

**Reviving *Administrative Amnesia*:
Basic Writing Faculty *Looking and Responding Rhetorically* in the Neoliberal University**

Marcy Isabella and Heather McGovern

To help faculty resist neoliberalism, the authors outline ways to *determine* how to resist: looking behind, around, and through. The authors introduce *administrative amnesia*, show how colleagues applied *looking* to respond rhetorically to local issues (e.g., shared governance, sexual assault, and repercussions of university expansion on basic writing), and offer advice on being resilient.

Preface: How This Article Has Changed, and How to Read It

In an earlier version of this article, we told a story of how the same people, in different moments, can promote different goals. Our story prioritized values many teachers hold: student learning matters; at-risk students deserve support. As teachers of writing, we championed writing as a change-agent. We told one story, about one activist moment, when our program wrote one letter, and when that one letter *worked*. We saw that moment as *success*. We now see it as a remission, not a triumph.

When we returned to revise this article in light of reviewer comments, we realized that we'd understated the problems at our university because (1) we need to maintain good working relationships at our institution as avenues for change, and (2) one co-author does not yet have tenure. We revised to be more comprehensive about our institution's problems, which we believe are common nationally; to provide fewer excuses for all actors, ourselves included; and to provide tactics that others can adopt.

We also erred in the first telling of this story by situating it as *success*. We desired to show the value of responding rhetorically--but responding rhetorically doesn't always mean responding successfully. We believe, like Shari Stenberg and Debbie Minter, that "responding

rhetorically is not about winning—or not often, anyway. Instead, it is about determining the best way to respond within serious constraints” (656). For us, the most important action is not “to respond,” but “to determine.” Reviewers requested more applicable advice; we refocused on the strategies we employ when *determining* rhetorical constraints and possibilities. That is as functional as we can get: rhetorical responsiveness obliges us—and you—to respond locally.

Moreover: we are learning that resisting the consequences of neoliberalism obliges us to respond repeatedly, again and again, in different contexts and with different constraints. There is not one battle to win (if there was, it happened long ago, and it looks like we lost). Instead, we must acknowledge that there is no going back. Despite how often or how rhetorically we respond to the neoliberalist agenda in/at/of our institutions, universities will not “return” to anything (there is no there there). But there are still points of struggle; moments when philosophies, perspectives, and their associated priorities clash; and when responding rhetorically matters. We illustrate this, here, by telling multiple stories of resistance.

Our stories reflect “social resilience.” For Stenberg and Minter (and, now, for us) social resilience “is not something we do or do not possess, but something we can practice and cultivate” (662). Your institution, like ours, may provide you with a plentitude of opportunities to “practice and cultivate.” In telling our stories, we show how we decide which “opportunities” to take up, how we try to take them up in ways that keep us learning to be resilient, and how all of this hinges on seeing rhetorically.

Our stories also deviate some from Donna Strickland’s work on the “managerial unconscious.” Strickland explains that Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) avoid embracing, or valuing, or often even recognizing their roles as managers. We agree that this can happen, both, as Strickland outlines, in the history of the discipline (17-25), and as people try to

be democratic forces (108-118). But we believe there's more to it. We posit that another kind of unconscious occurs, one that *does* embrace the managerial function. We position *administrative amnesia* as a condition caused primarily by changes in one's bureaucratic or institutional placement. Such changes can be accompanied by a shifting perspective (e.g., teacher to administrator, or colleague to teacher), which then may develop into a condition marked by lapses—brief or otherwise—in recalling or keeping in mind the values, priorities, and challenges that one had formerly held or experienced.

Strickland encourages WPAs to consider the ethical components of managerial actions (119-121). In a similar vein, we encourage a practical activism in which faculty apply *ways of looking* to wake others (and themselves) out of administrative amnesia.

Introduction: A Primary, Powerful Tool Available for Basic Writing Faculty

Basic writing faculty have an important tool for resisting the neoliberal university. Our work in the classroom is grounded in building rhetorical awareness. We tell our students what Aristotle supposedly told his: that rhetoric is “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (36). We explain to our students that navigating a given rhetorical situation requires understanding—*seeing*—your audience in all their particularities, your purpose in all of its manifestations, and your available tools and strategies. We explain to students how each rhetorical act is bound to a specific context. We teach—because we believe—that through rhetoric, we can relate, persuade, explain, and educate. We believe, further, that through rhetoric, we can startle, disturb, rouse, and reorient. In our classrooms, we aim to enable students to *see their writing* rhetorically. Our aim here is to encourage readers to *see their institutions* rhetorically. We direct you to look three ways: *behind, around, and through*.

(1) *Look Behind*

James Porter et al. posit that “though institutions are certainly powerful, they are not monoliths; they are rhetorically constructed human designs (whose power is reinforced by buildings, laws, traditions, and knowledge-making practices) and so are changeable” (611). It’s easy to forget that. Institutions are created through repeated acts, by many individuals, over time. To see an institution rhetorically is to understand its histories. An institution didn’t just appear: there is a story of its birth and a journal of its growth. Stenberg and Minter define a disciplinary “collective imaginary” as that “which encompasses the overarching stories we tell ourselves about who we are, what we value, and what comprises our distinguishing features” (648). Institutions, too, have their own collective imaginary. It’s the story about why they’re there, why they were needed, why they matter. To *look behind* is to understand (determine) the identity of the institution. *Looking behind* a person might be seeing how their DNA and childhood experiences combine to predispose the individual to develop along certain lines: the same is true of an institution. *Looking behind* an institution is to see its socio-political DNA, the decisions of key founders and major shapers, and to see how it may be predisposed to develop along certain lines, to value some things over others, to resist or adopt some changes more readily.

(2) *Look Around*

Look around the current landscape. Identify values by considering: What is the current collective imaginary for the institution? For the smaller units involved? What forces or individuals are you working to change, bypass, or counteract? Who are your allies and what do you share? What are the current constraints, possibilities, and contexts? What processes and avenues of influence are available? What are the consequences of using each process/avenue/rhetorical tactic?

(3) *Look Through*

To look through is to see a particular situation through the perspective of someone who feels, thinks, believes, and values differently from you and your allies. You can do this, first, by listening to those perspectives, if and when possible. Then, you entertain them: You try to believe as they do, temporarily, to gain a more complete understanding of what and how and why they see differently (Elbow 9). This can give you access to employable strategies, or it can reveal that there is no available common ground. You may decide that your resistance is no longer the best option, or see where you and others share values after all, and how to use those.

Applying the Ways of Looking

In the next sections, we apply the ways of looking to situations at our university, to model for readers how they might do so. As with any specific application, ours is not comprehensive of all one might do/ learn when *determining*, when *looking*. We separate a look behind, around, and through the landscape of higher education from that of our local university. Our analysis of the former is short as many others—including many of those we cite—have completed thorough analyses, so we intend to remind readers of some of their conclusions.

Look Behind, Around, and Through: The Big Picture of Higher Education

If ever universities existed as some sort of nobly-selfless enterprise, neither of us remembers it, or, even, learning about it (unless it was held up as a lost relic of democracy we somehow—unknowingly and unwillingly—abandoned). We remember that, in the 1970s, Louis Althusser positioned educational institutions as ideological state apparatuses, critiquing the ways that they subtly, coercively reproduce capitalist relations and oppressive practices through the guise of providing education (oh, that great liberating force). We remember that, in the 1990s, Bill Readings argued that we needed to understand universities as autonomous bureaucratic

systems (41). Their ideological work no longer centered on reproducing capitalist relations. Instead, he explained, *through* capitalist relations, capitalist values, and capitalist activities, universities work to (re)create themselves. Their primary function is to grow, to out-compete, to dominate the market. And we remember, more recently, when Donna Strickland brought the critique closer to home: composition studies--and WPAs--suffer from a “managerial unconscious.”

Donna Strickland argues that our field’s collective imaginary—though she doesn’t call it that—has caused us to neglect, and in many ways deny, the inescapable and inherent ways that our field works to administer or, in her words, manage. She calls this the “managerial unconscious,” and she explains, “despite composition studies’ theoretical articulations with various forms of leftist thought, the appeal to democracy and the classroom practices that tend to be favored may function instead as articulations of managerial commonplaces, unexamined ideologies and practices that do not always forward democratic goals” (100).

Althusser advised that teachers act against the ideology of the state, as heroes (106). Readings advised to embrace dissensus (191). Strickland advised us “to rethink what it might mean to be an oppositional teacher, intellectual, *and* manager” (100).

Looking Behind, Around, and Through: Zooming in to the Local

Our university is in the midst of dramatic changes, and it is not a leap of (Marxist) interpretation to see the changes as both an outbreak of intentions and an eruption of consequences, both of which were brought about by a relatively recent (for our institution) adoption of neoliberal values and practices. Our university is relatively young, first offering classes in 1971. Most current faculty were not present, then. We often hear, however, the story of origin: our university was established out of a mission to provide a high-quality liberal arts

education for students who otherwise wouldn't have access to one. Even if it may be idealized, this democratic ethos, so tied to our existence, has cultivated—and keeps cultivating—a collective imaginary. Stenberg and Minter explain the value of identifying and understanding a collective imaginary: “Collective imaginaries are particularly important because they stand in contrast to neoliberalism’s penchant for individual competition and accomplishment, providing us a shared set of goals and values that drive our collective work” (657).

At our institution, the collective imaginary of the past seems to be shifting, or being replaced, and this process is causing a kind of internal clash of cultures. Over the past decade, a growing number of small, off-campus sites (referred to as “satellites”) have been established, and, as of Fall 2018, our university expanded further via the construction of another “main campus” location. We find ourselves in a position where we can see the ways in which our university is one of Readings’ autonomous bureaucratic systems, with a drive to dominate the market. Our university’s original main campus is in a more rural setting, and the new main campus is in a nearby “urban” area (we use quotation marks to emphasize that in some ways it is more of a marketing term). The “urban” campus is in a town that is *comparatively* urban (population just under 38,500) and that faces some challenges similar to larger urban areas, but which probably cannot leverage some solutions available in larger urban locations. The university is promoting the “urban” campus under a vision of assisting the surrounding community, which has a troubled social, economic, and political history. The “urban” campus also, more self-servingly, provides the university with an opportunity to expand its customer base in effort to maintain its own economic viability. In the kind of education-marketing talk we’ve grown used to, it is an opportunity to attract more (and more diverse) students. In the neoliberal model, where institutions’ main goals are to self-perpetuate and succeed in a

marketplace, students are not merely consumers purchasing credits; they are commodities: raw materials that help to sustain the machination of higher education; they are feedstock. If that sounds vulgar, it should. But it's important to keep sight of.

To see rhetorically, we must remember our institutional and disciplinary histories. We must see our present and local moments in relation to historical shifts and national trends, even the ones we don't like. We must recognize the values that inform our collective imaginaries, whether or not they are our values, too. Because it is all of these, at once, that comprise our rhetorical situations.

In the next sections, we outline a few local challenges, selected because we thought others might find them familiar. We hope these examples help readers see how to apply the ways of looking and how they reveal local nuance.

Shared Governance

Presently and nationally, "neoliberal pressures have altered university structures in ways that decrease faculty's role as decision makers" (Slaughter and Rhoades 77). This is also a local concern. On our campus, we've struggled, with mixed success, to address shared governance at least since just before the resignation of our last president, but perhaps always. Over the past several years, administrators have sometimes made decisions in violation of Faculty Senate's recommendations, or without consulting faculty or staff. In these instances, administration has either offered no explanation, or provided the excuse that they can't afford to wait for others to deliberate. Now, shared governance has become such a concern that the Campus Senate has called a meeting of the full faculty to determine how to proceed.

We see, then, looming above and across all the specific challenges, the challenge of *shared governance*, or multiple stakeholders participating meaningfully in decision-making.

Shared governance is one way for institutions of higher education to make decisions that more completely consider a full range of potential consequences. Meaningful shared governance relies on discussion among, and participation between, the otherwise distinct, somewhat autonomous, entities of the institution: staff, faculty, student body, administration, and board. Meaningful discussion enables each to speak from their perspectives and experiences; meaningful participation empowers each to be heard. Robust shared governance doesn't mean that decisions will satisfy all, or even most, of the stakeholders. It can mean that decisions are made with a more comprehensive understanding of consequences. It's crucial to mention before we move forward: in processes of shared governance generally, and in meaningful discussions specifically, a faculty member with administrative responsibilities might not always be effective in speaking from the faculty perspective or sharing faculty concerns, especially if the faculty perspective is otherwise the minority in the room. In instances like this, when those of us with administrative responsibilities find ourselves in rooms with other administrators, talking about administrative things, at any moment we risk developing administrative amnesia.

Introducing the Themes: Silence/Silencing and Expansion/Mission

Beyond the challenge of shared governance, as we listed other challenges we face at our institution, two primary themes began to emerge: *Silence/Silencing* and *Expansion/Mission*. In the discussions that follow, we will identify the theme, provide examples, and illustrate what we mean by *looking behind*, *looking around*, and *looking through*. We will also share ideas (or examples) of what responding rhetorically could (or did) look like in each instance.

Theme One: Silence/Silencing

By "silence," we mean to refer to the ways our administration is good about keeping quiet. Regularly—and by that we mean too often—we learn about major initiatives, decisions, or

actions from external sources first. By “silencing,” we mean that faculty and staff who dissent/speak out sometimes appear then to be targeted.

Example A: Addressing Sexual Assault Lawsuits.

The Situation, and Looking Behind: In early July 2018, local newspapers published reports of what was then one, but is now eight, lawsuits involving sexual assault and our university. After we’d read about multiple lawsuits, many of us waited for an official statement, a show of support for the survivors, maybe something that recognized that our university (like others) has to do better. We were still waiting when the Presidents of the Union and Faculty Senate sent an internal email in mid-July. They asked the President of the University for an official response to the lawsuits; they copied all faculty and professional staff to help force a reply. The President didn’t respond for some time: other top administrators sent emails, full of legal jargon and vague reassurances. The President finally responded at the end of July.

Look Around: Faculty responding to issues raised by the lawsuits noted their larger social and cultural context—especially, the #metoo movement that has encouraged many sexual assault survivors to come forward. We watched as one lawsuit led to another, and another, and another, in a sequence that brought to light, locally, the pervasiveness of sexual assault.

As the official emails proved unsatisfactory, the faculty and staff most concerned about the allegations found one another, in part through association with the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality interdisciplinary minor. We discussed our own conflicting emotions—at times super-motivated, at others, exhausted. We rotated multiple activists, in order to care for one another’s well-being, pulled in people with different expertise and rhetorical skills, maintained strength-in-numbers, and protected individuals from negative repercussions.

Look Through: When looking through, one tries to see a situation through the perspectives of others. In this instance, we considered various stakeholders' possible perspectives. We discussed how it might feel to be named in one of the lawsuits, or to be the parent to someone who was. We tried to understand the position of the administration in terms of what it could (would) say with ongoing litigation. After brainstorming about how to manage gathering information and making suggestions while maintaining relationships with people who had been and who would remain, we hoped, allies; groups of faculty met with various administrators to learn about current processes, procedures, policies, and education.

Responding Rhetorically: After perspective-adopting and information-gathering, a group of faculty and staff responded to the President's editorial. We requested specific changes; we offered expertise and time. We sent the letter from the Coordinator of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality minor to help protect individuals, who could choose to sign. Later, at orientation programs for first-year students, faculty volunteered their time and expertise to talk to students about sexual assault. We waited in crowds of students for leaders to pass the mic and open the discussion, but that never happened.

Wanting an external audit, internal investigation, and/or additional proactive measures, most of us remained unsatisfied with the university's response to the lawsuits. Many of us were also critical of the responses that were shaped around efforts to prevent *being* assaulted, efforts we read as victim blaming. One faculty member acted on this and printed t-shirts that called out rape culture, indicating that the problem of sexual assault isn't one to be fixed or prevented by the victim, but the perpetrator. Many of us wear these shirts on campus and in our classrooms.

While faculty have identified a few issues to prioritize, trying to set realistic goals for changing our institutional culture and conversations about sexual assault, the most effective

change-agents so far have been students. For example, one student wrote an article for the student newspaper, criticizing a town hall meeting that the university held. The event was supposed to be a forum, a discussion, but it wasn't. Instead, it was a panel of university officials talking at the audience. They "saved" a few moments at the end to respond to questions they had vetted already. Both faculty and students were in attendance, and both were disappointed. The student senate acted on the disappointment: they lobbied for and hosted a Town Hall meeting 2.0.

Later, student activists attended a board of trustees meeting. Some stood in the back, holding posters and chanting. One activist, seated in the middle of the audience, stood up, kept hold of a microphone, and read aloud a list of demands. Many of those demands overlapped with what faculty had asked for in August—and, in some cases for years. Some had been requested formally by the student senate or other student activists last spring, but it was following this protest that we received official communication that some of their requests will be met. There will be increased funding for bystander intervention programs, an additional staff member for the Women's Center, and a hotline. So while we can't say the situation is fully resolved, we can say there is some change.

Example B: Targeting of Dissenters. The situation described in Example A required a great deal of activism in order to get anything but silence from the administration. Relatedly, and ominously, it seems that some dissenters are targeted, especially those who speak publicly about the most controversial topics, which, at our university (and perhaps at yours), have lately been student sexual assault and racial discrimination.

The Situation: As just one example, a pre-tenure colleague, at the request of the Provost, received an official email query from her Dean, regarding her students' attendance at a campus event held in conjunction with the national #BelieveSurvivors action on September 24.

Look Behind: This colleague has a history of activism for women's and gender issues, both in her own work (she designed the t-shirts mentioned earlier) and in her support of the activism projects students take up in her Women's, Gender, and Sexuality classes. Her students have worked to make the university's lactation room compliant, raised money for the Women's Center, and conducted surveys about campus sexual assault.

Also relevant: this fall, the university launched more than one initiative to get more students to attend more on-campus events. There is a method to electronically track student attendance at on-campus events, and there are celebratory functions for first-year students who attend a specific number of events. Faculty are encouraged to get students involved.

Also relevant: the university rolled out a Culture of Respect campaign this fall, in part a response to the sexual assault lawsuits. Many schools have adopted the Culture of Respect campaign, whose mission is to "build the capacity of educational institutions to end sexual violence through ongoing, expansive organizational change" (Culture of Respect).

It has been difficult for many faculty to trust that the Culture of Respect program, at *our* university, will encourage "ongoing expansive organizational change" that will "end sexual violence." At *our* university, the program also appears to be code for silencing dissenters—in ways that echo Moshmann and Edler's argument that civility is the "new face of coercion" (2). We have a new "culture of civility" that seems to be license, here as it is nationally, for censorship. As the Culture of Respect was announced at fall meetings with faculty, faculty were

warned that we might lose access to our all-faculty and staff listserv if we are not adequately civil.

Look Around: When, at the request of the Provost, the Dean emailed the faculty member, the stated concern was that students might have been uncomfortable. When questioned about why her students attended the event, she had to explain and defend her pedagogy. Such emails questioning the pedagogical choices of faculty do not seem to be widespread practice, but this email was one of four official challenges she's received from upper administration this fall alone.

In her response, she explained that her basic writing students attended the event to practice rhetorical analysis. She'd let them know that they could analyze as observers or as participant-observers in support or in dissent. She reached out to her dean as a possible ally. She shared her story with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies faculty, and her mentors, as possible allies.

Look Through: If we consider what might motivate the other people involved, we might consider that until the faculty member explained how attending the event was connected to a rhetorical analysis lesson, and how she framed their options, it might have appeared that she was compelling students to participate in a politically-charged (given the partisan rhetoric that led to the national event) activist moment.

It's also important to know that our administration (perhaps, again, like yours) has received complaints from alt right and other activists about speakers hosted by and stances taken by the university. In this climate, they may have wanted to exercise caution, pre-judging the faculty member based on her previous activism and that of her students. The email she received was not an official warning. A generous read might call it a request for more information, though the power dynamics for a faculty member in her tenure year could make it difficult to interpret it

that way, especially when the queries fall outside of typical practice. But an honest appraisal of others' possible motives, an honest looking through, means we must imagine any number of intents.

Responding Rhetorically: Beyond the faculty member responding to the official request for information, there has been no formal response. The faculty member talked with her dean, who was supportive; her mentors sent full professors to accompany her to already-scheduled meetings with administrators on issues related to her students' sexual assault activism.

Another faculty member continues to distribute buttons that say "F-Civility" or "Pop a jaunty bonnet on your civility." Other faculty wear them to remind administrators that we fear that one goal of the culture of civility campaign is to silence dissenters.

We don't know if any of these actions matter.

Theme 2: Expansions and Missions

The second theme we identified as *Challenges* we'd explore in this article, to model for readers how to apply the *Looking* strategies, is *Expansions/Missions*. We refer to the *Expansions* of our university via satellite locations, a second "main" campus, new programs, and growth in our student population. By *Missions*, we refer to the institutional mission as made explicit in documents (e.g., Vision and Mission statements, strategic plans), but also the unarticulated (silent) priorities that direct our future. We discuss example A, about an Equal Opportunity Fund (EOF) program, where we most clearly identify administrative amnesia; Example B explores our university's new strategic plan.

Example A: A New EOF Program.

The Situation: Early in the fall 2017 semester, our state announced that it would support two new EOF programs. Already having one EOF program, our institution submitted a proposal

for a second. They were granted it. At a program meeting shortly after the announcement, we looked over the plan for the new EOF, and we noticed glaring concerns.

Look Behind: EOF, which has existed in our state since 1968, supports students from low-income families. Our EOF program includes a summer residential/academic experience. Traditional metrics like retention and graduation rate—and reputation among faculty, students, and staff—say that our EOF program fulfills its mission.

In the past five years or so, our university has become increasingly consumed with a desire to expand, both in size on the main campus and through geographical reach across multiple newer locations. Proposal authors prioritized how to justify a second program to the state. In some ways, the second EOF program was designed less around what might best serve students and more around how to generate customers for the university's new products. Our university was opening a new "urban" campus and developing a new civic engagement program to be hosted there. The university needed more students living and studying in the new location, taking courses in the new program. Faculty and staff members were included in only one meeting, late in the process, where they were asked to brainstorm/inform rather than to shape/write. This made their input less meaningful. By focusing on what might make their proposal win, the authors perhaps forgot the mission of the program: to support students.

Look Around: Basic writing and math faculty are connected to what Stenberg and Minter describe as a disciplinary collective imaginary—a connection to a larger group of people based on disciplinary affiliations, pedagogical practices, research interests, conference attendance, and often shared values. Almost by default, we put students first. Program faculty and staff are also connected to the local, program, and EOF collective imaginaries. Many of our program faculty and staff work or have worked in the summer EOF program. Put briefly, our program faculty and

staff have disciplinary, institutional, and/or personal commitments to EOF and the students it serves.

Our connections with our colleagues are also personal. Stenberg and Minter talk about part of social resilience being “relational work with colleagues” (648). As Bennett and Smith note, many resilient resisters have formed a sort of fraternity (12). We have allies. We were reacting against decisions by, and pleading for change with, people we follow on social media, celebrate with at EOF ceremonies, and co-author reports with on committees (much like what is advocated by Lemeiux Spiegel in this issue). Perhaps more importantly, we were collaborating as activists with program members with whom we have professional and often social bonds: we teach the same students; we have program potlucks; we celebrate births and new haircuts.

Look Through: In this instance, we have a slight advantage in imagining and discussing other perspectives: one of us was there.

We want to examine what happened (and what it looked like) critically, but we also want to be fair, so let us start with this: the people involved were—and still are—also genuinely interested in the social justice aspects of a new EOF program and the support it can provide to students. But there was an inattention that could have put students in positions that are troubling. We identify and blame “administrative amnesia.” Those thinking about administrative issues one moment might teach/advocate for social justice at other moments, yet temporarily forget their values and perspectives in those roles.

There was an inability to see the needs of students that continued as the project moved from the proposal stage to implementation. At the first academic implementation meeting, everyone present was acting administratively, even if their roles weren’t strictly administrative. Meeting participants expressed concerns about segregation and the relative scarcity of student

services (especially access to tutoring, counseling, advising, and medical care) on the "urban" campus in its first semester. Although participants were capable of "seeing" these problems, their managerial perspective caused them to dismiss the problems, prematurely. The concerns were assuaged by others in attendance. Attention was redirected to what courses could or could not be scheduled. It was predictable that at a managerial meeting the voices of dissent would be ignored—they "fall outside what is legitimate" (Bennett and Smith 11). The focus was on doing what the proposal promised and getting students on the new campus, efficiently, not doing what was best for students.

This kind of thinking is not new: Rob Smith warns that higher education's "managerialistic practices...will militate in favour of more 'efficient' and technical solutions that do not reduce the 'productivity' of academic staff" (688). Thus, it was predictable that the administrative meeting would result in a plan for offering needed courses, leaving other issues unresolved. Seeing as and acting like administrators, attendees found managerial solutions to mitigate the symptoms of segregation, rather than fighting against the segregation itself. In fact, one of the co-author's primary goals at the meeting was to protect track coordinators from the additional administrative work involved in staffing additional courses; she was still putting people first, but *which people* was defined by an organizational chart rather than a student-first mentality. To be fair, attendees ensured that course scheduling would allow students to travel to the main campus for other courses and student club meetings. Administrative amnesia didn't lead to all student needs being ignored, but it did allow the most inconvenient ones to be dismissed.

Looking through enabled discovery. In discussion as a program, we saw how administrative amnesia, exacerbated by the neoliberal focus on competition, expansion, and growth, prevented people—the same people we usually count as allies—from seeing, adequately

valuing, or remembering the potential problems for students. In this instance, seeing rhetorically helped us identify a site for action and revealed a tactic: we acted on administrative amnesia.

Responding Rhetorically: We wrote. As one rhetorical strategy, we chose “rushing”: we argued that in *rushing* the EOF proposal and implementation, those responsible failed to understand the ways they were disadvantaging a vulnerable population. Blaming time constraints allowed our audience to save face. It offered a palatable excuse for poor decision-making, decision-making in which one of us was complicit.

We were more critical in shaping one of our other arguments. In an effort to invoke a particular audience (Ede and Lunsford 89)—to provide the reader(s) with textual clues that would help them see what role we wanted them to play, to direct their thinking—we intentionally inserted terms that, through tradition and repetition of rhetorical acts, have come to be inexorably connected to civil rights rhetoric. We called out the plans as *segregating* students and creating a *separate and unequal* environment. Roughly 86% of students in EOF statewide are non-white (State of New Jersey, *EOF Progress Report*, 16), so we used these terms to remind readers of the ways in which our culture disproportionately economically disadvantages non-whites.

Intentionally, we selected adjectives meant to evoke an understanding of students as needing support: *at-risk*, *need* and *vulnerable*. The State Of New Jersey reports that students in the program have a median family income near the bottom quintile (*EOF Progress Report*, 9); our new EOF program also intends to recruit youth aging out of the foster care system, who graduate from college at a low rate nationally.

We wanted to make it clear that if the University recruits students who *need*, it must help meet those needs. We don’t see students in EOF as only vulnerable, at-risk, or needy—they are as likely to be strong, problem-solving, and giving—but we emphasized particular possible

characteristics to remind readers of our shared goal, our shared responsibility, to help students retain, learn, and graduate. We took up the act of writing as one of reminding others—and ourselves—of the *people* involved.

Our colleagues, our allies, were also our audience(s). We sent the letter to our dean and assistant dean, an administrator in the Provost's Office, the new Vice President of Student Affairs, and to EOF administrators on our campus. We also communicated our concern to a student senator and faculty senators: we started recruiting additional partners. We applied additional pressure by cc'ing various stakeholders on the email and stating our intent to contact the Board if need be.

We cannot say for sure how we persuaded, but our rhetorical response led to a remission-like change. Student Affairs agreed to delay housing the incoming students in the new program on the "urban" campus. Although we're pleased with the result of this rhetorical act, it wasn't a win. We welcome EOF's support for these new students. We are less excited, still, about having up to 50 of them living next fall—albeit with up to 50 other freshmen—in the new campus location with less immediate access to many supports, including tutoring and counseling.

Example B: Strategic Plan.

We place this as the last example as we think it is our next fight.

The Situation: A new strategic plan for the next 3-5 years is under development.

Look Behind: Changes of this nature are/have often been pitched as “re-imagining” or “re-envisioning,” and they have been initiated at the administrative level, although they’ve had significant consequences for faculty, staff, and students.

The university last made a strategic plan in 2008, seeing it through 2020. Through revision, the expiring plan came to contain four focal points: Learning, Engagement, Global Perspectives, and Sustainability. It's worth noting that some community members pressed to include "learning," as others argued that "learning" was implied and identifying it would be redundant. Upon reflection, we might ask if anything else was implied, anything that no one pressed to make explicit. Looking back, now, many of the changes we write of here—changes we see as consequences of neoliberal values—are difficult to place within the four focal points of our expiring plan.

The new strategic plan began with surveys, focus groups, and other studies by external consultants. Then, a committee with faculty, administrators, and staff worked with external consultants to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis and to draft and revise a strategic plan. We're now responding to a new draft plan.

Look Around: The draft strategic plan purports to value student success as one of the main strategic goals. That promise feels hollow to many faculty and staff, even when it is being exhibited as a priority. To many faculty, it feels as though over the past few years, the institution values student success less than ever. We've gone from 15 sections of basic writing in Fall 2016 to a need for 34 sections for Fall 2018. As a dual result of growth in overall number of freshman, and increased placement of those freshmen into basic writing and math courses, for the first time in the history of the university, two years in a row, we could not offer seats in those courses to all of the students required to take them in their first term. We are now also more dependent than ever on adjunct faculty to teach these courses, including many hired just in the last two years, who we are struggling to mentor properly due to the volume of hiring.

To be fair, the university has created a host of committees to study student success, and has invested in some new faculty, staff, and programs to support students. Still, the human resources fail to keep pace with demand. Despite these and other, inexpensive supports—like new clubs—we increasingly feel that the institution fails to adequately support students. We’ve long had a high retention rate (currently about 86%), but we fear this will change. Smith indicates that neoliberal universities are interested in the financially efficient aspects of retention (683). They fail to see retention as a deeply personal—i.e., *of the person*—issue, involving students as individuals.

Look Through: In the past five to seven years, many of our original faculty, hired in the 1970s, have retired, and our new hires are, themselves, products of the neoliberal institution (Stenberg and Minter, 662). Arguably, one of the authors is such a product. But looking through means we must allow for the possibility that we (the authors) are now or in some way out of step, now or in some way afraid of change.

Our administrators say that they place students first, that a fiscally-sound university can provide a richly positive experience for students. They hope we can find creative, inexpensive ways to support students. We may need to take them at their word and see that we share values.

And we must recognize that some of our concerns are for ourselves—that we can implement some low-cost solutions to the problems we’re facing, if we’re willing and able to work more: teach in overload, invest even more time one-on-one with students.

Responding Rhetorically: We’ve tried sharing with other faculty the statistics about our inability to staff our classes. More people now argue on behalf of the students we ultimately share. But this hasn’t yet resulted in change. It may never. We’re currently trying new tactics:

inviting administrators to observe our classes; telling stories about specific students at meetings with administrators: putting human faces on the numbers. We're following up on administrative suggestions.

We are still looking behind, looking around, and responding. We believe that the support systems integrated into our basic writing classes and first-year studies program work together to give our students something they can count on: people. We are not yet ready to stop advocating for our students, staff, contingent, and full-time faculty.

One More Look: Looking Ahead

If you are resisting in the neoliberal university, we encourage you to see your institution rhetorically: to look behind, look around, look through. Whether or not you choose to act, these strategies are useful, teachable, and shareable.

Share Institutional History

Keep telling the story of your institution; share context with new faculty, build a “collective institutional memory.” Soliday reminds us that “crises” are not new—individuals, institutions, and disciplines all have short memories: “educational reform is halting, inconsistent, and difficult, encompassing issues of representation, as well as quotidian practices that affect access policies and conditions for work” (87). Remember, and remember to tell, the stories of past crises. Just as importantly, though, remember, and remember to tell, the stories of past small successes.

Share Institutional Privilege/Security/Safety

Protect your more vulnerable colleagues. The sort of protection we encourage might look like walking a pre-tenure colleague to a meeting with administration, or sitting beside them during it. It might look like a conference room speckled with variations of the same protest t-shirt. Or, it might look like collaborating on an article that puts out in the open a lot of what's said behind partly-closed office doors. Through our work, and from our positions, we can support one another at our own institutions, or, through disciplinary affiliations, at others.

Let Small Successes Sustain You

And now we want to share one more strategy, one we intentionally left for this moment. We want you to *Look Ahead*. See the spectrum of consequences that are possible in a given opportune moment. To *look ahead* means withstanding, continuing, restoring, and maintaining energy reserves. Individually, and collectively, we must keep fighting because what's at stake hasn't changed (and isn't going to). We must adapt, and we must persist: we must be resilient, because resilience is responsive (Stenberg and Minter, 2018). *Looking ahead* means seeing the small and temporary changes that align with our values as enough to sustain us for the next engagement.

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Marcy Isabella, Assistant Professor of Writing and First-Year Studies at a four-year public university in the northeast, teaches courses in first-year writing, research writing, and anarchist art. She also works as a convenor for a general studies curriculum, assisting faculty develop new interdisciplinary arts and humanities courses. She has recently published on writing program assessment.

Heather McGovern, Professor of Writing and First-Year Studies at a four-year public university in the northeast, teaches basic and professional writing and women's, gender, and sexuality studies courses. She currently coordinates a First-Year Studies program which includes basic writing, math, and critical thinking/reading, along with other first-year writing and math courses. She has recently presented at CCCC on what to call basic writing and published on assessment and on technology use in basic writing.

