The adjunct we once termed a “freeway flyer” or “gypsy academic” has morphed in the face of online education to become a course management software wizard or online platform guru. In the past, being contingent faculty involved driving long distances from one campus to another, but now, with the rise of online education, we have entered a new age of contingency with faculty who surf from one course management platform to another. This rise in online education has created new opportunities and new challenges for contingent faculty and writing instruction. From my own vantage point, first as more of a “freeway flyer” adjuncting and tutoring at three different institutions, then as a graduate instructor teaching classes in various departments across campus and online, and now as remote full-time staff in an online writing center, I have seen how much the online environment affects the experience of contingency.

The field of rhetoric and composition has responded pedagogically to the rise of online education, with many years of CCCC programs that included sessions on online writing instruction. CCCC has also published position statements like “A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction.” While there is still more work to do pedagogically, there is certainly more work to be done with regard to the working conditions of online contingent faculty.
In this special issue, we turn our attention to the relationship between contingency and online writing instruction. Borgman and McClure offer a hopeful perspective on online teaching, highlighting the challenges and opportunities that online teaching provides. The authors share a vulnerable look into their reasons for first choosing to take on contingent online teaching positions and then enrolling in flexible hybrid programs, describing their online teaching work as “freeing.”

Mechenbier and Warnock critique common methods of observing teaching, highlighting the problems that online contingent faculty encounter with this type of evaluation. As an alternative, the authors propose a collaborative method of “reading” online writing courses instead. This method involves less evaluation and more observation, conducted by an interdisciplinary group of faculty with subject matter expertise, instructional designers, and faculty with a history of online teaching excellence.

Our authors in this issue today do an excellent job of highlighting the opportunities and challenges of online composition teaching for contingent faculty. This topic is one that I hope we continue to explore in the pages of this journal.

Work Cited
The Ultimate Balancing Act: Contingent Online Teaching and PhD Coursework
Jessie Borgman and Christine I. McClure

We both fell into online teaching. For Jessie it was a job opportunity in a restricted geographical location, and for Christine it was because she was the only person willing to do it. Online teaching has changed our lives in drastic ways and has enriched us as professionals. We are both seeking PhDs in flexible hybrid programs because being contingent faculty members in online writing instruction (OWI) inspired us to seek this advanced degree online instead of through a more traditional face-to-face program.

Christine is now a second-year student in the University of Central Florida’s Text and Technology program, and she has declared scientific and technical communication as her area of specialization while also taking instructional design courses from the College of Education. While her core courses are face-to-face, her elective courses are online. Jessie is in her final year of coursework as a PhD student in Texas Tech University’s (TTU) Technical Communication and Rhetoric program. Her courses in TTU’s program are synchronous online courses. We both realized that it would be impossible to participate in traditional face-to-face programs simply due to time and place constraints. We needed programs that offered both face-to-face and online courses within our fields that would fit into our busy lives.

Our ability to pursue PhDs hinges on us teaching online/hybrid courses (specified as online throughout this article) because of time constraints and the ability to have more control over our work schedules. Although there are many disadvantages to teaching online as contingent faculty, we have learned strategies to overcome these disadvantages, and we now see some of the disadvantages as advantages.

Due to our extensive teaching experience both face-to-face and online, we feel online instruction is freeing. Additionally, our experiences in OWI give us an “edge” and make us more marketable, as most programs want someone with both online teaching and instructional design experience. Adding to our “edge” are our experiences as online students. We’ve done it all, and that makes us more marketable in the contingent faculty world.

Over time, we found that teaching online fit with our work ethic, as we are both extremely organized and very communicative with students. Our personalities are suited for online instruction, something that should not be overlooked. We fully believe that not everyone’s personalities work well in the online environment (Hewett and Hallman Martini). We are both highly motivated and have excellent time management skills, which are vital in online instruction.
Our experiences as online writing instructors and doctoral students have not been without challenges and concessions; however, we have learned strategies to overcome these challenges to become successful in all of our classes. For example, balancing a very heavy workload is challenging. Although there is little data on contingent faculty (Kezar and Bernstein-Sierra) and specifically on those teaching online (Meloncon), most of the literature suggests that the workload is much heavier in terms of communicating, maintaining, and grading within online environments (“Online Teaching”; Reinheimer; Van de Vord and Pogue; Wang et al.).

As contingent faculty teaching online, we have experienced the heavy workload of creating scaffolded, multimedia instructional materials for our students, as well as reading and commenting on papers, discussion boards, and emails. Because of this, we have learned that we do not live 9-to-5 lives; in order to meet our deadlines, we need to be able and willing to work anywhere, at any time, and in any way we can. Working in the early morning, late at night, and on weekends is the norm now, and we bring our technology, books, and student papers with us wherever we go. We have come to realize that we cannot read hundreds of pages a week for our own graduate classes, write our own papers, research, write curriculum, answer emails, and grade our students’ assignments in a “regular” work week, so we must always be prepared to do what we can when we can. This will probably be construed as a huge negative for some people, but for us, it is freeing. This schedule has allowed us the flexibility to function in a new fluid workspace afforded to us by our online teaching and hybrid PhD programs.

It takes more time to be contingent faculty. What’s more, we have found that teaching online and completing PhD-level coursework requires more energy and time than we had anticipated, causing us to be more stressed, forgetful, and tired. Additionally, the work takes a toll on our health because we don’t eat as well, and we forget to take care of ourselves. We prioritize other things like our families and their well-being over ours. We feel we are women who should be able to do it all, but sometimes we find ourselves more frazzled than sane in our quest to do so. We’ve found our degree quest to be hard on our families, as we can’t give them the time that we once could. Additionally, our careers have also been slowed in terms of available time to research, write, and publish. Now that we are both a few years into our programs, we’ve realized that we cannot give 110 percent to everything, and we need to let some things go, such as nights out with friends and downtime.

Online contingent faculty also have to grapple with inconsistent employment, the lack of training and professional development (Dailey-Hebert et al.; Mechenbier; Meloncon), and generally less pay for the same work (Kezar and Bernstein-Sierra; Mechenbier). For example, Christine has been promised classes that never materialized, and during her sixteen-and-a half years as an adjunct, she had to
teach several classes a semester at more than one institution just to make enough money to pay bills. Jessie created a full-time job by piecing together work at five schools. She has also experienced classes getting canceled at the last minute due to enrollment issues.

Because a major disadvantage of being contingent faculty is the lack of professional development opportunities, Jessie created her own opportunities over the years by publishing and presenting at conferences. Unfortunately, Christine was one of the many who had no opportunity to do so due to time, cost, and lack of network connections. Most of what we do on a daily basis we taught ourselves. We were our own professional development for a very long time, using the literature available to us and trying and erring our way through until we found day-to-day strategies and skill sets that worked for us in our online teaching and interaction with students. Despite the exciting professional development activities we were able to create, we both still wanted more and felt inspired to pursue our PhDs. We are the lucky ones, however, because many contingent faculty members never get the opportunity to participate in professional development.

Contingent online instructors also face identity issues and feelings of disconnection from the department and other faculty (Borgman; Coffield et. al.; Hewett & Ehmann Powers); this was true for us both for many years. Instead of questioning our expertise and our places within our departments and universities, our pursuit of doctoral degrees has led us to become more confident in ourselves and in the direction we are taking our careers, which affects our teaching. We are learning and developing our existing knowledge of the vocabulary of our fields; building on our previously established professional networks (in Jesse’s case) or building new ones (in Christine’s case); identifying and combining passions from different fields, such as genre studies and information design; and finding opportunities to collaborate with peers and instructor colleagues.

While the disadvantages may sound overwhelming to many, we’ve found ways to make all of them work in our favor. We’re not saying that the road to where we’ve landed wasn’t long and hard and at times very uncertain, but that we essentially (to borrow an overused proverbial phrase) took the lemons that most online contingent faculty deal with and made lemonade.

Through our experiences in online teaching while working on our PhDs, we have learned that we need to compromise and re-prioritize our lives, and through this, we have discovered ways to be productive in our online teaching and in our own courses. One of the most important lessons is to leverage organizational and time management techniques to keep us on track. It has become imperative that we utilize several different calendars, electronic and hard copy, to coordinate our various schedules, including the assignments, grading, quizzes, and meetings with
students for the courses we teach; classes, research, and due dates of assignments for those we take; appointments, soccer games, playdates, spousal time, grocery shopping, and paying bills in our personal lives; and publications, conferences, and research groups for professional development.

Despite the balancing act, we have flourished in our teaching because of the freedom that online teaching affords us. Being online instructors has allowed both of us the freedom to return to school and keep our careers going. It has also allowed us not to acquire massive amounts of debt because we are able to pay for our program (and get some tuition assistance from our teaching institutions). However, many instructors neither make enough money to pay outright for their PhD nor qualify to receive assistance from their university. Jessie took eight years off between her master’s and PhD so that she could be financially stable and afford to pay for her schooling. Christine is able to afford her degree because she works full-time and gets assistance from her school.

Despite our similar online history and desire to complete our PhDs, our plans for our futures are much different. Jessie is not planning to pursue a tenure-track position when she finishes her degree because she enjoys the freedom of contingent work. She has the luxury to publish because it’s fun and she enjoys it, not because she has to get a set number of publications for tenure. She also enjoys the variety of working for multiple institutions and having a really diverse student demographic to interact with. (She works for a for-profit art school, a four-year state school, and a community college.) She’s been teaching full-time as an online adjunct for over nine years and has been blessed to have steady employment, so going back to school was not inspired by a desire to gain a steadier tenure-track position.

Christine, on the other hand, does want a tenure-track position, preferably a fully online position, because of the stability this type of position can provide. Although Christine was an adjunct for over a decade and a half, ten years of which was solely online, with employment at multiple institutions, the lack of benefits and the balancing of adjunct work with home life and raising four children was stressful. She is now a full-time faculty member with benefits, but appointed as an instructor. Tenure, and therefore certain job security, is still not a possibility. Tenure-track positions of course require scholarship, and Christine finds researching and writing for publication and presentation exhilarating and fulfilling.

What we have learned, though, is online teaching as contingent faculty should not always be viewed as a disadvantage. In fact, we hope we’ve shown that teaching as an online contingent faculty member may have a lot of advantages that can overshadow more traditional routes of employment and participation in graduate studies—at least for some. We buy into the argument that distance education does not have to be distant. Being online students and educators has been more of a
blessing in both of our lives than a hindrance; we have been able to pursue more opportunities than we had imagined. Teaching online while pursuing a PhD is the ultimate balancing act, but it’s a balancing act we’re tackling with gusto and grace!

**Works Cited**


A Collaborative Method for Observing/Evaluating Online Writing Courses  
Mahli Mechenbier and Scott Warnock

Although finding numbers to confirm it may be difficult, writing programs appear to be increasingly offering online writing courses (OWCs). As a result, many OWCs are taught by contingent faculty. For programs, having OWCs taught by a contingent teaching force replicates many issues of onsite teaching and administration, including the capabilities (and resources) for evaluating/observing courses and teachers.

In the field of computers and writing, theory becomes practice as teacher-scholars challenge students with the ideas, approaches, and tools of new digital composing environments. Matters discussed in conferences and journals quickly become new ways to teach writing in digital settings. However, how are those practices, approaches, and tools evaluated? At most institutions, course observations are a component of reappointment, promotion, and tenure, and for faculty members who are off the tenure track, observations are often the sole cause for—and while terminology can differ, the implications are the same—“nonrenewal of the contract.”
From the contingent faculty reviewee perspective, classroom evaluations are problematic for several reasons, including rank discrepancies, scheduling, subject matter expertise, and not having a true peer relationship with the faculty evaluator. Additionally, tenure-line faculty reviewers may feel pressured to observe unfamiliar courses and write letters for the files of unfamiliar non-tenure-line instructors who are not perceived as permanent department members. Online teaching adds at least one crucial issue: securing a ranking faculty member with online writing instruction (OWI) knowledge. So who would conduct evaluations? Quality Matters (QM) is a nationally recognized categorized rubric (focusing on instructional design), but finding a QM-certified faculty member in a department (or even institution) could be challenging: the Quality Matters higher education Peer Reviewer tool lists 3,308 individuals who are trained and certified to assess an online course (not all of whom have faculty rank): a mere 66 per state. In addition, since online faculty are often off the tenure track, what happens when the situation is reversed, and a QM-certified lecturer is asked to assess a tenure-line faculty member’s OWC? The ability to assess an OWC according to standards, possession of appropriate rank so a peer-reviewed observation letter receives proper “credence,” and OWC experience—these gatekeeping concerns coalesce into a mass of administrative and political obstacles.

In this article, we briefly describe long-standing, general issues with course evaluations and online course evaluations specifically. We then suggest a different way of approaching OWC observations—“observation” is the term we will use—in an attempt to address the expertise and politics-driven concerns of OWC evaluation.

Historical Standard Procedure in Teaching Evaluations and Observations

Peer course evaluations/observations have long been a challenge at all levels and in all modalities of education. As Scott wrote in his blog, “Teaching evaluations in general, or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say the process of conducting teaching observations, can be vexed. Observers can run into issues ranging from the academic hierarchy to establishing fair criteria” (Warnock). Philip Stark and Richard Freishtat assess the matter bluntly: “Let’s drop the pretense. We will never be able to measure teaching effectiveness reliably and routinely” (14). Online learning brings its own issues, some stemming from the experience of the evaluators, as Vincenza Benigno and Guglielmo Trentin stated: “Given the special characteristics of online courses, their quantitative/qualitative evaluation calls for the adoption of specific procedures to assess both the learning process and the participant performance” (259). In their excellent guide Evaluating Online Teaching, Thomas J. Tobin, B. Jean Mandernach, and Ann H. Taylor assert, “While these expectations are not unique to evaluations of teaching in the online modality, the relative novelty of on-
line programs and course offerings often translates into less explicit understanding of how this information fits into the larger university context” (35).

This “relative novelty” is a core problem. When observing onsite courses, teachers—even if they have little sense of a particular course—can draw on decades of experience having been a student in such courses. They have some idea what they will see. Distance learning changes this, as Tobin et al. note: “Unlike the established nature of face-to-face education, many instructors have limited awareness of or familiarity with online education” (50); basically, “[w]hile virtually all instructors have experienced effective face-to-face teaching at some point in their lives, the same assumption cannot be made for online teaching” (63). Online writing instruction further heightens these distance learning issues. Cristie Cowles Charles wrote in a 2002 *Kairos* article, “Why We Need More Assessment of Online Composition Courses: A Brief History,” that at most universities OWCs

are usually only assessed from two standpoints (if at all): 1) Writing program administrators or distance learning administrators simply add online courses to their general program assessments, focusing mostly on existing surveys, portfolio grading, and student evaluations; or 2) individual instructors informally evaluate their own online or hybrid courses based on personal observations and student comments.

In face-to-face classrooms, a professor-evaluator participates, as Mahli refers to it, as “sitter and notetaker.” An evaluator who observes an onsite course bases the evaluation on in-class performance within a specified time period: instructor presence, student responses and engagement, material covered, how material is covered. Online, as Shirley Bennett and Donatella Barp say, “[T]he flexibility of the online medium raises questions and forces decisions that do not have to be faced when working face-to-face, such as challenges concerning what is observed online, how the observation process is managed and structured . . .” (568). Observers must decide what to click and in what order. How long should the observer have access? Does the observer read discussion board dialogue? Does the observer access the course in a student role or a faculty/course editor role? Can the observer access quizzes and other assessments? What if, for instance, the observer does not know some course components are designed not to be visible at certain times?

In OWCs, observations can unintentionally transform into a performance evaluation in which the faculty-evaluator is assessing the overall “presence” of the instructor; the online instructor cannot control the evaluation as he or she can in a finite class period. Therefore, the course in its entirety is subject to examination, and additional elements that are not factors onsite such as technology, course design, and content organization are assessed.
Issue: The Observer

So who will conduct the observation or evaluation of an OWC? Jonathan Golding and Philipp Kraemer claim:

Methodologically, there are several practical questions about faculty observation that are rarely addressed. First, who will actually observe? Perhaps it will be leaders of academic units (i.e., department chair, associate dean or dean). The problems with such a strategy are that administrators have likely not been fully engaged in the classroom for some time, and (like most college faculty) they probably have had little or no formal training in theories of teaching or pedagogical techniques.

Faculty might hesitate to admit the challenges of using technology to create a student-centered, accessible learning environment. A seasoned professor cannot merely transfer an onsite course onto a learning management system and assume success. Mixed with this tech anxiety, the observation/evaluation situation—especially when the evaluator lacks formal training in online teaching theory—can become fraught rhetorically, pedagogically, and politically. For contingent faculty in particular, whose jobs often depend on these evaluations, faculty, departments, and writing program administrators (WPAs) should develop more consistent, OWC-friendly procedures for looking at these courses—and instructors who teach them.

Collaborative Feedback

Teaching performance is a predominant factor in an administrator’s decision to renew a contingent faculty member. With the rise in online teaching, this becomes a key issue. Jill Langen points out that because of “the dramatic increase in the use of adjunct faculty in higher education,” faculty evaluation “and how these evaluation results are utilized” are critical: “Without a clear and consistent process available to measure performance, it becomes increasingly difficult for administrators to ensure that quality learning opportunities are available in the classroom” (185). Because evaluation letters become part of an instructor’s review file, the feedback must be delivered by a credible source; in the online teaching realm, this might include individuals who are not professors but instead instructional designers or educational technologists. For example, an all-TT-committee who reviews a three-year-renewable-lecturer file might raise issues if a letter of teaching evaluation comes from a non-faculty member—even though instructional designers often possess significant expertise. There is documentation and support to address these concerns. For one, CCCC’s A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction takes on this problem of evaluation and recommends several effective practices:
• **Effective Practice 7.11**: Online writing teachers should be evaluated/assessed by a peer or supervisor who has similar training and equal or superior abilities/experience in writing instruction generally and OWI particularly.

• **Effective Practice 7.13**: OWI teacher assessment should be engaged as rigorously as—and not more rigorously than—it would be in a similar traditional onsite course (Committee for Effective Practices).

We emphasize that interdisciplinary opportunities present themselves here in the relationship among writing teachers, WPAs, and instructional designers, whose practitioners are trained in designing systems and experiences for learning outcomes, but not always in subject-specific pedagogy. Although instructional designers possess expertise delivering educational materials to make learning more effective for students, these professionals (the majority of whom do not have faculty rank) are passed over and ranking faculty selected as online course evaluators.

**“Reading” an OWC**

Issues of who will conduct course evaluations, how evaluations will be conducted, when they will be conducted, how they will count—these bedevil higher education at many levels. These issues are exacerbated by the natural strain of the academic hierarchy. In the absence of concrete methodologies and approaches for course observations/evaluations, faculty can be suspicious if not fearful of observation processes. We propose a different approach to OWC evaluation/observation: “reading” an OWC. This approach could help ameliorate some issues of OWC course observations—and perhaps may be useful for general teaching observations, too.

**Reading an OWC: The Underlying Philosophy**

Composition scholar Peter Elbow developed philosophies and approaches about how teachers, and readers in general, might respond to writing. His *Writing with Power* and *Writing without Teachers* are composition and rhetoric classics. In the latter, Elbow makes the provocative claim that writers do not need advice or theories; instead they need a “movie of people’s minds while they read your words” (77). This approach to response is nuanced but not complex, and it has fascinating implications if we transfer it to classroom evaluations/observations.

Our fundamental idea is that course observers reframe their approach: They will conduct observations with the philosophy and practice that they are “reading” the observed class.

This changes the process, moving it away from one of evaluation or assessment to one of observation. Interestingly, this is perhaps more in the true spirit of assessment. Larry Braskamp and John Ory describe the etymological roots of “assess-
ment”: It is a process of “sitting beside,” with the evaluator “judging and providing feedback about the other’s performance” in “dialogue and discourse, with one person trying to understand the other’s perspective before giving value judgments” (13); they advocate a holistic, diverse-method approach, with the “judging” happening dialogically. In suggesting an Elbow-ish reading of the course, we are going one step further, removing most judgment while also disentangling reading the class from reading the instructor.

**Reading an OWC: How**

The “how” of reading an OWC requires a rewiring of our customs for course observation: We must resist our tendency (and the pressures, which are often not insignificant) to judge, rate, opine, but the process is not logistically daunting. First, the reader/observer should log in from the student role, so the observer sees the course the way students experience it. For these online observations, the instructor should lead the observer through the course, even by phone. After all, onsite, the instructor has control over what the observer sees: the same should apply online. In our observation experiences, instructors usually have provided us with access to most of the course to date. Again, consider this in relation to onsite observations, in which the observers see a snippet of instruction, usually only one class’s worth.

Participants’ relationship to time and place are different online, especially in asynchronous courses. This is again another aspect where the observer’s expertise is valuable. The observer has to think about the time students and instructor put into the work. How much time should someone invest into a class? The overall effort emphasizes a formative, not summative, process about teaching. It helps avoid reductive teaching observation rubrics.

**Reading an OWC: Who**

One of the most interesting aspects of the reading approach is that because the process is one of observation based on the narrative of what an observer sees, the observer’s relative expertise can be accounted for overtly. Observers can admit unfamiliarity, disclosing that through the process of the evaluation. The “who” of observation/evaluation processes is often not at all transparent, especially for contingent faculty. Is the “judge” the person conducting the observation? Does the observation report or form get passed on to a WPA, department head, or dean? Who ultimately decides if the observation is valid?

Reading a course also expands the concept that “peer” review is mutually beneficial. After all, as Swinglehurst et al. convey, peer observation has “benefits to be gained by both the observer and the observed” (383). This concept is frequently absent from course observations, which are often based on an “evaluator” who (as we mentioned), particularly in the case of OWCs, does not have proper expertise.
Reading an OWC: The Observation Product
Essentially, the product of the observation should be a brief narrative report or letter in which the observer describes what he or she has seen in the course. The observer could create a narrated video, but the process of writing an evaluation, we think, is a good one. In terms of mode, the letter is a narrative. Scott has written many such letters. Occasionally, he might conclude with some suggestions (especially when he was observing as the WPA), but he tried to take on a clear writing role: He was neither assessor nor judge. In colleague-to-colleague observations, that non-judgment role was even more accentuated.

Advantages to “Reading” a Course
The approach we describe has several potential advantages. It helps address the multi-level politics of the process of teaching observations. It casts an honest light on expertise: An observer’s expertise can be explicit, transparent, part of the process. Perhaps most importantly, particularly in the context we describe, it addresses a core question: Who really is the judge at the end of a teaching observation process? This may seem an obvious question, until one reflects on the fact that nowhere inherent in the class observation process is the idea that one teacher needs to rate another—unless compelled to do so. Teacher evaluations often ascend an administrative ladder. Unless a direct supervisor conducts the evaluation, a peer contingent instructor could complete the observation, but what weight does that letter then have? (Is the evaluator’s assessment considered expert?) Departments can focus so much on the observer’s rank that the online expertise becomes secondary. Additionally, the approach we suggest is more reflective than evaluative, in line with the Swinglehurst et al.’s “Peer-to-peer Reflection on Pedagogical Practice (PROPP).” We encourage WPAs to welcome a collaborative and introspective approach to teaching evaluations; however, as we acknowledged, that requires commitment to mentoring contingent faculty as well as the willingness and availability of tenure-line faculty to serve in this capacity.

It is worth remembering, as Tobin et al. point out, faculty and administrators, when confronted with evaluating online teaching, will like the ease of simple rubrics, unless convinced otherwise: “Universities often jump directly to locating (or creating) an evaluation rating form. Unfortunately, this is one of the last steps […] in designing an effective evaluation of online teaching” (24). However, because students fill out end-of-term course evaluations—essentially a rating system which uses responses to statistically measure instructors—then this rubric already exists. We reason the observation as narrative would supplement the course evaluation form so teaching can be assessed more holistically.
In terms of politics, observation/reads might allow for open talk by stakeholders about process and the purpose of evaluation. However, the reality—with limited and shrinking numbers of tenure-line faculty and an increasing number of contingent faculty to be observed—is that there is inadequate time for these important conversations. A traditional method of evaluation is known, comfortable, and readily accepted by administrators and deans. We encourage, despite departments’ changing dynamics (and budgetary situations), that these process and purpose dialogues are given priority so online contingent faculty are properly evaluated.

**Observation Opportunities beyond OWCs?**

As often happens with online instruction, rethinking course observations as a “movie-of-the-minds” approach may provide new ways to observe and understand teaching in general. For the WPA, what process is created to assess the quality of online faculty? (We use created since merely “adopting” an already existent in-class observation process that has worked for years will not effectively evaluate an online instructor’s strengths and limitations.) Programmatic, it may fall to the WPA to unify and standardize methods and approaches to evaluate online courses and online writing teachers. We are offering a method because the reality is that evaluating teaching often involves committing resources that many institutions do not have. As Tobin, Mandernach, and Taylor said, “[. . .] many institutions new to online education may have limited faculty development, technology, or support resources available for faculty teaching online” (50).

In her article about observing OWCs, Charles ends by repeating Cynthia Selfe’s challenge that compositionists need to be “paying attention,” in particular about assessing courses. This “paying attention” underlies Elbow’s suggestion to record the “movie” of what is seen in someone’s writing, and the same philosophy can be used when looking at someone’s OWCs. We encourage departments to welcome interdisciplinary teams of evaluators comprised of a faculty member with subject-matter expertise, an instructional designer with online course pedagogical skills, and a faculty member with a history of OWC teaching excellence. This itself will not flatten the academic hierarchy, but we hope that, by framing education observation as just that, observation, it will not exacerbate it either.

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