ABSTRACT

BETHANY ERIN VAN SCOOTER. “Whose Job is Writing Anyway?”: An Institutional Ethnography of Graduate Writing at NC State University. (Under the direction of Dr. Zachary Beare.)

Many graduate students encounter new writing tasks and unfamiliar rhetorical situations in graduate school. Often these writing situations involve what John Swales describes as “occluded genres,” meaning that their expectations and conventions are “out of sight” to novices entering the discourse. Faculty members are often at a loss for how to teach students these genres (or feel it is beyond the purview of their class), so they send students elsewhere—to graduate level writing centers or other departmental or university programming meant to provide writing support. Interested in these challenges, this capstone project investigated various sources of writing support offered to graduate students across the disciplines at NC State University.

This capstone presents findings from an institutional ethnography conducted at North Carolina State University designed to identify “institutional sites of writing” and to discover where graduate student writers at NC State are referred to for writing support. This research involved in-depth analyses of institutional websites, documents from various departmental websites, and program descriptions and curricular requirements.

The mapping of the network of writing support at NC State offered by this capstone project may help provide a foundation for future work interested in the effectiveness of (and ease of access to) writing support for graduate students across the disciplines. Further, The insights of this study could help inform resource and funding allocation for writing support resources and illuminate opportunities for collaboration and outreach across campus units to better support graduate student writers.