

Exchanging Normative Assimilation for Frictional Access:  
An Examination of the Rhetorical Circulation of Ableism in University

Documents and Spaces

by

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## ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education pride themselves on their commitments to access, inclusion, and care. However, when motivated by neoliberal goals of productivity, such initiatives may confuse inclusion with normative assimilation by attempting to align all individuals with an ableist status quo. In other words, neutral documents, discourses, and design practices may contribute to the rhetorical and material circulation of systemic ableism by encouraging compulsory alignment with able standards and norms. To examine how the systemic force of neoliberal ableism may move across higher educational spaces, this dissertation engages understandings of rhetoric as complexly circulating across trans-situational, everyday sites in universities. Further, I show that neoliberalism relies on the rhetorical circulation and normalization of ableist rhetorics across seemingly neutral university documents, discourses and design practices like those aimed to promote access, inclusion, and care. This dissertation thus follows the social justice call in technical and professional communication to interrogate participation in documentation, design, and discursive practices that may contribute to larger systems of oppression. Specifically, I apply a mixed-methods, qualitative approach of corpus linguistic analysis, semi-structured interviews grounded in user-experience design, and thematic, concept, and in vivo coding to examine and disrupt the circulation of ableist rhetoric across composition program mission statements, self-care documents, and digital classroom interfaces. Drawing from technical and professional communication, rhetoric and composition, disability studies, rhetorics of health and medicine, social justice, and disability justice scholarship, this dissertation explores theoretical frameworks for interrogating ableism's material-discursive implications and provides guidelines for

university stakeholders to engage in more equitable communications. Ultimately, I offer a theory of “cripistemological coalition” that calls for transdisciplinary, coalitional measures that position disability as integral to university inclusion, access, and care.

## DEDICATION

To Mom, Dad, and Chris: Thank you for your love and support throughout this process. I could not have done this without you.

To Grandma Sally and Pop-pop: Thank you for gifting me with your passions for books, writing, theatre, and family. These passions have shaped my life and sustained me during the most uncertain of times. Grandma, you were right—I'm going to be a professor!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Influence of Neoliberal Ableism on Higher Education**

Institutions of higher education pride themselves on their commitments to access, inclusion, and care. Reflecting such commitments, universities make significant efforts in applying inclusive discourse, documentation practices, and design strategies intended to value and support diverse bodyminds.<sup>1</sup> However, many universities' well-intended efforts fall short of actual inclusion, access, and care due to the rhetorical influence of neoliberalism. Specifically, neoliberal goals of "profit, control, and efficiency" (Giroux, 2002, p. 434) often confuse inclusion with normative assimilation by attempting to align disabled<sup>2</sup> individuals within normative, ableist structures, rather than including disabled individuals as they are. This confusion frequently leads to material-discursive practices that inspire conditional efforts and accommodations that retroactively "include" disabled individuals only after the overcoming or erasure of disability. In this way, neoliberal efforts of standardization may draw upon and reinforce ableist systems that contribute to disability's erasure in higher educational institutions. Recognizing how neoliberalism relies on the circulation, neutralization, and normalization of ableist rhetorics, this dissertation innovates theory and data-driven guidelines to help university stakeholders

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<sup>1</sup> This term originates in Margaret Price's (2014) "The Bodymind and the Possibilities of Pain" and demonstrates the connection between the body and mind, rather than understanding the two as distinct entities.

<sup>2</sup> As do other scholars like James L. Cherney (2019), I choose to use disability-first language (i.e., "disabled individuals") rather than person-first language (i.e., "individuals with disabilities") as a way to prioritize disability as a desirable aspect of one's lived experience. Person-first language risks reinforcing ableist assumptions that one is a person despite one's disability.

rhetorically to examine institutional documents, discourses, and design practices for the rhetorical influence of neoliberal ableism.

The influences of neoliberalism and ableism on higher educational institutions are vast and often hard to recognize as they are systemically interconnected. Specifically, neoliberalism denotes “a set of economic principles and cultural politics that positions the free market as a guide for all human action” in lieu of ethical frameworks. Aiming to “remove all barriers to the free market,” neoliberalism upholds “entrepreneurs and private enterprise” as determinants of the economy, rather than “the state or federal government” (Stenberg, 2015, pp. 4-5). To complement this economic model, neoliberalism also frames economic wellbeing as an individual matter of personal choice, rather than as a social or political consequence. It likewise equates individual rationality with the prioritization of “human capital” and likens social good with economic profit (p. 5). Furthermore, neoliberalism pursues “global economic expansion, privatization, and individual responsibility” (McGuire, 2017, p. 413) through seemingly deregulated “porous borders and flexible boundaries” (p. 413). In this way, neoliberalism may motivate discourses, design decisions, and documentation practices that guide and regulate individual action in ways that productively serve capitalist markets.

Aiming to align individuals with standards dictated by the market, neoliberalism often draws upon and reinforces dominant experiences as universal by using seemingly neutral language (Welch, 2011, p. 547). By standardizing experience and positioning “social issues as strictly private concerns,” neoliberalism “cancel[s] out or devalue[s] social, class-specific, and racial injustices of the existing social order by absorbing the democratic impulses and practices of civil society within narrow economic relations”

(Giroux, 2002, p. 429). In this way, standardized neoliberalism disregards unique, individualized embodiments and privileges the most dominant, or “unmarked...white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle-class bodies—that appear neutral” (Hamraie, 2013, n.p.). In other words, by reinforcing dominant standards as neutral, neoliberalism may contribute to the strengthening of institutional ableism and the erasure of disabled embodiments and ways of knowing.

Because of neoliberalism’s reliance on productive, ableist standards that further the goals of the market, this dissertation understands neoliberalism and ableism as inherently connected. To further illuminate this connection, I draw from Michel Foucault’s (1979) concept of biopolitics, or biopower. Rather than enforced upon individuals, biopower manages individual bodyminds through a series of “interconnected technologies” that monitor everyday habits and activities in accordance with preconceived, normative standards (Chaput, 2010, p. 4). Specifically founded in what Foucault refers to as the power of homogeneity, biopower regulates populations on the everyday level through technologies like documentation practices that locate, measure, and fix individuals against prescribed norms. That is, through this power of homogeneity, neoliberal biopolitics uphold standards of productive ability that may frame market goals as neutral or natural, measure all individuals against these ableist standards, and identify individual instances of aberrance as in need of remedial intervention.

Through their mutual reliance on productive standards of embodiment, engagement, and identity, neoliberalism and ableism are thus intertwined. As James L. Cherney (2019) explains, ableism involves “an orientation that considers physical deviation from a presupposed norm as a lack” and frames “physical deviance from that

norm as lacking something that all other nondisabled people share” (p. 8). Further, ableism encompasses “ways of knowing, valuing, and seeing the so-called ‘abnormal’ body as inferior” (p. 8). Ableism thus furthers neoliberal agendas by positioning bodyminds that deviate from able, productive standards as lacking, inferior, and consequently in need of medical, technological, or legal intervention. Functioning in mutually systemic ways that influence individuals’ everyday behaviors, identities, and beliefs, both neoliberalism and ableism can be difficult to detect and trace.

### **Embracing Rhetorical Circulation**

To examine the institutional impacts of neoliberal ableism, we must engage with rhetoric in a manner that accounts for how “economic neoliberalism moves from situation to situation, disregarding spatial boundaries between the political, economic, and cultural realms as well as their attendant modes of persuasion, wearing away at the rhetorical linkages between appropriate discursive choices and agentive power” (Chaput, 2010, p. 3). To understand systemic forces like neoliberalism, Catherine Chaput (2010) challenges rhetoricians to exchange situational understandings of rhetoric, or understandings of rhetoric as confined to a particular context (Bitzer, 1992) for ecological understandings of rhetoric as involving a circulation across a range of spaces. Specifically, rhetorical circulation examines how “rhetoric circulates through our everyday, situated activities and does not exist in any one place: it is always passing through, but it is never located” (p. 20). Rejecting an understanding rhetoric as confined to a specific situation, the concept of rhetoric as circulation understands rhetorical influences like neoliberalism as trans-situational, or as moving across diverse, networked contexts and influencing the everyday realities of individuals who engage across those spaces.

This circulatory understanding of rhetoric is similarly important in examining the systemic influence of ableism. As Cherney (2019) explains, ableism denotes “a framework of interpretation,” incorporating a range of “linguistic codes and rhetorical assumptions that govern interpretation” of diverse sociopolitical situations (p. 11). Like neoliberalism, ableism influences everyday behaviors by encouraging alignment with standardized ways of being and knowing and influencing the interpretive and rhetorical frameworks from which individuals draw to construct knowledge regarding themselves and their surrounding world. Furthermore, ableist rhetoric influences embodied, sociopolitical engagements and is circulated and reified by such embodied engagements. As Dolmage (2017) explains, all rhetorical forms involve “the circulation of discourse through the body” (p. 9). Specifically, he asserts that when interrogating the influence of rhetoric on institutions, we must consider “the bodies within them, the bodies they selectively exclude, and the bodies that actively intervene to reshape them” (p. 9). Because neoliberal ableist rhetoric functions on the everyday level, it is essential that university stakeholders examine its discursive and material influence on institutional policies, practices, and the bodyminds that participate in them.

As ableism is a systemic force inherently connected to neoliberalism and circulated across higher educational settings through diverse documentation practices, discourses, and design strategies, tracing its circulation across higher educational spaces requires that we engage with trans-disciplinary scholarship. This dissertation is thus situated at the intersections of disability studies (DS), ableism studies, technical and professional communication (TPC), rhetorics of health and medicine (RHM), social justice, and disability justice. Specifically, this dissertation draws from these scholarly

areas to demonstrate the embodied, yet relationally rhetorical nature of disability inclusion, access, and care as influenced by diverse discourses, design strategies, and documentation practices in higher education.

As DS articulates, disability and ability are both rhetorical phenomena in that they are influenced by and experienced through the highly complex interplay of individual, material embodiments, sociopolitical contexts, and discourses (Dolmage, 2017, p. 46). That is, the field understands disability as both a personally embodied condition and a relational phenomenon between a body and space (Garland-Thomson, 2011, pp. 598-600). Specifically, DS argues that certain embodiments are normalized and naturalized through the ongoing construction of environments designed for them, while others are framed as deviant when they do not fit into existing structures. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997) refers to these individuals as the “normate,” or “those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them” (p. 8). As DS posits, individuals are not in themselves disabled, but are in fact “impaired by social and architectural barriers” (Kafer, 2013, p. 7). In other words, when existing structures and practices deny certain bodyminds full capacity for access and participation by design, those embodiments are frequently deemed *disabled* within those contexts.

This dissertation understands the concept of the normate as integral to neoliberal logics because it establishes a normative baseline of ability with which others are expected to align. It likewise promotes the identification, disclosure, and remediation of disability, or deviance, through the application of comparative, normative standards. Accommodations intended to provide access and inclusion thus often facilitate individual



access to, and inclusion in, ableist institutional spaces. Dolmage (2017) refers to such accommodations as “retrofits,” or acts of retroactively fitting individuals into existing systems through the erasure or overcoming of disability (p. 70). Positioning disability as a personal problem in need of resolution, the retrofit yields conditional access which requires disabled individuals to adjust to the normative system rather than transforming the system to include those with disabilities at the forefront of design.

In this dissertation, I couple attention to DS with TPC because I recognize that the documents, discourses, and design strategies with which university stakeholders engage directly validate certain bodyminds as normate across higher educational spaces. While many university professionals might not identify as technical and professional communicators (TPCers), the field can help diverse university stakeholders understand the implications that normative, standardized discourse, design, and documentation can have on the lives of disabled students, faculty, and staff across higher education institutions. As a field, TPC examines the discursive-material implications of documentation and design for disabled individuals across institutional contexts (Palmeri, 2006; Walters, 2011; Gutsell & Hulglin, 2013; Melonçon, 2013a; Colton & Walton, 2015; Browning & Cagle, 2017). Such scholarship has found that when documentation and design practices assume universally able bodyminds, they may contribute to the marginalization and erasure of disability across institutional contexts.

I thus turn to a combination of DS and TPC in this dissertation to examine the implications of the documentation, design, and discursive practices modeled across trans-situational spaces of higher education. However, recognizing ableism as a systemic problem rather than an individualized phenomenon, this dissertation likewise

incorporates ableism studies, social justice, and disability justice theories. Ableism studies complements DS by helping us think through the systemic way in which ableism may move through and influence everyday spaces, bodyminds, and assumptions across institutions. It likewise helps us to recognize access as a matter of social justice, as access directly impacts one's capacity to engage equitably as a citizen across diverse institutional spaces (Siebers, 2011).

In this way, this dissertation follows TPC's disciplinary engagement with social justice, or its "turn toward a collective disciplinary redressing of social injustice sponsored by rhetorics and practices that infringe upon, neglect, withhold, and/or abolish human, non-human animal, and environmental rights" (Haas & Eble, 2018, p. 5). In other words, TPC engagement with social justice asks composers of institutional documents and designers of institutional space to critically examine how their work may contribute to experiences of privilege or oppression by diverse groups of individuals. Such work is vital to TPC, as documentation, discourse, and design always reflects "certain perspectives, viewpoints, and epistemologies" (Jones, 2016, p. 345). Consequently, those who compose such documents "must be aware of the ways that the texts and technologies that they create and critique reinforce certain ideologies and question how communication shaped by certain ideologies affect individuals" (p. 345). In other words, social justice work encourages us to critically examine how our use of discourse, design, and documentation practices may uphold ideological structures that contribute to the oppression and marginalization of populations like disabled individuals.

As previous TPC scholarship has done (Wheeler, 2018; Bennett, 2022b; Bennett & Hannah, 2022), I turn to disability justice specifically to examine the social justice

implications of systemic influences circulated by higher educational discourses, documents, and design decisions. Disability justice reflects a movement and theoretical body of work based on efforts of disabled people of color; further, it recognizes disability as an intersectional phenomenon impacted by diverse aspects of identity like race, gender, sexuality, and class. Likewise, disability justice understands ableism as systemic and as thus connected to other systems of oppression like racism, sexism, and classism. At its core, disability justice therefore rejects neoliberal capitalist ableism by centering its principles around disabled ways of being and knowing (Mingus, 2011; Berne et al., 2018; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). By applying disability justice, this dissertation aims to trace and challenge ableism's systemic circulation across spaces of higher education and to offer institutional stakeholders with alternative frameworks for engaging documentation, discourse, and design practices that prioritize the embodied needs, experiences, and knowledges of disabled individuals.

### **Interrogating Ableist Rhetoric in Inclusion, Care and Access**

Drawing from a range of scholarly disciplines, this dissertation examines the interrelated functioning of neoliberal and ableist rhetorics across diverse sites in higher education to identify, understand, and evaluate their systemic influence on disabled individuals. Specifically, I examine the “operation of ableism” (Cherney, 2019, p. 15) by interrogating trans-situational sites of higher education for their reliance on standardizing discourses, commonplaces, and assumptions that may contribute to neoliberal ableism's circulation. While other scholarship has examined ableist influences on higher education (Price, 2011; Dolmage, 2017; Mitchell & Snyder, 2015; Bennett 2022a; Bennett, 2022b), this dissertation analyzes how neoliberal rhetoric may infiltrate and circulate through

seemingly neutral documents and spaces constructed to support the daily functioning of students and faculty. As other scholars have noted, neoliberalism frequently relies on a series of buzzwords, or moral concepts, to further its normalizing goals. Examining the concepts of “inclusion” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015), “access” (Dolmage, 2017) and “care” (Michaeli, 2017), this dissertation specifically evaluates how these terms may be rhetorically repurposed as neoliberal, ableist technologies when they mistake inclusion for normative assimilation with the existing status quo.

An examination of everyday spaces in higher education can offer vital insight into the rhetorical circulation of neoliberal ableism. This dissertation thus evaluates the influence of ableism and the rhetorical assumptions on which it relies across diverse sites in higher education. Motivating my research are the following questions:

1. How might we apply notions of rhetorical circulation to trace the influence of ableist rhetoric across trans-situational sites in higher education?
2. How does ableist rhetoric influence the discourse used in institutional documents and spaces related to inclusion, access, and care?
3. How does ableist discourse foster material consequences for students and faculty?
4. How might more theoretically robust rhetorical practices support institutional goals of disability access, inclusion, and care?

Taking up Chaput’s (2010) concept of rhetorical circulation, I examine the functioning of neoliberal ableist rhetoric across three specific sites intended to support the everyday care, inclusion, and access of individuals in the university: mission statement documents, digital classroom interfaces, and self-care initiatives. To pursue this examination, I apply

what Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones (2019) refer to as the 4R's. These involve recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing our engagement with discourses, documentation practices, and design strategies that contribute to the oppression and marginalization of certain populations. Specifically, each of my site-specific chapters applies the 4R's through methods that help institutional stakeholders to recognize ableism's influence across a particular site; each then offers a discussion that reveals the implications of ableism's circulation in that site; ultimately, each provides data-driven strategies that reject and replace practices that contribute to ableism's circulation across higher education. I hope that by understanding how neoliberal ableism functions discursively and materially in the everyday lives of students, and faculty, diverse university stakeholders may draw from the provided rhetorical tools to facilitate more equitable and socially just understandings of access, care and inclusion.

### **Applying a Mētīc Organizational Strategy**

I composed this dissertation with consideration for a mētīc epistemology, or a way of knowing which posits that interdependent bodies co-construct knowledge in dynamic and relational ways. A mētīc epistemology resists linear, normative progress by encouraging “adaptation,” “critique,” “uniqueness,” and “recursivity.” It involves embodied strategies, or “everyday arts” attuned to transforming specific rhetorical situations (Dolmage, 2014, p. 5; p. 289). Mētīc is founded in the concept of rhetoric as an embodied act; it thus understands knowledge construction to be both influenced and constrained by one's embodied experiences and the social norms through which such experiences are interpreted. Signaling an “available means of persuasion” (p. 5), mētīc promotes the transformation of social structures by encouraging alternative forms of

engagement. Specifically, *mētis* resists the constraints of normative engagement by encouraging alternative, “sideways” movement that promotes critique of normative constructions. Through *mētis*, university stakeholders can recognize the constructed nature of ableist norms and “repurpose tensions about bodily values, recognizing the stigmatization and effacement of bodily difference, yet also mobilizing new stories and new expressive possibilities” (p. 197). By aligning this dissertation with a *mētis* epistemology, I demonstrate how critical attention to ableism’s institutional circulation may allow us to foster more equitable and socially just understandings of access, inclusion, and care.

In the spirit of a *mētis* epistemology, I organize my dissertation to promote readers’ “sideways” movement; each chapter functions both independently and collectively to examine the circulation of ableist rhetoric in higher education. As other DS scholarship has done (Price, 2011; Dolmage, 2017), my dissertation resists linear structures and engages in *mētis* movement in its analysis of each site. While this may create a sense of repetition across chapters, this allows for more accessible user engagement with my document and encourages readers to navigate the dissertation as they desire, rather than following an enforced model of linearity.

### **Summary of Inclusive Chapters**

In Chapter 2, I offer a review of literature from relevant transdisciplinary scholarship that informs subsequent, site-specific chapters. I begin with a discussion of neoliberal biopolitics to provide an in-depth explanation regarding the influence of biopolitical standards on the circulation of ableist rhetoric across institutional spaces. I then engage DS to demonstrate how this field can offer a theoretical lens for examining

and challenging neoliberal ableism. Following these efforts, I couple DS with neoliberal biopolitics to demonstrate how the former relies on and reinforces what the latter refers to as compulsory able-bodiedness, or the compulsive pursuit of able ideals (McRuer, 2006). I then offer an overview of ableism studies and demonstrate how it complements the work of DS by framing ableism as a systemic force of oppression (Cherney, 2019). To further facilitate the examination of neoliberal ableism's systemic influence, I then advocate for a shift from situational understandings of rhetoric (Bitzer, 1992) to understandings of rhetoric as circulation (Chaput, 2010), as this form of rhetoric helps us conceptualize the systemic impacts that neoliberalism and ableism may have on the everyday realities of institutional stakeholders. I specifically indicate how these phenomena can circulate across institutional spaces through documents, discourses, and design strategies by drawing from TPC, social justice, and disability justice theories. I conclude this chapter by offering an overview of the theoretical frames informing each of my site-specific chapters.

In Chapter 3, I summarize the methodologies informing this dissertation and detail the methods I apply in analyzing each site. I begin by contextualizing my research in my guiding research questions. I then identify and explain the research methodology motivating this project. Understanding disability as both a sociopolitical and personal phenomenon heavily influenced by discursive structures, my methodology is grounded in post-structuralism, which understands individual experience as heavily influenced by discourse (Foucault, 1979; Weedon, 1987), cripistemology, which recognizes disability as an embodied experience and source of sociopolitical knowledge (Johnson & McRuer, 2014), and social justice theory (Walton, Moore & Jones, 2019), which helps us to

interrogate the connection between personally embodied experiences and sociopolitical discourse. I then offer an overview of my site-specific methods, which include corpus linguistic analysis (Baker, 2007), thematic coding, concept coding, in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016), and semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013). These methods are useful in that they allow me to examine both the discursive and embodied impacts of ableism's circulation across higher education.

In Chapter 4, I draw from TPC, DS, composition, and disability justice theories to examine how neoliberal ableist rhetoric may influence articulations of inclusion across composition department mission statements. As previous scholars have recognized, mission statements denote important sites of analysis as they communicate a department or institution's identity and regulate behavioral norms within that space (Swales & Rogers, 1995; Schoen, 2019). Composition mission statements thus communicate the identities and behaviors that are welcome and anticipated by departmental stakeholders. Interested in better understanding how the standard, neutral language often found across mission statements may contribute to ableism's circulation, I examine the mission statements of 32 Research-1 university composition programs using WordSmith tools, a digital corpus analysis program (Baker, 2007). I first examine the frequency of particular words in the mission statement corpus to identify overlying trends in language use. I then examine the collocates (relationships between words) and concordances (words in context) of the terms "faculty," "students/student," "we," "they," "our," "their," "writing," "voices," "see," and "vision." Through this analysis, I identify problematic linguistic trends that may contribute to ableism's circulation and offer data-driven guidelines and sample revisions to help composers of mission statements to reject and



replace seemingly neutral discursive constructions that may contribute to ableism's circulation.

In Chapter 5, I draw from rhetorics of health and medicine (RHM), TPC, and disability justice theories to analyze how neoliberal ableist rhetoric may influence articulations of care across universities by analyzing the discourse circulated on the public-facing websites of three universities' care-based initiatives. Recognizing how many universities engage care-based discourse that encourage "self-monitor[ing]" and "self-govern[ance]" (Weinberg, 2021, p. 8) in accordance with neoliberal standards, this chapter examines how the underlying assumptions found in university care-based documents may promote ableist understandings of wellness. Interested in examining how assumptions related to wellness may contribute to ableism's circulation across universities, I use concept coding (Saldaña, 2016) to identify and analyze the underlying assumptions reflected by these documents in relation to wellness. Specifically, I constructed concept codes to examine whether these documents reflected assumptions that might strengthen or disrupt ableism's circulation. These concepts included "well as able," "well as rational," "well as productive," "well as independent," "well as different," "well as environmental," "well as collective," and "well as vulnerable." I first coded individual articulations of these assumptions. Then, interested in how these assumptions may reinforce or challenge each other across care-based documents, I examined interactions between them. I ultimately offer a series of data-driven guiding questions informed by disability justice to help composers of mission statements reject and replace problematic assumptions of wellness that may contribute to ableism's circulation across higher educational institutions.

In Chapter 6, I move beyond discourse analysis by engaging user-experience methods to better understand students' embodied experiences with digital classroom interfaces. Digital spaces are historically wrought with tension in relation to access; while many presume digital learning spaces to be inherently more accessible than in-person learning environments, TPC scholars have recognized the capacities of such spaces to reassert normative assumptions that may marginalize disabled individuals (Moeller & Jung, 2014; Oswal & Melonçon, 2017; Nielsen, 2018). This chapter thus explores the simultaneous accessible and normalizing potential reflected by digital classroom interfaces. Moving beyond discourse analysis to engage with embodied knowledge and experience in relation to design, this chapter draws from user-experience (UX) and universal design (UD) principles to gain insight into students' embodied experiences in digital classes and to model collaborative methods that can position students as co-designers of these digital learning spaces.

Specifically, I apply UX and UD principles to a series of three semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013) with three graduate students enrolled in a fully online MA program. Through these student interviews, I examine the capacity of digital classroom spaces to foster what Dolmage (2017) refers to as deep accessibility, or accessibility that promotes the greatest level of engagement possible. To evaluate this capacity, I used thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) to analyze student interviews based on the characteristics of deep accessibility, which include movement, sense, architecture, communication, and agency. As I was also interested in identifying trends related to students' discussions of disability, time, productivity, and embodiment, I coded for these phenomena as well. After completing this coding, however, I recognized that these codes

did not account for the range of responses reflected by students across these individual thematic discussions. I then applied a series of subcodes using in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016), which involves coding material based on participants' specific discussions and language. Through this coding, I identify a series of thematic concerns found across student discussions and offer data-driven guidelines influenced by disability justice to help designers of digital classroom spaces move beyond engagement with potentially ableist design strategies. This chapter holistically offers collaborative, user-experience methods for working with students to recognize and reveal how digital classroom interfaces may facilitate or limit accessible engagement and to reject and replace such practices with more equitable considerations grounded in student experiences.

Ultimately, Chapter 7 offers implications based on the dissertation's findings. While each chapter demonstrates the value in individualized and departmental efforts in tracing ableism's institutional circulation, this chapter draws from social justice (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019) and disability justice scholarship (Berne et al., 2018) to demonstrate the need for larger coalitional efforts that resist ableism's rhetorical circulation. I specifically call for the application of what I refer to as cripistemological coalition to evaluate a range of university documents, discourse, and design practices. Based in Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) and Karma Chávez's (2013) concepts of coalition and Johnson and McRuer's (2014) concept of cripistemology, this chapter encourages the formation and use of interdepartmental coalitions in recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing neoliberal ableism across trans-situational sites of higher education. In this chapter, I detail the design and functionality of these cripistemological coalitions and explain how they would facilitate interdepartmental

application of the 4R's (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019) to interrogate ableism's rhetorical circulation across university spaces.

## **Chapter 2 Preview**

In the next section, I provide an overview of the literature informing this project. The literature I have included is transdisciplinary in nature to help me trace how ableist rhetoric may circulate across diverse institutional spaces and impact the knowledge, relationships, and identities of the individuals who engage in such spaces. The overview of literature puts in conversation the fields of rhetoric, neoliberal biopolitics, DS, TPC, RHM, social justice, and disability justice scholarship to demonstrate the complexity of ableism's circulation and the need for trans-disciplinary efforts to trace and disrupt its institutional movement.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction to Literature Review**

This literature review integrates various strands of transdisciplinary theory to illustrate how neoliberal ableist rhetoric may circulate across higher education institutions through language. I begin with a discussion of biopolitics and how its everyday influence may promote compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006) or a need for individuals to perform ability to secure public recognition and rights. I then demonstrate how this promotes conditional forms of inclusion, with individuals granted rights and recognition upon the erasure of their disability, rather than as they are. These conditional inclusion efforts fuel a neoliberal market, with institutions profiting from products and resources intended to help individuals overcome disability. I argue that the field of disability studies (DS) thus offers a vital lens through which to examine the influence of neoliberalism, as neoliberalism is sustained by the circulation of ableist rhetoric. To study how neoliberal ableist rhetoric functions, I recommend that readers shift from a situational understanding of rhetoric to an understanding of rhetoric as circulatory. I then introduce my reasoning for examining ableism's circulation across higher education institutions. I ultimately introduce key, transdisciplinary concepts grounded in DS, technical and professional communication (TPC), and social justice theories that guide my later analysis of specific, trans-situational university sites.

As discussed in Chapter One, although this literature review introduces the transdisciplinary body of scholarship informing my dissertation, each subsequent chapter will draw on this literature further and more specifically in the service of that chapter's

aims. I also use this transdisciplinary scholarship to provide readers with theoretical frameworks attuned to the unique tensions presented by each site in subsequent chapters. I then use this literature to inform data-driven, practical guidelines through which readers may re-envision the material and discursive construction of such sites to allow for understandings of inclusion that recognize disability's relationality and complex nuance. By understanding how neoliberal ableism functions discursively and materially, professionals across higher educational institutions may interrogate neutral spaces for ableist influences and shift towards discourse, design, and documentation practices that can more effectively foster the inclusion of all.

### **A Connection Between Ableism and Biopolitics**

To understand how neoliberal rhetoric circulates at the everyday level, we must first understand the influence of biopolitics on neoliberal functioning. Michel Foucault (1979) offers an in-depth introduction to biopolitics. Biopolitics, originating in the eighteenth century, is enacted through a system of discipline and punishment that manages individual bodies by evaluating and ranking them against prescribed norms. As Foucault relays, this system of discipline and punishment “makes” individuals by functioning “as a calculated, but permanent economy” that is “permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent” and, most importantly, “invisible” (p. 214). Influencing individual values, beliefs, habits, and actions, biopolitical power functions “like a faceless gaze that transform[s] the whole social body into a field of perception” (pp. 134-214) as it circulates throughout society without an identifiable point of origin.

This disciplinary power functions at the everyday level through what Foucault (1979) refers to as normalizing judgment, which measures individuals against prescribed,

normative standards. As Foucault postulates, normative deviation is identified through processes of “examination,” or structured systems of evaluation that “qualify,” “classify,” and “punish” individuals based on their capacity to fulfill prescribed expectations (p. 184). Such examination processes transform each individual into “a case,” through which various, evaluative documents are used to “describ[e], judg[e], measur[e], [and] compar[e them] with others” so that they may be ultimately “trained...corrected, classified, normalized, [or] excluded” (p. 191). Documentation practices so position “individuals in a field of surveillance” governed by “a network of writing” (p. 189). This network of writing evaluates individuals in relation to their adherence to prescribed norms and identifies and measures instances of aberrance with the purpose of fixing them.

In this way, biopolitics surveils individuals by ranking them according to “capacities” and incapacities (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, biopolitics invokes what Judith Butler (2004) refers to as a “compulsory visibility,” as individuals must be “seen” or recognized according to prescribed norms of citizenship to gain access to certain rights (p. 132). As Butler explains, “One must be subjected to a regulatory apparatus...in order to get to the point where something like an exercise in freedom becomes possible” (p. 88). In other words, securing “autonom[y]” (p. 100) and “self-determination” (p. 7) requires recognition and acceptance by rights-granting institutions, which mandate that individuals align with standardized norms. Biopolitics so manage individual lives by guiding their “actions, decisions, and choices” across a multiplicity of institutions (Foucault, 1979, p. 241). In this way, neoliberal biopolitics function through “the seizure of the very materiality of life at the level of the individual” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 8) and by framing certain habits and behaviors as “natural,”

“normative,” and able and others as abnormal or disabled. That is, by encouraging individuals to align with prescribed norms, biopolitical forces determine what is considered socially normal or natural.

### **Disability Studies as a Lens to Challenge Ableism**

As neoliberal biopolitics presume problematic able norms, the field of DS offers a generative lens through which we may critically examine normative discourse and design practices. Neoliberalism relies on what those in DS refer to as a medical model of disability, which frames disability as a problem to be solved by “normalizing or eliminating the pathological individual” through a combination of personal efforts and medical and technological intervention (Kafer, 2013, pp. 4-5). However, DS encourages us to understand disability as both an embodied, personal experience and as heavily influenced by social and political discourse. DS thus recognizes disability as offering generative insight in relation to the vulnerable, interdependent, and dynamically unpredictable nature of the human condition and the inequitable reality of sociopolitical systems that frame such human qualities as unnaturally aberrant (Dolmage, 2017).

To fully appreciate disability’s generative capacity, however, one must understand the rhetorical nature of disability as based not only in individually embodied experiences but also in the relationship between embodiments and their surrounding contexts. The very definitions of disability and ability are rhetorically relational, as each relies on its binary opposition from the other. Specifically, to be “able” is defined as being “free from physical disability” (McRuer, 2006, p. 9). Furthermore, while disability has continuously been positioned as something that one “has,” those in DS urge us to reframe disability as a “verb and a doing” (Puar, 2017, p. 73) that occurs dynamically



between individuals and their surrounding contexts. Disability and ability are thus rhetorically constructed and experienced through a complex interplay of individuals, material embodiments, contexts, and discourse, or the sociopolitical understandings that inform language (Dolmage, 2017, p. 46).

DS therefore helps us to recognize that experiences of ability and disability are not simply individual, but also are complexly and rhetorically relational. Specifically referring to ability and disability as acts of “fitting” or “misfitting,” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2011) relays,

A fit occurs when a harmonious, proper interaction occurs between a particularly shaped and functioning body and an environment that sustains that body. A misfit occurs when the environment does not sustain the shape and function of the body that enters it. (p. 594)

This concept of misfitting recognizes disability as a matter of “fit” between a body and a space that either is or is not designed with that body in mind. An understanding of disability as an act of misfitting implicates designers of institutional spaces in individual experiences of disability, as it understands disability as occurring not because of any inherent lack in an individual, but instead due to an environment’s failure to support or sustain that individual’s embodied needs.

Further, DS elucidates how value-neutral discourse and design cannot exist, as “there is no neutral position or ‘view from nowhere’ untouched by materiality, context, and identity” (Hamraie, 2013, n.p.). All design reflects certain values based on whom it does and does not consider. Aimi Hamraie (2013) specifically demonstrates that spaces claiming neutrality are constructed for socially dominant identities, or white, male, able-

bodied, middle class, cisgendered, heterosexual individuals. Garland-Thomson (1997) refers to such individuals as the normate: those who seamlessly fit into social and political spaces because those spaces have been designed with them in mind (p. 8). In other words, the normate body is not inherently more normal or natural than others; it merely exists in a world whose discourse and design anticipates and values it. DS thus articulates disability as generatively revealing the ableist nature of neutral spaces that fail to sustain the needs of disabled bodyminds (Siebers, 2011).

Centered around the needs and experiences of normate bodies, seemingly neutral discourse and design may deny equitable access and citizenship to disabled individuals. As Tanya Titchkosky (2011) explains, access “is a way to orient to, and even come to wonder about, who, what, where, and when we find ourselves to be in social space” (p. 4) and thus “is tied to the social organization of participation, even to belonging” by determining “socio-political relations between people in social space” (p. 4). In other words, access determines who or what belongs in an institutional space by defining how one may participate in that institution. As Tobin Siebers (2011) explains, normative concepts of citizenship are highly ableist as they are predicated on one’s capacities for independence, “rational thinking, healthiness, or technical skills” (p. 180). Simply put, to be granted the “rights and protections” associated with citizenship, individuals must align with ableist understandings of what a citizen should be. Under neoliberalism, disability inclusion may thus be confused with normative assimilation, or efforts to align disabled individuals with able norms of citizenship that fail to include them as they are.

This conditional inclusion promotes within individuals what Robert McRuer (2006) refers to as compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, in which

individuals feel obligated to align with standards of ability to be recognized as citizens of certain institutional spaces. Similar to Butler's (2004) concept of compulsory heterosexuality, compulsory ability understands ability as an act of performance, as it becomes something that one "does" "with and for another, even if the other is only imaginary" (p. 1). Like gender, one performs ability due to pressures to be recognized as able within public spaces. Further, as ability is based in arbitrary ideals, it constitutes a compulsive and imaginary performance in that what is socially accepted as "able" does not actually exist; in fact, all individuals will likely experience disability, or moments of disability, throughout their lives since vulnerability is integral to the human condition. In this way, able-bodiedness constitutes a compulsive performance, with individuals pursuing an ability they will never attain (McRuer, 2006, p. 30).

Through compulsory able-bodiedness, neoliberal biopolitics reinforce "an expanding, yet tightly parametered array of acceptable [standardized] body types" as representative of personal health (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, pp. 18-19). Positioning disability as a personal deficiency requiring remediation through external sources like technology, companies profit through these understandings of health by creating a market based on identifying and resolving disability (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015; McGuire, 2017). Anne McGuire (2017) classifies this phenomenon as the neoliberal deregulation of disorder. Like other forms of neoliberal deregulation, the deregulation of disorder appears to promote individual agency through flexibility; however, it in fact promotes increased capacities for holding individuals to prescribed standards. McGuire specifically associates this shift with the transformation of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychological Disorders-5 (DSM-5)* in 1980 from a categorical model of individuals

being diagnosed as either able or disabled to a spectral model, which assumes abnormality in all individuals by measuring and locating them against prescribed norms. A spectrum model assumes disability not as a matter of presence or absence, but as a matter of degree; it frames all individuals as disabled and measures the extent to which disability may impact a person. While this model challenges able/disabled binaries, it also provides a more direct means of surveilling individuals by determining a person's level of ability and the social and material resources needed for them to meet expected norms.

The spectrum model of disability thus creates a market for the private sector to profit from the “management of human life” and the calculation of “human value” and “human waste” (McGuire, 2017, p. 419). Under this model, the ideal citizen, or “good spectrum subject,” as McGuire (2017) refers to them, is “one who possesses the capacity, flexibility, and capital” to continuously pursue alignment with dominant norms in the name of “compulsory normativity” (p. 418). In other words, the neoliberal market profits from this spectral understanding of disability by framing the body as something that can and should continuously be improved through individual, medical and technological interventions (Wendell, 1996, pp. 86-93). Neoliberal biopolitics so function according to a system of exclusion and inclusion; they exclude as deviant those who do not fit into prescribed norms and profit from “inclusive” efforts aimed at curing such individuals (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 41). Individualizing disability in this way, neoliberal biopolitics obscure the influence of “toxic environments, workplaces, or oppressive living arrangements” on individual experiences of disability (p. 40). As McRuer (2006) notes, “Compulsory able-bodiedness functions by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice” (p. 8). Compulsory ideas of able-

bodiedness serve to position disability as a personal problem and to obscure the environmental, social, and political forces that violently contribute to its exclusion.

### **Pairing Disability Studies with Rhetorical Analysis**

Institutional spaces may thus circulate ableist rhetoric not only by reflecting designs that support particular bodyminds over others, but also by contributing to the active erasure of the social, political, and historical experiences of disabled bodyminds. As Nirmal Puwar (2004) explains, although many organizations view themselves as “neutral, meritocratic, and objective” by “disavow[ing]” embodiment and focusing on standard, universal concerns, this makes it difficult for individuals to disclose uniquely embodied experiences, needs, and challenges that fall outside such norms. Furthermore, in many institutional spaces, “adherence to...norms and values...is almost a condition of entry” (p. 150). Specifically, institutional spaces often frame the boundaries of normative behavior around that which promotes productivity in that space. This demonstrates that institutions may circulate ableist rhetoric through the behavioral norms they anticipate. Further, as Jennifer Edwell (2018) notes, the “built environment” may influence individual and social experience by “shaping knowledge” and “prompting actions” (p. 159). In other words, the design of institutional space and the documents organizing that design impact how individuals engage in that space, the relations they form in that space, and the knowledge they acquire through such engagements. As John Ackerman (2003) explicates,

Site and space operate within audience, exigency, and constraint--or they are at least accepted as possible ‘actants’--within a system of signs, to borrow a

disembodied but altogether material notion of the author or agent at work within a semiotic field or systematic activity. (p. 96)

Simply stated, institutional spaces and individual engagement in such spaces are rhetorical in that they are guided by “audiences,” “exigencies,” and contextual constraints.

The design of institutional spaces and individual experiences in them are thus complexly influenced by larger sociopolitical systems and discourses. As Ackerman (2003) writes,

social space is eminently the concern of rhetoricians because our analyses can reveal the tools and discourses that are used to construct locations where people work and play. Rhetorical agency--in social space--depends on the strategic application of a range of representational devices, whether the goal is to continue a given spatial tradition or to sponsor a counter-discourse via a counter-site. A rhetoric of everyday life will address social space because those spaces are the result of someone’s design and rendering. (p. 86)

In other words, spatial design rhetorically influences individual lives by guiding and constraining their everyday actions, identities, and beliefs. Therefore, by rhetorically analyzing what, and more importantly, who, is excluded from institutional documentation, discourse, and design practices and the bodyminds, beliefs, and behaviors they normalize, we may promote more inclusive constructions that facilitate access for as many bodyminds as possible.

In this way, rhetorical analysis is useful in examining institutional space because it provides us the tools with which to examine how institutional design decisions

complexly engage with and influence the interactions, experiences, and knowledge-making processes of diverse bodyminds. Likewise, it can help us better understand how institutional norms may contribute to ableist assumptions. In advocating for the value of rhetorical analysis in the examination of ableist discourse, I draw from Dolmage's (2018) definition of rhetoric as involving "the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication" (p. 2). Specifically, rhetoric allows us to determine how institutional spaces and the texts and design strategies that organize them may influence individual "beliefs, values, and even bodies" (p. 2). Rhetorical analysis thus involves an examination of how language shapes "particular forms of engagement" (p. 2) that validate, reify, and circulate certain sociopolitical agendas (p. 2). Consequently, rhetorical analysis allows us to better understand how institutional spaces and the documents and discourse that inform them may act as neoliberal normalizing technologies.

Recognizing the generative way in which rhetorical analysis and DS may reveal underlying ableism in seemingly neutral design, this dissertation begins by following Dolmage's call for the scholarly integration of DS and rhetorical studies. As Dolmage (2018) writes:

Disability studies demands that rhetoricians pay close attention to embodied difference; in return, rhetorical approaches give disability studies practitioners means of understanding the debates that in part shape these bodies. Rhetoric needs disability studies as a reminder to pay critical and careful attention to the body. Disability studies needs rhetoric to better understand and negotiate the ways that discourse represents and impacts the experience of disability. (p. 2)

In other words, rhetoricians should consider DS to better understand the complex way in which institutional space may rhetorically influence individual bodies; in turn, DS scholars should consider rhetoric to analyze how everyday systems may influence the behaviors, knowledge construction, and embodied experiences of disabled individuals. This dissertation thus integrates DS and rhetoric to trace neoliberal ableism across discourses, documentation practices, and design strategies in higher education.

### **Shifting to Circulatory Understandings of Rhetoric**

Exploring the rhetorical connections between neoliberal rhetoric and ableism requires us to recognize that ability, disability, and neoliberalism are complex, ecological phenomena that rhetorically circulate through social and political institutions and the bodies that populate them. As Dolmage (2014) writes,

The body is invested rhetorically. The body has always been a rhetorical product of experiment...All meaning issues forth from the body, but communication also reaches into the body to shape its possibilities...Rhetoric is always embodied... the body is rhetorical—it communicates and thinks. (pp. 89-90)

In other words, knowledge construction is an embodied process and one's embodied engagement is discursively impacted by social and political systems. Perceptions of ability and disability are similarly rhetorical as they are influenced by "cultural assumptions" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 55). By understanding ability, disability, and systemic ableism as rhetorical, sociopolitical phenomena, we can better recognize them as active processes in which all are relationally engaged.

However, to fully facilitate a rhetorical understanding of the systemic nature of ableism, we must, as Chaput (2010) recommends, exchange a situational understanding



of rhetoric for an understanding of rhetoric as circulation.<sup>3</sup> While Lloyd F. Bitzer (1992) argues that rhetoric is “situational” because it constitutes “a response to a situation of a certain kind” or an “invitation to create and present discourse” (pp. 3-9), Chaput posits that neoliberal rhetoric exceeds particularly contextualized and situational constraints and moves “across spaces previously thought to be separate, if not independent” (p. 19). Furthermore, Chaput commends Jenny Edbauer’s (2005) idea of rhetoric as an ecological “mixture of processes and encounters” and her positioning of rhetoric as “a verb, rather than a fixed noun or situs” (p. 13). In this model, rhetoric is viewed not as a particularly bounded situation, but as “the amalgamation and mixture” of diverse, dynamic events that foster “a process of distributed emergence” and “an ongoing circulation process” (p. 13). As Edbauer explains, an ecological view moves from understanding rhetoric as situational to recognizing rhetoric as “trans-situational” and as circulating and spreading in a “wider ecology” (p. 20). Chaput extends Edbauer’s ecological understanding of rhetoric through her discussion of rhetorical circulation. She explains that

rhetorical circulation gives up the causal relationship between rhetoric and materiality, believing instead that rhetoric circulates through our everyday, situated activities and does not exist in any one place: It is always passing through, but it is never located. The exigency of rhetoric, therefore, shifts from urgent problems to everyday life activities. (p. 20)

Simply put, the concept of rhetoric as circulation illuminates how neoliberal, ableist ideals may become normalized and naturalized across institutional spaces.

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<sup>3</sup> For a general lineage of scholarship related to the rhetorical situation and rhetorical circulation, please refer to Mark A. Hannah and Susie Salmon’s (2019) “Against the grain: The secret role of dissents in integrating rhetoric across the curriculum.” *Nev. LJ* 20.

Furthermore, by coupling Chaput's (2010) notion of rhetorical circulation with posthumanism, we can better understand how students and faculty who engage with ableist documentation, discourse, and design practices may contribute to ableism's circulation. The posthuman perspective positions all as intertwined in complex systems of practice (Barad, 2008, p. 126). Advocating for posthumanism, Casey Boyle (2018) explains that individual bodies do not only exist outside circulated practices, but instead "become bodies by establishing sets of tendencies;" bodies only exist through their relational engagement with others (p. 5). As Karen Barad (2008) similarly argues, "relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific interactions" (p. 133). According to this logic, individuals exist in relation to the practices they habituate. In other words, identity is intertwined with social, relational actions and the documents, discourses, and design practices that motivate them. Thus, it is challenging to separate "conscious awareness" from these interactions, as such awareness materializes with and through social engagements (Boyle, 2018, p. 29). Posthumanism thus reveals how individual engagement is influenced by complex apparatuses, or the "local physical conditions that enable and constrain knowledge practices" (Barad, 2008, p. 137). That is, posthumanism allows us to recognize how physical and relational contexts constrain all individual action and subsequent knowledge construction.

However, posthumanism postulates that while humans do not "preexist" relational practice, they are not merely static "end products" of such relations either. They are instead "part of the world in its open-ended becoming" and perpetual "intra-activity" (Barad, 2008, pp. 135-139), constrained by, yet continuously expanding, larger institutional systems. This is specifically true of discourse, which "constrains and enables

what can be said” by defining “what count[s] as meaningful statements” (p. 137). Social discourse constrains the epistemological “field of possibilities” by influencing cultural frames and social perceptions in the construction of knowledge. However, as part of a complex network, discourse is “not static or singular” but instead is open to “dynamic and contingent multiplicity” (p. 137). In this way, individuals directly influence discursive frames and possibilities through their dynamic intra-actions and may therefore foster new epistemological possibilities.

Posthuman attention to rhetorical circulation underscores how institutional discourse constrains everyday public and individual knowledge by empowering certain identities, behaviors, and ways of being as normal and others as deviant or disabled and in need of rehabilitation. This concept of posthuman rhetorical circulation is essential to understanding not only how neoliberal rhetoric functions, but also how it may circulate in tandem with systemic ableism throughout an institution. It likewise reveals a potential for circulating alternative discourse. As Cherney (2019) notes,

within the rhetorical model, bodies circulate the texts that they embody; the movement and interaction of these bodies in society brings their texts in contact with each other, exchanging their ideas, and their comingling performs what we call communication. Bodies spread the words that make them what they are. (p. 144)

Viewed through a posthuman lens, rhetorical circulation animates ableism by rhetorically informing a range of bodyminds and the institutions in which they engage. Specifically, as Cherney explains, ableism involves:

an orientation that considers physical deviation from a presupposed norm as a lack... [It is] a system of discrimination that rhetorically invents and employs the idea of a ‘normal body’ and treats physical deviance from that norm as lacking something that all other nondisabled people share. Ableism involves ways of knowing, valuing, and seeing the so-called ‘abnormal’ body as inferior. By extension, ableist discrimination places the ‘normal’ body at the top of an ideological hierarchy, isolates any deviant body as the oppressed Other, and protects this arrangement by denying its presence while promoting practices based upon it. (p. 8)

Like disability, ableism is rhetorical in that it is normalized and naturalized through its circulation amongst institutions and the bodies that inhabit them. Posthuman understandings of rhetoric as circulation thus reveal that there is nothing natural about the able ideal; its social dissemination has simply normalized it. By understanding ableism as rhetorical and grounded in complex posthuman relations, we can examine “how words, language, and texts construct political identities, hierarchies, and power” (p. 3) through their influence over “gestural, social, and architectural” norms and the individual bodies influenced by them (Dolmage, 2017, p. 46).

In my examination of specific institutional spaces, I do not aim to identify individual instances of disability discrimination, but instead to examine how ableism circulates as a systemic, rhetorical force. I therefore complement my use of disability studies with ableism studies. As Cherney (2019) relays:

The developing study of ableism furthers the project of removing the negative connotations of disability by calling attention to the larger ideological problem

behind the multitude of ways that society discriminates against and disadvantages disabled people. Ableism extends the goals and purposes of disability studies by shifting focus away from the “individual patterns” behind specific discriminatory acts to investigate the “social situations or cultural representations that influence those patterns. (p. 4)

At the heart of ableism studies are considerations for the systemic nature of ableism and its rhetorical reliance on discourse. Through ableism studies, we can better understand the discursive foundations of ableism and explore alternative constructions. Furthermore, by examining the rhetorical circulation of ableism through a posthuman lens, we can interrogate how neoliberal ableism constrains discursive possibilities and disables certain bodyminds; recognize the constructed nature of this discourse; and imagine possibilities for its revision.

As Cherney (2019) posits, just as “studies of whiteness have revealed the invisibility of institutional and subtle racism,” the study of ableism allows researchers to “expos[e] the ideological foundations, assumptions, and thinking that perpetuates its existence” (p. 10). Connecting the study of systemic ableism to systemic racism, Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009) relays that as does racism, ableism “inscrib[es] certain bodies in terms of deficiency and essential inadequacy [which] privileges a particular understanding of normalcy that is commensurate with the interests of dominant groups” (p. 11). By marking certain bodies as deviant, ableism further strengthens and upholds logics that position and empower able bodyminds as normate and others as deviant or lacking (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 8). Furthermore, ableism consists of “a convergence of networks of association that produce exclusionary categories and ontologies (i.e., ways

of being human) that have become integral to Western knowledge and culture”

(Campbell, 2009, p. 17-20) through their rhetorical circulation. Campbell explains that

The very existence of ableism and its effects, like racism, are covert, but more often profoundly hidden. Ableism is an epistemology (a knowledge framework) and an ontological modality (a way of being) that frames an individual’s identity formation and, thus, becomes the power ‘that animates one’s emergence,’ through complicity and resistance. (p. 27)

As an epistemological and ontological framework, ableism impacts and constrains individual identities, behaviors, and knowledges. Because of its far-reaching and often violent implications for disabled individuals, it is thus, as Campbell explains, “imperative” that we “interrogate the impact of ableism” and trace its potential discursive circulation across institutions (p. 28).

### **Examining Ableism’s Circulation Across Higher Education**

To trace the rhetorical circulation of neoliberalism and ableism, this dissertation examines how the language used in specific sites of higher education engages with ableist rhetoric and traces the discursive impacts of such language on disabled bodyminds. Like Dolmage (2017), I situate this dissertation in the realm of higher education due to the frequent circulation of ableist rhetoric across university spaces. As Dolmage notes, “Academia powerfully mandates able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, as well as other forms of social and communicative hyperability, and this demand can best be defined as ableism” (p. 7). Academic institutions frequently and unknowingly rely on and circulate ableist rhetorics that may disempower and disable certain bodyminds by assuming a baseline of ability in their students, faculty, and staff. Dolmage asserts that this rhetorical

ableism exists in structural “inequit[ies] and inequalit[ies] in the buildings, patterns, and positions of the university” as well as in “the bodies they [include and] selectively exclude” (p. 9). Evidence of ableism is thus often present in the design of academic spaces, the documents that support them, and the bodies that inhabit them.

The context of higher education is an appropriate space for examining the rhetorical circulation of ableism due to the way in which many universities have adopted neoliberal goals of “profit, control, and efficiency” (Giroux, 2002, p. 434). Such models often position disability as an “a drain, a threat, something to be eradicated and erased—not worth retaining” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 83). As Angela M. Carter et al. (2017) note, by cultivating “discipline, restraint, productivity, and autonomy” (p. 96) in their student, faculty, and staff members, universities often frame “disabled, neurodivergent, and chronically ill bodies...as unproductive, impaired, dependent, disorderly, and, therefore, of little intellectual or productive value” (p. 96). In other words, when motivated by the pursuit of neoliberal goals of productivity and efficiency, academia often approaches disability as an obstruction individuals must overcome. Accommodations in universities consequently promote disability’s “correct[ion], normaliz[ation], or eliminat[ion] through medical, technological, individual, and familial interventions (Kafer, 2013, p. 5). As previously noted, this leads to understandings of access that require disability’s erasure.

The accommodations provided by higher education are generally motivated by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which aims to prevent disability discrimination by eliminating barriers, providing equal opportunities, and facilitating employee independence and productivity (Puar, 2017, p. 75). Specifically, the ADA defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or

more of the major life activities of such individuals” (Emens, 2012, p. 211). Furthermore, it defines a disabled person “as a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (“A Guide,” 2020). Although the ADA intends to support the academic, professional, and personal goals of disabled individuals, by individualizing disability as a personal “impairment” responsible for “limiting” one’s life activities, the ADA draws from ableist rhetorics that subscribe to a medical model of disability as lack. Likewise, by promoting accommodations that offer individuals equal access to existing systems, the ADA both reinforces existing systems as normal and fosters an inclusion reliant on disability’s remediation. The ADA attempts to *solve* disability through its erasure, rather than critiquing the failure of normative design to account for disabled bodyminds. In this way, the ADA seeks to assimilate disabled individuals “into some of the very structures that debilitated them initially” (Puar, 2017, p. 75). ADA-inspired documents so position disability as a problem to be overcome rather than as a way of being in the world that might generate critique of the normative status quo. Such understandings of disability, access, and accommodations disregard the relational and ecological nature of disability.

Articulations of accommodations and access motivated by the ADA may thus circulate neoliberal ableism through a process that Campbell (2009) refers to as a two-pronged strategy of dispersal, or the distancing of disabled people from each other, and emulation, or the mirroring of ableist norms by disabled people. Under neoliberalism, these ableist impulses are often disguised by buzzwords like “access,” “inclusion,” and “care.” As Nancy Welch (2011) explains, “rhetoric, in the service of neoliberal goals depends...on the steady disavowal of any controversy” (p. 548). Under neoliberalism,



such terms are repurposed not to promote diversity but to encourage a “cooperation and consensus” that strengthens dominant, existing structures (p. 550). Therefore, while words like “access,” “inclusion,” and “care” aim to promote equity, they often foster equal access to the status quo by aligning individuals with existing systems; they thus frequently occlude the impacts of dispersal and emulation.

One way in which higher education may motivate the dispersal of disabled individuals is through understandings of access that individualize disabled experiences. Rather than promoting a “collective consciousness, identity, or culture” (Campbell, 2009, p. 22), the ADA, and the articulations of access that it motivates in higher education, often position disability as “a private/individuated affair by failing to attend to wider social contexts of reception for their diagnosed clients” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 69). In other words, the ADA may inhibit the critique of sociopolitical influences of disability by understanding disability as an individualized phenomenon. Specifically, Dolmage (2017) asserts that on most college campuses, disability “exist[s] only as a negative, private, individual failure,” with access initiatives leaving “little... space...for the building of coalitional, collective, or interdependent disability politics” (p. 56). By individualizing disability and promoting normative inclusion, access and accommodation, initiatives motivated by the ADA frequently disregard the social and political nature of disability and inhibit disabled individuals from building larger collective coalitions to promote social and environmental change within universities. However, as many in DS argue, disability is a political issue “as it is implicated in relations of power and...[as] those relations, their assumptions, and their effects are contested and contestable, open to dissent and debate” (Kafer, 2013, p. 9). By individualizing disability, the ADA and its

corresponding accommodations may promote access to the normative rather than examining the political implications of existing norms and the way they systematically exclude certain bodyminds. Such dispersal of disabled individuals also further positions able bodyminds as the normative majority and disabled bodyminds as aberrant exceptions.

The dispersal of disability is likewise apparent in the application of care for university students, faculty, and administrators. Support programs are often predicated on individualized, self-care logics typically associated with neoliberalism. As Lizzie Ward (2015) explains, self-care is integral to “neoliberal citizenship...by using notions of empowerment, choice, and control” (p. 51). Neoliberal self-care is problematic in that it positions individuals as responsible for their wellbeing and disregards the responsibility of social and political systems to “create structures enabling and facilitating one’s wellbeing” (p. 53). Such self-care likewise “obscure[es] the social, economic, and political sources of physical, emotional, and spiritual distress and exhaustion;” it disregards the impact of “gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and other identity markers of privilege” on public perceptions of vulnerability and distribution of care (p. 53). It also depoliticizes personal experiences, promoting self-regulation by occluding the need for social or political organization (p. 53). Rather than supporting and caring for individuals, these self-care programs are predicated on self-control and position wellbeing as guided by personal responsibility.

In tandem with the dispersal of disability, higher education often fosters the emulation of ableist norms across its students, faculty, and professional staff under an

agenda of inclusion. As Campbell (2009) explains, even when attempting to include liminal or marginalized bodies:

ableism always restates and enshrines itself. On the one hand, discourses of equality promote ‘inclusion’ by way of promoting positive attitudes (sometimes legislated in mission statements, marketing campaigns, equal opportunity protections) and yet on the other hand, ableist discourses proclaim quite emphatically that disability is inherently negative, ontologically intolerable and in the end, a dispensable remnant. (p. 12)

In other words, ableist discourses may foster a conditional inclusion that requires individual alignment with existing normative structures. In this dissertation, I specifically examine how trans-situational sites like mission statements, care-based documents, and digital classroom interfaces can encourage ableist emulation by holding individuals accountable to able standards and design.

### **Ableist University Documentation, Discourse, and Design**

Recognizing how neoliberal neutrality may result in processes that erase disability and circulate ableist rhetorics, this dissertation calls for the interrogation and subsequent revision of documents and spaces intended to support the everyday care, access, and inclusion of individuals in higher education. Further, “‘Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground’” (Lefebvre as quoted by Ackerman, 2003, p. 88). In this dissertation, I therefore examine the design and discursive construction of three trans-situational sites in higher education to better understand their influence on the habitual practices of those in each space and to gain

insight into the values that such practices reveal. I pursue such examination in the remainder of this dissertation.

To examine the influence of neoliberal, ableist rhetorics, I analyze three trans-situational sites in higher education: composition department mission statements intended to promote inclusion, university wellness initiatives intended to promote care, and digital classroom interfaces intended to promote access. As demonstrated by both my examinations and subsequent analyses, to fully understand and resist the circulation of neoliberal ableism, we require complex, transdisciplinary frameworks that allow us to pursue more complex, nuanced understandings of this circulation and its impact on disabled bodyminds. The transdisciplinary frameworks that I utilize throughout this paper broadly draw from the fields of DS and TPC, rhetorics of health and medicine (RHM), social justice, and disability justice.

While those in higher education may not themselves identify as technical and professional communicators (TPCers), those in higher education continuously articulate meanings through their engagement with design and discourse. In articulating a range of meanings across university documents, discourses, and design practices, university professionals influence normative understandings of “identities, social practices, ideological positions, discursive statements, [and] social groups” (Slack et al., 1993, p. 28) across university spaces. By engaging with certain documentation, design, and discursive strategies, university professionals directly impact power relations based on who, or what, they anticipate. As in TPC, these documents and spaces “play a socializing role: they encourage or value certain practices while discouraging or complicating others” (Longo & Fountain, 2013, p. 174). In other words, institutional documentation

and discursive practices anticipate and reinforce certain bodyminds as belonging across the institutional spaces of higher education.

As a field, TPC recognizes that the construction of equitable, socially just spaces and documents requires the critical examination of “which perspectives and whose experiences are valued and legitimized” (Jones, 2016, p.343) in documents and spaces. Specifically recognizing the implications that design and discourse may have within the lives of disabled individuals, TPC scholars (Palmeri, 2006; Melonçon, 2013a; Colton & Walton, 2015; Walters, 2011; Browning & Cagle, 2017; Hitt, 2018; Nielsen, 2018; Konrad, 2020; Bennett & Hannah, 2021) have called for consideration of DS within TPC. Both TPC and DS understand the ranging material impacts that language may have on the body (Moeller, 2018) and thus encourage “detailed and theoretically grounded analyses of the ethical, social, cultural, and political effects of discourse (Melonçon, 2013a, p.4). Specifically, these scholars have utilized DS to challenge the field’s historically problematic assumptions of users of standard, universal bodyminds, as well as its understandings of disability as pathology (Gutsell & Hulgin, 2013, p. 85). To account for disabled embodiments, TPC scholars have encouraged the transformation of seeming neutral, normative structures through diverse practices more attuned to the uniquely embodied experiences and knowledges of disabled individuals.

This call for interrogating ableism is grounded in and extends the goals of the recent social justice turn in TPC, which calls for critical action by those in the field to interrogate potentially oppressive structures (Walton & Agboka, 2021). In the field of TPC, the social justice turn denotes efforts to examine “how communication...can amplify the agency of oppressed people--those who are materially, socially, politically,

and/or economically under-resourced” (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 242). In other words, social justice scholarship addresses how TPC documentation, discourse, and design may contribute to the oppression of certain populations and promotes more equitable documentation practices that foster agency for frequently marginalized populations. The concept of intersectionality is thus integral to social justice (Walton et al., 2019). Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) define intersectionality as “a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences” that recognizes how sociopolitical circumstances and individual identities “are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways” (p. 2). Specifically, the concept of intersectionality allows us to understand how identity categories like race, gender, ability, and sexuality may mutually and complexly influence subjective experiences of privilege and power across contexts.

In tracing the functioning of systemic oppression in TPC, social justice scholars Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones (2019) encourage the use of two frameworks: the 3P’s and the 4R’s. I understand these two frameworks as most effective when applied in tandem with one another, with the former supporting the theoretical and practical goals of the latter. Inherently connected, Walton, Moore, and Jones explain the 3P’s as reflecting:

- *Positionality*: the “intersectional,” and “fluid” way in which contextual and situational constraints influence identity, resulting in dynamic experiences of privilege or marginalization by individuals (pp. 65-66)
- *Privilege*: experiences of “unearned social, cultural, economic, and political advantages due to alignment with specific sociocultural identity markers,”

particularly when one's identity "aligns with socially constructed assumptions of what it means to be 'normal'" (p. 83)

- *Power*: understandings of oppression as systemic, intersectional, and constantly shifting depending on the complex interactions between positionality and privilege (p. 113)

Collectively, by engaging with the 3P's, TPCers and composers of institutional documents can better understand how seemingly neutral documents, design practices, and discourses may directly influence individual identity, privilege, and empowerment across diverse institutional contexts.

In encouraging the interrogation of TPC documents, design strategies, and discourses, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) also offer a framework they refer to as the 4R's, which involve recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing engagement with potentially problematic oppressive systems and structures. Across this dissertation's subsequent chapters, I apply considerations for positionality, privilege, and power in my use of the 4R's to interrogate the social justice implications of documentation and design practices used across diverse sites of higher education. Previous scholarship (Colton & Walton, 2015; Hitt, 2018; Wheeler, 2018; Bennett & Hannah, 2022; Bennett, 2022) has recognized disability access as a matter of social justice because access determines one's capacity to engage equitably as a citizen across institutional spaces. Further, in recognizing disability access as a social justice concern, Kristin C. Bennett and Mark A. Hannah (2022) advocate for disability justice to promote more equitable and ethical practices in TPC. Disability justice provides an actionable framework for promoting practices of inclusion across diverse contexts. A theoretical term "coined by Black,

brown, queer, and trans members of the original Disability Justice Collective” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 15), disability justice values the complexities of disabled bodyminds as integral to social change (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 21) by “embrac[ing] difference, confront[ing] privilege and challeng[ing] what is considered ‘normal’” (Mingus, 2011, n.p.). In addition, unlike the disability rights movement, which traditionally centers on otherwise dominant bodies “at the expense of other intersections of race, gender, sexuality, age, immigration status, religion, etc.” (Sins Invalid, 2020, n.p.), disability justice attends to both the intersectionally embodied and sociopolitical aspects of disability. Recognizing ableism as connected to other systems of oppression, such as “heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism” (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 21), disability justice emphasizes the ecological and sociopolitical nature of disabled experiences as founded in larger systemic networks of oppression. Disability justice thus recognizes the connections across systems of oppression with aims to ultimately “dismantle” them (Mingus, 2011).

Due to disability justice’s generative capacity to help us not only interrogate the accessibility of existing systems but also to revise such systems to be more inherently inclusive and accessible, I turn to disability justice principles across the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, specifically to reject and replace inequitable, ableist practices. Through disability justice, I hope to not only trace the influence of neoliberal, ableist rhetoric across diverse sites in higher education, but also to provide practical recommendations in relation to more equitable and accessible organizational strategies.



## **Discussion of Site-Specific Theoretical Applications**

In the following sections, I briefly introduce the need for a transdisciplinary examination of higher education documents and spaces related to access, care, and inclusion. Through this examination, I illuminate the transdisciplinary nature of ableist rhetoric and the need for frameworks that address its unique complexity across diverse situations in higher education.

**Examining the relational role of documents in fostering inclusion.** The fourth chapter of this dissertation urges university professionals to apply a theoretical framework integrating TPC, DS, and disability justice in recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing problematic documentation strategies regarding mission statements. TPC reveals the power that documents have in constructing and regulating institutional norms. As Carolyn Miller (1989) notes, by normalizing, or making “common” that which is “efficient” or “useful,” TPC determines that which is “good” or normal (pp. 61-67). TPC scholarship thus helps us understand the “ethical and political consequences” (Porter, 1998, p. 204) associated with the circulation of neutral documents, particularly in relation to the privileging and empowering of certain positionalities. Documents influence what counts as communication in institutional spaces, and they determine the “consequences of that communication” (Longo & Fountain, 2013, p. 174). By “encourag[ing] certain practices while discouraging or complicating others,” these documents have a socializing function; they promote particular positionalities as “normal” and certain practices as acceptable. Specifically, those who construct documents influence which “identities, social practices, ideological

positions, discursive statements, [and] social groups” (Slack et al., 1993, p. 28) are empowered as “normate” and disempowered as deviant across institutional spaces

TPC thus offers a vital theoretical lens to examine documents in higher education, specifically those like mission statements that are intended to promote inclusivity.

However, pairing TPC with rhetorical circulation still proves insufficient in understanding how ableist rhetoric may move across normative documentation practices.

Many TPCers have noted how TPC documents frequently assume users of universal bodyminds. As TPC scholars (Melonçon, 2013a; Gutsell & Hulgín, 2013; Bennett & Hannah, 2021) have advocated, it is thus essential that TPCers not merely consider disability in their work, but also prioritize the needs and experiences of disabled bodyminds at the forefront of design. Universities reflect a workplace context for many individuals, and the documents that shape everyday realities for people across these contexts have real, embodied impacts on the lives of those who use them. By constructing a theoretical framework that combines TPC, DS, and disability justice, this chapter offers methods for recognizing and revealing the influence of neoliberal and ableist rhetorics on mission statement documents and offers important insights for rejecting and replacing such tactics with strategies that support more nuanced and inclusive constructions.

**Promoting more equitable practices in care-based documentation.** The fifth chapter of this dissertation postulates a need for a theoretical framework grounded in TPC, RHM, and disability justice to trace the functioning of ableist rhetoric across self-care sites in higher education. Previous scholars have noted the rhetorical nature of healthcare, due to its “persuasive dimensions” and “capabilities of communication practices” (Malkowski & Melonçon, 2019, p. iv). RHM so advocates for “a rhetorical

orientation toward the study, practices, and communication of public health” to “emphasize how language helps to create, organize, challenge, and fragment public health realities” (p. iv). In this chapter, I employ RHM to analyze the discursive and material consequences of rhetoric in university articulations of wellness and care. As Irene Clark and Ronald Fischbach (2008) note, public health officials possess rhetorical capacities and responsibilities when engaging in acts of persuasion in relation to health concerns. By rhetorically designating certain embodiments as healthy, public health discourse may privilege and empower certain identities as normal and others as pathologized (Moeller, 2014, p.75). Such discourse thus reifies certain standards of health as ideals that the public is expected to reflect. Consequently, under the influence of neoliberalism, healthcare initiatives can become normalizing technologies intended to align individuals with dominant structures. It is thus imperative that we recognize the rhetorical nature of health discourse and analyze its material impacts.

In this chapter, I examine institutional understandings of health by analyzing the discourse used by university self-care initiatives. Programs in higher education intended to care for students, faculty, and staff are often predicated on individualized, self-care logics associated with neoliberalism. As mentioned previously, neoliberal self-care is problematic in that it positions the individual as responsible for their wellbeing; furthermore, self-care depoliticizes healthcare by disregarding the unequal distribution of resources across diverse populations (Michaeli, 2017, p. 53). In this way, the neoliberal concept of self-care encourages individuals to understand health as a matter of personal responsibility and choice; it thus obscures the social and political factors that may disproportionately impact the wellbeing of individuals by privileging and empowering

some identities over others. While neoliberalism attempts to articulate individual medical engagement as a matter of autonomous choice, all individual health engagement is influenced by complex social and political networks (Gouge, 2018)

To better understand the material and discursive implications of care-based documents, I utilize a theoretical framework of RHM, DS, and TPC in recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing problematic rhetorical assumptions located in university care-based documents. This chapter thus offers readers tools for rhetorically analyzing care-based initiatives and for engaging with alternate constructions through a framework that incorporates principles from disability justice.

**Engaging more nuanced understandings of access in digital classroom interfaces.** My sixth chapter reframes access through a theoretical fusion of DS, TPC, and disability justice. Motivated by medical understandings of disability as pathology, ADA law frequently encourages notions of access that allow individuals to retroactively engage with ableist spaces through the overcoming of disability. While such retroactive accommodations may improve access, they communicate that disability is an individual, “supplementary concern,” as access is granted retroactively, rather than at the forefront of design (Dolmage, 2017, pp. 70-79). As noted previously, by anticipating normative bodyminds, institutional spaces grounded in retroactive notions of access often unknowingly deny disabled individuals full participation in those spaces and thus impact experiences of citizenship (Elcessor, 2016, p. 7). It is thus essential that we interrogate such spaces.

To examine notions of access in practice, I analyze in this chapter graduate students’ experiences with digital classroom interfaces. As many universities have

recognized, online learning, or e-learning, can increase access for students, as students can attend sessions flexibly around their own unique schedules and from various geographic locations (Kent, 2015). In fact, many argue that online spaces are “more engaging and democratic” than traditional classrooms (Selfe & Selfe, 1994, pp. 482-483), as they disrupt many of the power dynamics enforced by physical classroom spaces. Historically, the “narrative of online education is that it opens up educational spaces to more people, granting additional flexibility” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 276), particularly for non-traditional or adult students “who work full time or have irregular schedules,...who do not live near a college campus, and...who have mobility problems” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 90). By allowing a wider range of students to access classroom spaces in manners conducive to the constraints of their lives, online education, in many ways, offers increased access to education for as many individuals as possible.

However, disability exclusion is frequently replicated online as often as it is offline (Goggin & Newell, 2003). Rather than considering a range of intersectional positionalities in generating diverse methods for engagement, online spaces frequently prioritize dominant structures and reassert normative behaviors. Further, digital spaces often replicate dominant norms by assuming “preferred users” of able bodyminds (Ellcessor, 2016, p. 76). Rather than generating new forms of engagement and consequently new knowledge, this understanding of digital accessibility provides “alternative ways into the same thing” through the overcoming or erasure of embodied difference (Boyle & Rivers, 2016, pp. 30-31).

To resist the construction of spaces that reify dominant, ableist norms, TPCers have called for designers of institutional documents and space to attend to users’ uniquely

embodied engagements with technology (Melonçon, 2013b, p. 74) through user-centered and participatory design methods attuned to the posthuman way in which technologies directly influence, and are influenced by, individual experiences. Engaging with users of space is important, as “a site or document may meet the letter of the law or guideline, but it may provide a user with a disability an experience that is ineffective, unnecessarily inefficient, or unsatisfying” (Youngblood, 2012, p. 216). To better understand users’ lived experiences with such technologies, TPC has turned to user-centered design strategies. Advocating for user-centered design, Robert R. Johnson (1998) explains that users possess practical knowledge related to their uniquely embodied experiences with technology; such knowledge can contribute to the revision of technological spaces and interfaces based on users’ previous, practical engagements. Importantly, user-centered design methods empower users as equal citizens within digital spaces by allowing them to contribute to larger, sociocultural decisions related to technology.

This chapter embraces the value of user-centered design by applying user-experience design (UX), which seeks to prioritize “what users need and to design interfaces, products, and experiences that meet those needs” (Greer & Harris, 2018, p. 14). Because UX allows designers of documents and spaces to better understand the needs and experiences of users in relation to those constructions, UX can provide insight into disabled students’ experiences in digital classroom spaces. In this way, UX can position disabled user knowledge as valuable and facilitate the citizenship of such users by front-lining their capacity to foster change. Furthermore, this chapter couples insights from UX with those of universal design (UD). A term coined by Ronald Mace, UD involves the “design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the

greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design” (Mace as quoted by Dolmage, 2017, p. 115). As Allison Hitt (2018) explains, UD “is a spatial theory that emphasizes the importance for all spaces to be physically accessible to all people--both disabled and nondisabled. UD positions accessible design for disabled users as accessible design for all users” (p. 53). In other words, UD understands accessible design as that which anticipates and supports the experiences, needs, and bodyminds of as many individual positionalities as possible. Through a theoretical combination of UX and UD, this chapter engages collaborative interview methods with disabled graduate students enrolled in an online degree program to position them as agents within digital class design. Grounded in a combination of UX and UD, these interviews seek to recognize and reveal how digital classroom interfaces may potentially draw from systems of oppressive ableism and to reject and replace such problematic participation through insights from students’ embodied experiences across these spaces.

### **Chapter 3 Preview**

In the next section, I provide insight into the methodology informing this dissertation and an overview of the methods I use to analyze each site. To demonstrate the vast impact that neoliberalism may have on higher education institutions, I chose three distinct sites and used methods and trans-disciplinary theory specific to each. In the next section, I introduce my methods for collecting and analyzing data for each site.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### **Methods Overview**

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodology and methods in which this dissertation is grounded. I first offer my overarching research questions. I then discuss my use of what I refer to as a methodology of poststructural criptistemology. After providing insight into my driving methodology, I offer a brief discussion of my site-specific methods. As noted previously, I constructed this dissertation with consideration for a mētis epistemology. Thus, the variety of my chosen methods reflects attention to how neoliberal ableism manifests and functions trans-situationally across diverse sites in higher education in unique and complex ways. While I will offer preliminary insight into these methods throughout this chapter, these discussions will be developed further within subsequent chapters to further demonstrate my attention to mētis and the construction of an accessible document that may be navigated by individual readers in unique ways.

#### **Research Questions**

This dissertation evaluates the influence of ableism and how it may move systemically across diverse contexts in higher educational spaces through seeming neutral assumptions. An examination of three distinct, trans-situational spaces in higher education can offer vital insight into the rhetorical circulation of neoliberal ableism across documentation, discourse, and design practices. My driving research questions for this project consequently were:

1. How might we apply notions of rhetorical circulation to trace the influence of ableist rhetoric across trans-situational sites in higher education?



2. How does ableist rhetoric influence the discourse used in institutional documents and spaces related to inclusion, access, and care?
3. How does ableist discourse foster material consequences for students and faculty?
4. How might more theoretically robust rhetorical practices support institutional goals of disability access, inclusion, and care?

### **A Methodology of Poststructural Cripistemology and Social Justice**

A challenge in a study like this one is harnessing the potentially productive tension between, on the one hand, poststructuralism's social orientation toward disability, which focuses on discourse; and, on the other, embodied understandings of disability, which attend to lived experiences. Poststructuralism recognizes disability's relation to discourse, or social and political norms circulated and reified through language. It posits that meaning is constructed through language "rather than reflected by language" (Weedon, 1987, p. 23) and that "the personal is political" (p. 74), as one's identity is constructed "in and through specific socio-political arrangements" actualized by language. Poststructuralism relies heavily on the theories of Michel Foucault (1979). As noted in Chapter Two, Foucault articulates that power is not enforced on individuals, but instead is exercised through their adherence to prescribed norms. Exploiting a "power of homogeneity" (p. 184), authorities validate certain behaviors as acceptable and police others as deviant (p. 184). However, while many in DS understand disability's discursive implications, they also recognize that this social positioning of disability does not address the embodied implications of experience and may presume that embodiment can be controlled "by human thought, will, and action" (Wendell, 1996, p. 45). Many, therefore,

call for an understanding of disability that recognizes its socially relational nature, while legitimating bodily agency and experience.

This dissertation study recognizes disability as an embodied phenomenon influenced by complex interactions among bodies, environments, and discourse, such as the mission statements that writing programs circulate. I therefore integrate poststructuralism with Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer's (2014) concept of "cripistemology." Cripistemology is a methodology that seeks to harness the productive tension between the influence of discourse on disabled experiences and the validation of embodied experiences with disability as vital, knowledge-making resources. Calling for an "unknowing" of the norms guiding dominant logics through cripistemology, Johnson and McRuer ask scholars to "thin[k] from the critical, social, and personal position of disability" (p. 134). An alternative to standardizing epistemologies, cripistemology embraces non-linear forms of thinking and celebrates complex, "multi-directional" (p. 145) ways of knowing; it validates diversely embodied accounts to demonstrate this complexity. In this dissertation, I integrate poststructuralism and cripistemology to examine how seemingly neutral language, design practices, and documents may contribute to both social discourse regarding disability and the impact of such discourse on disabled individuals.

Further, as the access fostered by discourse, design, and documentation directly impacts one's capacity to engage as a citizen within institutional and public spaces, this dissertation is grounded in a fusion of technical and professional communication (TPC) and social justice. As noted in Chapter Two, previous TPC scholarship (Agboka 2014; Colton & Walton, 2015; Jones et al., 2016; Haas & Eble, 2018; Walton, Moore & Jones,

2019) applies social justice theory to interrogate and address how discourses, documentation practices, and design decisions may contribute to “power imbalances that systematically and systemically disenfranchise some stakeholders while privileging others” (Haas & Eble, 2018, p. 4-5). That is, by endorsing certain bodies, minds, behaviors, and ideologies as normal, TPC impacts who is empowered and privileged across different institutional spaces. Specifically, as Natasha N. Jones (2016) argues:

Technical communication is political and imbued with values. Technical communication reflects certain perspectives, viewpoints, and epistemologies. As such, technical communicators must be aware of the ways that the texts and technologies that they create and critique reinforce certain ideologies and question how communication shaped by certain ideologies affect individuals. (p. 345)

In other words, the theoretical application of social justice encourages technical and professional communicators (TPCers) to interrogate how documentation, design, and discursive practices participate in larger ideological systems and, further, to determine who may be privileged or marginalized by the perspectives, viewpoints, or epistemologies endorsed by TPCers. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, Natasha N. Jones, Kristen R. Moore, and Rebecca Walton’s (2016) 3P’s offer insight into how TPC documents may draw from and contribute to larger ideological systems. These 3P’s consist of positionality, or an understanding of identity as “relationally” influenced by broader “historical” structures and dynamically impacted by larger contextual systems; privilege, or an “unearned advantage that benefits those who are granted this status to the exclusion and detriment of those who are not;” and power, or how privilege determines one’s “relative” agency within a particular context (pp. 220-221). By considering how

TPC documents, discourse, and design may have social justice implications in influencing the positionality, privilege, and power of diverse intersectional identities across a range of institutional structures, TPCers can pursue more accessible and equitable practices that consider as many institutional stakeholders as possible.

### **Site-Specific Methods**

As noted in Chapter One, my dissertation applies a *mētis* epistemology, which denotes a way of knowing based on the co-construction of “dynamic” and “relational” knowledge by “interdependent” bodies. To practice a *mētis* epistemology is to engage in “sideways” movement that promotes and engages in “adaptation,” “critique,” “uniqueness,” and “recursivity.” Through its capacities for adaptation and critique, a *mētis* epistemology offers scholars the rhetorical tools for “intellectual and material movement against normativity” (Dolmage, 2014, p. 157). As Dolmage explains, “*Mētis* is a way for us to move” as it accounts for the “shifting” and “fluid” nature of social and political discourse. As it is “mobile and polymorphic” (p. 195), a *mētis* epistemology aligns with the goals of this dissertation to trace the rhetorical circulation of ableist rhetoric across higher education institutions. This *mētis* epistemology not only impacts my analytical understanding of ableist rhetoric, but it likewise has influenced the methods and overall organization of my dissertation.

As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, to account for how ableist rhetoric “moves” and “fluidly shifts” across different sites in higher education, I draw upon what Rebecca Walton, Kristin Moore, and Natasha Jones (2019) refer to as the 4R’s: these involve recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing seemingly neutral documentation, design strategies, or discourses that may contribute to systems of oppression like ableism with

more equitable and accessible practices. I specifically ground my processes of recognizing and revealing ableist influences in methods attuned to the constraints of each site. In the way that I outlined the theoretical frameworks informing each chapter in Chapter Two, below, I will briefly discuss the methods informing my examination of ableism's circulation across each chosen site. While a methodological combination of post-structural cripistemology and social justice informs all chapters, each set of methods allows me to better understand the subtle ways in which ableism may influence diverse academic spaces; likewise, they allow me to recognize and reveal ableism's influences and to reject and replace them with those more attuned to disability's intersectional relationality and nuance. Please note that each subsequent chapter will expand upon these discussions.

**Methods for examining mission statements.** Chapter Four explores the implications of neutral, standardized documentation practices on disability inclusion and access. To do so, I examined the phenomenon of inclusion by analyzing mission statements of 32 Research-1 composition programs. In Chapter Four, I provide deeper insight into my choices of included mission statement documents. This chapter applies the methodological frameworks of poststructuralism, cripistemology, and social justice through methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA was an appropriate choice of method as it critically analyzes the role of discourse in influencing one's ideological beliefs, values, identity, and behaviors (Gee, 2001, p. 526); consequently, CDA allowed me to examine how mission statement language may draw from and contribute to normative discourse related to ableism. Specifically, I engaged CDA using WordSmith Tools, a digital corpus linguistic analysis program, to calculate the frequency of certain

words in my corpus, or collection of written texts. Digital corpus analysis complements traditional rhetorical analysis by offering insight into normalizing linguistic trends across documents like mission statements.

In analyzing these documents, I examined word frequency, collocates, and concordances. I first examined the most frequently used words in my corpus in order to better understand the impact of frequently used words on institutional understandings of student and faculty identities as well as articulations of ability and disability. By studying word frequency, I gained a stronger understanding about the discursive significance of my corpus's linguistic patterns (Baker, 2007). I also conducted collocational and concordance analyses to trace the sociopolitical implications of the language in these documents based on their contextual use. Concordances are the “occurrences” of a particular word in context, while collocates are two or more words that appear frequently together in a “statistically significant” fashion. Collocation reveals how “certain words frequently occur next to or near each other” to facilitate “understanding [of] meanings and associations between words” (Baker, 2007, pp. 71-96). In examining collocates and concordances, I acquired insight into the discursive framing of student and faculty identities based on how they were discussed in the context of mission statements. Such methods are helpful not only in recognizing and revealing the complex ways through which ableist rhetoric may move across mission statement documents, but likewise in analyzing its potentially problematic implications.

**Methods for analyzing care-based documents.** In Chapter Five, I continue my analysis of ableism's circulation through neutral discourse in the context of care-based documents circulated on three university websites. I examined care-based documents as I

was interested in better understanding how notions of wellness might contribute to discursive understandings of student identities and behaviors in university settings. Specifically, as seemingly neutral understandings of disability are often grounded in medicalized discourse that positions disability as a problem to be erased or overcome through technological, legal, or medical intervention, I was interested in better understanding how articulations of care and wellness may influence ableism's circulation across higher educational spaces. In Chapter Five, I offer insight regarding my specific choice of sites of analysis.

To analyze my data, I used concept coding (Saldaña, 2016). According to Johnny Saldaña (2016), concept coding allows researchers to “assign meso or macro levels of meaning to data or to data analytic work in progress” (p. 119). Through concept coding, researchers can examine how “smaller observable actions” may “add up to a bigger and broader scheme” (p. 119). In this way, concept coding promotes in-depth analysis of local phenomena. These acts of coding allowed me to identify trends in the discourse employed by each of these university care-based initiatives, to make connections across these individual initiatives, and to draw larger conclusions based on the discourse employed by such resources. Specifically, my codes aimed to identify the assumptions related to wellness that such public-facing care-based documents may communicate. These codes allowed me to better understand how such assumptions might contribute to or combat the circulation of ableism in higher educational spaces. In Chapter Five, I provide an in-depth discussion regarding my codes and coding process. This chapter complements my use of corpus linguistic analysis in Chapter Four as it engages in

sustained rhetorical analysis of the underlying assumptions articulated by seemingly neutral language on universities' public-facing websites.

**Methods for interrogating digital class design.** In Chapter Six, I then shift from analyzing circulated discourse in university spaces to a rhetorical analysis of the lived implications of document and design practices for graduate students. Specifically, I engaged semi-structured interviews grounded in user-experience design (Petrie & Bevan, 2009; Greer & Harris, 2018; Clinkenbeard, 2020) and universal-design principles (Oswal 2019; Palmer et al., 2019; Melonçon, 2018) to demonstrate methods for collaborating with institutional stakeholders like students in interrogating the lived implications of seemingly neutral documentation and design strategies for disabled individuals. In Chapter Six, I explain my process of surveying and choosing three participants. In interviewing participants, I used Irving Seidman's (2006) "three interview series, which "allows interviewer[s] and participant[s] to explore the participant's experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning" (p. 20). As Seidman explains, within the "three interview series," "the first interview establishes the context of the participant's experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (p. 21). I used this style of interviewing as I was interested in working with students to reflect on past and previous experiences with their online learning in order to collaboratively build knowledge and foster more accessible and equitable practices in digital classroom spaces. In Chapter Six, I provide in-depth insight into the structure and findings of these interviews.



To analyze my data, I used a combination of thematic coding and in-vivo coding (Saldaña 2016). As Saldaña explains, “a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 198). It generally denotes “an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means” (p. 199). Themes allow for researchers to analyze data in relation to “repeating ideas” and to come to larger, theoretical conclusions by examining the similarities, differences, and relationships between themes. As I explain further in Chapter Six, my primary codes were thematically designed around what Dolmage (2017) refers to as the five levels of deep accessibility: architecture, movement, sense, communication, agency. Dolmage explains that when designers consider access in relation to each of these phenomena, they can promote more equitable understandings and experiences of accessibility. These levels reflected my five primary thematic codes.

After completing this primary analysis, I recognized that while these codes identified general trends, they did not sufficiently account for the nuanced ways in which participants discussed these phenomena. I therefore used Saldaña’s in-vivo coding by building secondary codes based on specific insights from student interviews. In vivo coding reflects terminology employed or concerns raised by participants themselves; it denotes “‘literal coding,’ ‘verbatim coding,’ ‘inductive coding,’ ‘indigenous coding,’ ‘natural coding,’ and ‘emic coding’” (p. 105). In other words, in vivo coding allows researchers to “prioritize and honor” participants’ perspectives and to gain deeper insight into their experiences (p. 106). As Saldaña recommends, I established my secondary in vivo codes by looking for repetition in relation to participants’ use of certain phrases and attention to specific concerns. Chapter Six discusses in detail my process for identifying

codes and subcodes. This chapter moves beyond the discourse analysis reflected by Chapters 4 and 5 by applying user-experience design strategies to explore the lived implications of seemingly neutral language on the lives and experiences of students and to model socially just methods that position disabled individuals as agents in designing more equitable and accessible digital classroom spaces.

#### **Chapter 4 Preview**

In Chapter Four, I begin my analysis of rhetorical circulation by examining composition department mission statements. In this chapter, I demonstrate why mission statements are an appropriate site for examining the impact of neoliberal ableist rhetoric. I then offer a brief review of relevant scholarship, provide insight into data collection, and explain my site-specific research methods. This chapter provides findings from my analysis and offers theory and data-driven recommendations for composing more inclusive mission statement documents that are attuned to the relational and dynamically embodied experiences of disabled students, faculty, and staff.

## CHAPTER 4

### TRACING ABLEISM IN COMPOSITION MISSION STATEMENTS <sup>4</sup>

#### **Neoliberal Influences in Composition Mission Statements**

In this chapter, I begin my trans-situational examination of higher education sites through an analysis of ableism's circulation across university mission statements. Aiming to facilitate inclusion, universities frequently turn to the standardizing language of neoliberalism in composing documents like mission statements. However, striving for "profit, control, and efficiency" (Giroux, 2002, p. 434), neoliberal standards frequently confuse inclusion with normative assimilation. As noted in Chapter Two, when prioritizing the "normal" body, neoliberal standardization may circulate ableism, which positions certain individuals as disabled, or "lacking" when they do not meet standard embodied norms (Cherney, 2019, p. 8). While it has been recognized that mission statement documentation may impact individual identity, scholars have not specifically examined how mission statements may affect disabled identities. As mission statements influence daily life for students and faculty, it is critical that composition departments better understand if and how such documents may contribute to institutional ableism. Further, as mission statements are located on public-facing websites and anticipate certain identities, values, and beliefs, they directly impact who is recognized, validated, and included within institutional spaces. Consequently, I identify mission statements as a matter of social justice because they designate citizenship in departmental spaces.

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that a revised version of this chapter was published in *Composition Studies*, vol. 49.3 (Bennett, 2022a). Please refer to Appendix A22 for proof of the Editors' permission for including this chapter as part of the dissertation.

Responding to Tara Wood et al.'s (2014) call to integrate disability as "central" to composition (pp. 147-148), this chapter recommends an epistemic shift to composition documentation practices that resist ableist rhetoric by prioritizing disabled individuals at the forefront of document design. To trace how ableism may move through such documents, I turn to an understanding of ableist rhetoric as circulatory. As noted in Chapter Two, because neoliberalism systemically impacts daily life, efforts to trace it require that we understand rhetoric as circulatory, or recognize that "rhetoric circulates through our everyday, situated activities" (Chaput, 2010, p. 20). Ableism is one such rhetoric that functions at the everyday level, as the institutional norms that structure daily behaviors and protocols frequently assume able bodyminds. Thus, an understanding of ableism as rhetorical circulation allows us to examine how seemingly neutral documents may systemically influence the institutional exclusion of disabled individuals.

To demonstrate how ableist rhetoric may circulate across documents, I turn to Walton et al.'s (2019) 4R's. As explained in previous chapters, the 4R's encourage us as composers of documents to design more socially just documents by recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing discourse that may participate in problematic structures of oppression. To inform this process, I use critical discourse analysis to examine mission statements from 32 Research-1 institutions (refer to Appendix A1) using WordSmith Tools, a digital corpus linguistic analysis program. Specifically, I examine frequency, concordances, and collocations to evaluate the discursive construction of student and faculty identities across mission statements in order to recognize and reveal how mission statement language may contribute to disability's discursive marginalization. Based on these findings, I draw from disability studies and

technical and professional communication (TPC) to offer guidelines through which compositionists and WPAs may reject and replace these ableist influences in their documentation practices to engage with more equitable and accessible strategies.

### **The Ableism of Neoliberal Documentation**

In this section, I define neoliberal ableism and elucidate the need to interrogate its circulation across mission statements. As mission statements may act as “carriers of culture, ethos, and ideology” that influence “everyday social and institutional customs” and a “plethora of regulations, instructions, and procedures” (Swales & Rogers, 1995, p. 226) in universities and departments, compositionists should examine who is and is not anticipated by the norms such documents uphold. Mission statements denote a significant site of analysis as they often are featured on public-facing websites. The impact that mission statements may have on university members is well documented. Specifically, Megan Schoen (2019) poses that mission statements reflect a “critical ground of investigation” for composition as they “communicate the core identity of the university as a whole” and demonstrate that “writing programs [function] as part of a rhetorical ecology—a constellation of people, programs, initiatives, opportunities, constraints, and cultures that emerge and interact within a specific university context” (p. 38).

Furthermore, as John M. Swales and Priscilla S. Rogers (1995) note, mission statements directly influence “the plethora of regulations, instructions, and procedures” (p. 226) in an institution. It follows, then, that mission statement documentation practices should be examined, as they discursively influence the identities and experiences of students and faculty. Although many scholars recognize how mission statements may influence individual experiences, they have not analyzed how these documents may contribute to

the circulation of neoliberal, ableist rhetoric. This chapter thus extends the existing conversation by examining these influences.

To understand the circulation of ableism, one must first understand neoliberalism, which denotes “a set of economic principles and cultural politics that positions the free market as a guide for all human action” (Stenberg, 2015, pp. 4-6). Attempting to promote inclusion, neoliberalism universalizes experience through seemingly neutral language (Welch, 2011, p. 547). For example, in departmental mission statements, students frequently are referred to as a standard group and held to common expectations. Disregarding unique embodiments, neoliberal standardization generally privileges the most dominant, or “unmarked . . . white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle-class bodies—that appear neutral” (Hamraie, 2013, n.p.). Neoliberalism’s standardizing influence on composition is indicated by how program documents often neglect writing’s embodied, intersectional nature. As Robert McRuer (2006) relays, composition reflects “a corporate model of efficiency and flexibility” that often prioritizes “order and efficiency” while “forgetting . . . the composing bodies that experience it” (pp. 148-152). As neoliberal logics frequently disregard disparity in students’ academic opportunities and economic resources, they may, unintentionally, promote ableist assumptions. Furthermore, mission statements can uphold neoliberal ableism by positioning some bodyminds as more “efficient,” or able, than others.

Disability studies (DS) provides an avenue for understanding the relational impact that mission statements can have on disabled bodyminds. As discussed in Chapter Two, by understanding the phenomena of ability and disability as both embodied and “relational” acts, DS recognizes disability as personally embodied and socially discursive

(Garland-Thompson, 2011, p. 600). Those in DS thus posit disability as existing between bodies, space, and social discourse (Dolmage, 2014, pp. 19-20) that denies access to those who cannot “conform with architectural, attitudinal, educational, occupational, and legal conventions” (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 46). The able or “normate” identity, as Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (1997) defines it, is thus understood as “neutral” because the environment is seamlessly constructed for it (p. 8). By drawing from and reinforcing seemingly neutral assumptions, neoliberal standardization contributes to ableism’s institutional circulation.

Further, in relying on what Michel Foucault (1979) refers to as the “power of homogeneity,” neoliberalism regulates populations on the everyday level through discursive technologies, such as documentation practices, that locate, measure, and fix individuals against prescribed standards (p. 184). Such technologies influence individuals’ “thinking and acting” by evaluating them against standard norms (Chaput, 2010, p. 4). At the heart of neoliberalism is ableism, or the belief in “an idealized norm that defines what it means to be human” and assumes “that those who do not fit that norm are disabled...[and] lacking” (Cherney, 2019, p. 8). Integral to neoliberal productivity, able ideals become naturalized through their circulation across “a convergence of networks of association” (Campbell, 2009, pp. 17-20) that designate which qualities may further “the common good” (Cherney, 2019, p. 17) win institutional structures.

Since neoliberal rhetoric functions in “everyday, situated activities,” in institutions housing those activities (Chaput, 2010, p. 20), and in bodies that engage in those activities (Dolmage, 2017, p. 9), so, too, does ableism. As noted previously, in order to examine the influence of neoliberal rhetoric across institutions, Catherine Chaput

(2010) encourages a shift from understandings of rhetoric as a situational, or as “an isolated instance or...series of instances,” to an understanding of rhetoric as a trans-situational “circulation of exchanges, the whole of which govern individual and collective decisions” (p. 8). In studying the movement of neoliberal ableism through mission statements, I thus follow Chaput’s theory of rhetorical circulation to examine how mission statements may act as normalizing technologies by aligning student and instructor identities with an ableist status quo.

## **Methods**

To recognize and reveal how neoliberal ableism may circulate across institutional spaces, I chose to analyze the mission statements of 32 research-1 (R-1) universities. R-1 composition programs serve a considerable number of students and largely influence national trends in composition. Referring to the 2018 “Carnegie R1 and R2 Research Classifications: Doctoral Universities” list, I visited the website of each of the 131 R-1 universities’ Writing Programs, First-Year Writing (FYW) Programs, or English Departments, when FYW was housed there. This sampling allowed me to explore the role of standardizing language across differently structured writing programs. I collected mission statements from December 2020- January 2021. To ensure that the analyzed documents were mission statements, I chose the 32 documents (refer to Appendix A1) that used the term “mission” either in their labeling of the statement or in statement language. While other universities had documents that likely served as mission statements, they did not specifically refer to them as such. If labeled mission statements included visions and goals, I also analyzed these. Importantly, this analysis was not intended to critique individual programs or to generalize about all composition programs,



but instead to trace how mission statements may circulate ableist rhetoric through their use of standardizing language.

To identify such ableist rhetorical assumptions, I used critical discourse analysis. Acting as an “identity kit,” discourse guides one’s “words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities” so that one may be recognized by others (Gee, 2001, p. 526). By establishing a normative baseline of ability as natural, neoliberal discourse designates and regulates certain behaviors as more able and ideal than others. I specifically applied critical discourse analysis “to analyze discourse practices...and to investigate how meaning is created in context” (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 13). Critical discourse analysis traces the relationship between discourse and identity by examining discourse’s role in reinforcing social norms and correlating power relations (p. 20). Because I was interested in how mission statement language may impact student and faculty identities and behaviors, critical discourse analysis proved a useful framework for this chapter.

To critically analyze the circulation of ableist discourse, I used WordSmith Tools, a digital corpus linguistic analysis program. Although such programs do not replace traditional methods of rhetorical analysis, they can provide us with insights into large-scale linguistic trends to complement such analysis. In my analysis, I first examined frequent words in the corpus. By examining the frequency of words, we can establish “a sociological profile of a given word or phrase enabling greater understanding of its use in particular contexts” (Baker, 2007, p. 47). This study’s engagement with frequency thus underscores the discursive significance of the linguistic patterns across my corpus. I also conducted collocational and concordance analyses to understand the sociopolitical implications of the language in these mission statement documents. Concordances are the

“occurrences” of a particular word in context. Collocates denote words that frequently “occu[r] next to each other” and reveal significance between word associations (pp. 71-96). In the WordSmith Tools settings, I chose L5 to R5 horizons, meaning I examined relationships between each individual word and words located five spots to the left and right of them. Further, in calculating collocates, I examined the mutual information (MI) relation score of each word relationship, which indicates the physical proximity between words; words found more closely together receive higher MI scores. Through the examination of collocates and concordances, I gained critical insight into the discursive framing of student and faculty identities.

## **Findings**

In this section, I provide an overview of the findings yielded from my corpus linguistic analysis. I begin by discussing the most frequently occurring words, and then I offer insights from collocate and concordance analysis, organized by word. Specifically, I examine the words “faculty,” “students/student,” “we,” “they,” “our,” “their,” “writing,” “vision,” “see,” and “voices.” Please refer to Appendix A to review all relevant data.

**Frequently occurring words.** Using WordSmith Tools, I first determined the most frequently occurring words in my corpus. Although there were 370 total words (occurring five or more times), I have featured 40 of the most frequent in Appendix A2. These 40 words occurred 26 times or more and exclude the function words “and,” “the,” “of,” “to,” “in,” “a,” “for,” “that,” “through,” “year,” “as,” “is,” “with,” “#,” “on,” “it,” “at,” “are,” “or,” “by,” “an,” “it/s,” and “also,” as these words did not yield any insight within my findings. Interested in better understanding the impact of mission statements on identity and recognizing the frequency of the words “students” (168 instances) and

“faculty” (40 instances), I chose to analyze both. I also chose to analyze the singular of “student” (20 instances) to examine how the word was used as an adjective across the missions. In addition, I examined the most frequently occurring pronouns, “we” (107 instances) and “they” (39 instances), and personal pronouns “our” (123 instances) and “their” (74 instances), as pronouns may denote power differences and influence experiences of belonging (Bloor, 2007, p. 21). Collectively these words were distributed across the documents. In addition, I examined the word “writing” as it was the most frequently occurring word in the corpus (242 instances). Finally, due to my interest in the relationship of these documents to ableist rhetoric, I examined the words “see,” “vision,” and “voices,” as these terms assume ability. Although these were not frequently occurring, they revealed important insights in relation to ableism’s potential circulation across mission statement documents.

**“Faculty” collocates and concordance.** I then examined the concordance and collocates for the word “faculty,” which occurred frequently in the corpus (40 instances, refer to Appendix A2). First examining collocates (refer Appendix A3), I found that “faculty” was often paired with “members” (6 instances), as in the phrase “faculty members.” With an MI relation score of 12.341, “members” also occurred in close proximity to faculty, indicating an even stronger relationship between the two. Collocates “in” (9 instances), “of” (15 instances), “program” (5 instances), and “department” (4 instances) also frequently co-occurred with faculty. Collectively, these constructions position faculty as insider “members” who exist “in” their “departments.” In addition, a lack of reference to faculty embodiment and the co-occurrence of faculty with “the” (19

instances) indicate that such “membership” is standardized across these mission statement documents.

Based on this collocate analysis, I next examined the concordance of “faculty” (refer to Appendix A4). In context, “faculty” frequently was positioned as an active subject. For example, one mission statement notes, “The department’s faculty places special emphasis on teaching and research.” In many instances, “faculty” was thus framed by mission statements as an active subject. Furthermore, when positioned as a subject, “faculty” were framed as productive contributors to the department, demonstrated by their association with active verbs like “support,” “coordinate,” and “contribute.” Specifically, one mission statement notes, “Faculty members contribute to...creative activity in the humanities to advance knowledge and serve the public good.” This statement positions faculty as facilitating the advancement of the university and the larger public. Likewise, among the active verbs associated with faculty were “teach” and “integrate,” indicating that faculty are responsible for educating and thus integrating others. Specifically, faculty were frequently associated with the direct object of “students,” suggesting that students were often the assumed recipients of faculty efforts. Collectively, these findings imply that mission statements understand faculty membership as requiring standard, productive contributions to ensure one’s belonging.

**“Student/s” collocates and concordances.** To better understand how students were represented by the mission statements, I examined the collocates and concordance of “students,” the second most frequent word across my corpus (168 instances, refer to Appendix A2). Although “student” (20 instances) was less frequent than “students,” I decided to analyze it to better understand how the term was used as an adjective across

the missions. Appendix A5 reflects the collocates of “student.” Appendix A6 reflects 40 of the 191 collocates of “students,” excluding the words “to,” “and,” “the,” “with,” “for,” “are,” “a,” “is,” “by,” “on,” “FYW,” and “at,” as they did not yield interpretive insights within my analysis. In my analysis of the “student” collocates (refer to Appendix A5), I recognized a universal treatment of student embodiment through the association of the word “student” with “the” (7 instances), “every,” (3 instances), “body” (3 instances), and “develop” (3 instances). Rather than accounting for students’ diverse embodiments, these statements positioned students as standardly and universally embodied. The condensed collocates list for “students” (Appendix A6) also reveals how mission statements position students as passive, with actions being done to them, which was indicated by verbs mostly located to the left of “students.” This is apparent in phrases like “help students” (10 instances), “provide students” (5 instances) and “teach students” (5 instances). Interestingly, the 9.39 MI relation score between “help” and “students” was higher than the other “students” collocates, suggesting that students were frequently positioned as direct objects in need of faculty help.

Specifically, one mission notes that their “department is dedicated to...inculcating in them [students] the ability to think critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives.” Here, students are positioned as objects rather than agents, being taught how to communicate effectively in their “professional and personal lives.” Universalizing all students, this statement disregards the complex range of experiences and communication styles that students represent. The collocate analysis (refer to Appendix A6) also indicated that “students” were frequently associated with words like “of” (37 instances), “in” (38 instances), and “our” (30 instances), which

suggests a group membership like “faculty.” However, “students” were also associated with “their” (17 instances), which, contrastingly, situates them as outsiders. Likewise, while “our” was associated with “students” (30 instances), it was frequently positioned to the left of “students,” as in “our students” (26 instances). This frames students as belonging *to* an “us,” rather than *with* them.

To gain additional insight into the discursive construction of “student” and “students,” I then examined their concordances. The concordance of “students” (refer to Appendix A8) reflects 37 of the total 168 instances of the word, based on the most significantly observed trends. Despite the association of “students” with the words “become” (4 instances) and “develop” (13 instances), as indicated by Appendix A6, embodiment is never mentioned. For example, referencing their first-year writing course, one mission states, “A primary aim of the course is for students to develop productive understandings of their own goals as learners.” Here, students are positioned in universal states of developing their goals into “productive” understandings; failure is never anticipated. This is further indicated by the frequent positioning of words like “need” (5/6 instances) and “will” (6/7 instances) to the right of “students,” as in “students need” (refer to Appendix A6). In this way, student growth and development are articulated as occurring in particularly standardized ways.

This focus on individual development was also demonstrated by the frequent positioning of “students” as indirect objects that others “help,” “teach,” and “prepare.” Positioning “students” predominantly as indirect objects, the mission statements in my corpus credit students’ actions to the efforts of others. Specifically, one mission notes that their “department is dedicated to...inculcating in them [students] the ability to think

critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives.” Here, students are positioned as objects rather than agents, being taught how to “communicate effectively.” Equating student behavior with that of the department, this statement also disregards a range of students’ thinking and communication styles.

The concordance of “student” (20 instances) in Appendix A7 similarly illustrates the discursive implications of mission statements on students. Throughout this concordance, students are positioned as both independent, yet universalized individuals. This is reflected through the repetition of phrases like “each student,” “every student,” and “the student.” For example, one mission notes that “FYW aims to develop each student’s capacity to understand and adapt to new writing situations.” Treating students as universally standard, such language disregards student differences. This suggests that while mission statements attempt to account for student diversity through words like “multicultural,” these efforts may be occluded by standardizing language.

**“We” collocates and concordance.** I then examined the collocates and concordance of “we,” the most frequently occurring pronoun in the corpus (107 instances, refer to Appendix A2), to better understand the role of pronouns in constructing student and instructor identities. Appendix A10 reflects a condensed list of 40 of the 107 instances of “we” in the larger concordance that most clearly indicates the trends I noted in my analysis. Appendix A9 reflects a condensed list of 42 of the 119 collocates of “we” that occurred three times or more, excluding the function words “are,” “a,” “is,” “have,” “as,” “at,” “re,” “how,” “which,” “also,” “an,” and “so,” as these did not reveal analytical significance. In analyzing the “we” collocates, I noticed that “we” was heavily associated with “students” (16 instances), which consistently occurred to the

right of “we.” This suggests that “we” and “students” are framed by the mission statements as separate entities. Through sentence-level analysis of the concordance, I specifically found “department” and “faculty” to be the only identifiable antecedents of “we,” excluding students from this group. In addition, “we” was associated with verbs like “offer” (9 instances), “encourage” (4 instances), “provide” (3 instances), and “equip” (3 instances). For example, one mission statement notes, “We provide cutting-edge training in writing for first-year students.” Like faculty, “we” are positioned as active agents in student development, while students are generally positioned as indirect objects of faculty efforts. Likewise, while my collocate analysis found that “we” often occurred with “students,” my sentence-level analysis found that “students” were generally positioned as direct objects. For example, one mission statement notes, “We provide cutting-edge training in writing for first-year students.” Like faculty, “we” were framed as active agents whose efforts enable the “training” and subsequent development of “students.”

**“They” collocates and concordance.** Wanting to compare the framing of “we” to “they,” I next examined the concordance and collocates of “they” (39 instances, refer to Appendix A2), with findings reflected in Appendix 11 and Appendix 12. My collocate analysis revealed that, like students, “they” was frequently associated with “in” (13 instances), “of” (11 instances), “write” (5 instances), and “need” (5 instances). Upon further analysis of the “they” concordance, I found that the most common referent of “they” was “students.” Like “students,” the concordance of “they” revealed that “they” are associated with indirect action verbs like “can,” “learn,” and “need,” indicating that “they” were similarly framed by missions as passive outsiders learning to engage in



prescribed ways. Similarly, by associating “they” with words like “can,” such statements presume that “they” are universally able. The mission statements thus frame students as problematically passive and disembodied.

**“Our” collocates and concordance.** I next examined the concordance and collocates of the possessive pronoun “our,” as the term frequently was used across the mission statements (123 instances, refer to Appendix A2). As Appendix A13 reflects, like faculty, “our,” was often associated with the collocates “to” (40 instances), “of” (40 instances), “in” (36 instances), and “the” (36 instances). Such associations indicate that “our” was used across the corpus to denote insider status. In addition, while “students” (30 instances) was a frequent collocate of “our,” it was most frequently positioned as a direct object, indicating that students belong *to* “us” rather than *with* them. “Courses” (14 instances) and “classes” (4 instances) were also common direct objects of “our,” suggesting that “our” reflected either faculty or departments. For example, one mission explains that “Because...texts in their infinite variety take as their subjects our fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, we aim in effect to equip our students both to read the world, and write the future.” In this statement, students are positioned as objects rather than subjects, who are “equipped” by educators to read and write. Further, by standardizing all “histories” and “cultures” as “ours,” this statement also disregards a range of histories and cultures underrepresented in classroom or popular discourse. In the absence of a specific antecedent, constructions of “our” may thus equate classroom experiences with those of all.

My analysis of the “our” concordance (refer to Appendix A14) further revealed the term’s capacity to demarcate normative, ableist boundaries. Phrases like “our own”

suggest that independent action is valued by this collective group. Likewise, as my analysis of the “our” concordance indicates, “our” was frequently associated with “work” and “research,” which suggests that “our” group is united through their productive commitments. In addition, through the relationship of “our” with direct objects like “place” and community, “our” presumes that all of “us” are part of one, singular community. For example, one mission statement notes, “Our commitment is to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of our campus, our community, and the individuals who compose them.” This presumes that to be a part of “us,” one must identify with uniformly prescribed understandings of “intellect,” “culture,” and “community.” While language like “our” may seem inclusive, its tendency to draw universal assumptions may lead to the exclusion of populations like disabled individuals who reflect nonnormative experiences.

**“Their” collocates and concordance.** I then examined the collocates and concordance of “their” (74 instances), as this word also frequently occurred across the corpus (refer to Appendix A2). As previously demonstrated by “they,” my findings indicated that “students” was a frequent collocate of “their” (20 instances, refer to Appendix A15), occurring predominantly to its left-hand side (17 instances). In addition, through a close analysis of the “their” concordance (refer to Appendix A16), I found that “students” was predominantly positioned as the antecedent of “their,” while “faculty” was far less frequently associated with “their.” Like the other pronouns, “their” was often used to denote in and out-group boundaries. Specifically, like “our,” “their” reflected an assumption of ableist independence through its association with “own.” Likewise, “their” “writing,” “lives,” “communities,” and “thinking” are presumed to be universal across the

mission statements. For example, one mission notes, “We emphasize writing skills, critical thinking, and creativity as a means of preparing students for the increasing demands on their literacy in the workplace and in their communities.” While this statement uses standardizing language applicable across contexts, it does not account for the diverse nuance represented by “writing,” “critical thinking,” and “creativity.” By not accounting for difference, such statements may invalidate and disempower knowledge-making activities outside standard expectations.

**“Writing” collocates and concordance.** Across the mission statements, writing was presented as a politically neutral tool, equally accessible to all. Appendix A17 provides a condensed version (33 lines) of the 247-line concordance for “writing,” based on identified thematic trends. Appendix A18 reflects 61 of the 234 collocates. As the concordance in Appendix A17 reflects, writing is framed as the “work of the university,” “intellectual work,” or “epistemic activity.” For example, one mission positions “writing as a powerful intellectual tool and practice.” Writing is communicated as an integral tool for work in and beyond the university. It is framed as shaping the thought processes of students and their knowledge of, and engagement with, the world around them. This is further demonstrated by the association of “writing,” with “students” (31 instances), “university” (7 instances), “skills” (11 instances), “community” (10 instances) and “work” (6 instances). In this way, writing is framed as a skill through which students uniformly may engage in university work; difference is never anticipated. As indicated through phrases like “writing gives students practice in precision and logic” and “writing gives writers power” (refer to Appendix A18), writing is framed as an active force of transformation for students.

**“Voices,” “see,” and “vision” concordances.** I ultimately examined the concordances of “voices” (3 instances), “see” (8 instances), and “vision” (9 instances) to better understand the influence of ableist language across the corpus. I did not analyze the collocates for these words, as none of them occurred frequently. Across the corpus, students are associated with “voices,” which they are expected to “bring” to class and make “heard” (refer to Appendix A19). For example, one mission notes, “Students need to become...better equipped to navigate nimbly a broader and more rapidly shifting world...but they also can find it difficult to get their ‘local’ voices heard.” Such a statement risks circulating ableist rhetoric as it assumes individuals have the capacity to both speak and “nimble” move. Similarly, seeing is presented as an expectation of the collective group, indicated by its association with “we,” “culture,” and “human” (refer to Appendix A20). For example, one statement notes, “Imaginative reasoning allows us to speculate, to see and re-see our human and non-human environment in its diversity and flux.” While this statement recognizes human “diversity,” its assumption that all of “us” may “see” and “re-see” that humanity disregards disabled individuals. Finally, “vision,” a word generally used across mission statements to define goals and expectations, also is inherently ableist by assuming a capacity for sight (refer to Appendix A21). Although used infrequently, the presence of this ableist language demonstrates a lack of attention to disabled embodiments and knowledge-making practices.

## **Discussion**

Below, I analyze my findings according to three key themes: assimilation, disembodiment, and productivity.

**Assimilation.** As my findings suggest, the mission statements in my corpus generally demarcate boundaries between students and the broader academic community. Mission statements position faculty as a standard group, united as “members” through their ongoing “commitment” to their departments and students; this is further indicated through “faculty’s” frequent association with words like “support” and engage” (Appendix A3 and Appendix A4). Interestingly, when positioned as active subjects across mission statements, faculty agency seems grounded in their alignment with department expectations. Specifically, my analysis revealed that “faculty” are often charged with “teach[ing]” students (Appendix A4) prescribed, insider behaviors. This insider status was further indicated through pronoun use across the mission statements, with “we” and “our” typically designating faculty and “they” and “their” indicating students (Appendix A11 and Appendix A15). Further, “our” faculty and departments, united by collective “actions” and “community” (Appendix A13), are expected to acclimate students to the university and prepare them for the workforce. This is further indicated through the frequent positioning of “students” as the indirect objects of faculty and departmental efforts (Appendix A4). In assuming a baseline of ability, these missions speak to the power of homogeneity in enforcing normative ideals by identifying and correcting aberrance (Foucault, 1979, p. 184). Collectively, these mission statements hold both faculty and students accountable to normative standards.

While standards may suggest attempts by composers of mission statements at engaging with flexible inclusion, by failing to consider embodied differences, these documents inherently exclude. This use of homogeneity is most apparent in phrases like “every student” and “each student” (Appendix A5). It is likewise apparent in discussions

of “students” as “develop[ing],” “learn[ing],” “becom[ing]” and “practic[ing]” (Appendix A6) in universal ways. Through such discourse, these mission statements standardize experience by dictating appropriate individual behavior. In addition, as demonstrated by the findings, neoliberalism influences individual materiality (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 8); specifically, these missions encourage student and faculty assimilation with larger departmental expectations. Although many of the missions note values of diversity, such values are occluded by attempts to align individuals with the status quo. Rather than including disabled bodyminds, such normalizing discourses contribute to disability’s overcoming or erasure.

**Disembodiment.** Reinforcing homogeneity, these statements also disregard uniquely embodied experiences. Framed as belonging to an “our” or “we,” individual faculty difference is erased by references to collective “work,” “actions,” and “community” (Appendix A3). Student embodiment is similarly disregarded, as students are referred to as a collective “body” who “develop” uniformly (Appendix A5). Such framing situates disabled individuals in precarious positions, as they may reflect bodyminds that challenge idealized norms. Specifically, as rhetorical engagement is often positioned as “what makes one human” by guiding social interactions (Yergeau, 2018, p. 6), the non-normative engagement of disabled individuals historically has been framed not only as “rhetorically suspect” but also as less than human (p. 3). In standardizing engagement, these mission statements may dictate the bounds of social experience.

Furthermore, student engagement frequently is divorced from the body through the continuous positioning of students as objects, rather than embodied agents (Appendix A6). While “students” are engaged in processes of “develop[ing],” “learn[ing]” and

“becom[ing],” such actions are credited to the efforts of faculty and departments. In addition, the language used across the mission statements assumes ability through words like “vision,” “see,” and “voices” (Appendix A19-A21). For example, one mission statement encourages students to “see and re-see our human and non-human environment.” Such ableist language falsely standardizes not only what it means to be part of the university, but also what it means to be human. Even though these words are used infrequently, their presence suggests that seemingly neutral standards are likely ableist. Further, by assuming able bodyminds, mission statement discourse may, unknowingly, invalidate the rhetorical value of alternative communicative practices and the humanity of those who engage in such practices. These mission statements may thus invalidate disabled students’ agency by disregarding their “subjective bodily experience” and consciousness (Wendell, 1996, p. 87).

**Independent progress.** The ableist implications of such standardizing language are similarly reflected through the corpus’s attention to productivity. “Faculty” and “we” are discursively framed as active agents across the mission statements (refer to Appendix A3 and A9), engaged in efforts of “publish[ing],” “coordinat[ing],” “contribut[ing],” and “produc[ing].” To participate successfully within the department and university, faculty are thus expected to be productive. In addition, both “faculty” and “we” are expected to contribute to the progress of “students,” indicated by the frequency of words like “support,” “teach,” “offer,” and “help.” At the center of “our” efforts is a connection between writing and productivity. Writing is framed as “intellectual work” and “epistemic activity” (Appendix A17); it productively “gives power” and “precision and

logic” to students. The statements demonstrate that to become a part of “us,” a student must adopt standard logics and writing behaviors.

Students, in turn, are positioned as direct objects, passively receiving faculty efforts and “learn[ing],” “develop[ing],” and “becom[ing]” universally productive (Appendix A6). Similarly, verbs are predominantly positioned to the left of students, with actions being done to them rather than by them (Appendix A5-A8). Further, through frequent discussions related to what “student(s)” and “they” “will,” “can,” and “need” to do (refer to Appendix A7-A8), certain productive behaviors are mandated of all. Through reliance on such standards of productivity, these missions may “impose violent logics” upon disabled individuals, such as those with autism or mental illness, as the rhetorical actions of these individuals are historically positioned by neoliberal frames as involuntarily unproductive (Yergeau, 2018, pp. 9-10). Difference, complications, and failure are never anticipated. This disregards the unequal distribution of resources across student populations and the varying degrees of labor required of them. Focused on “ideal” independent students, universities may forget the “inequities” and “economic realities” that empower some students over others (Dolmage, 2017, p. 107). Through such standards of individual progress, these missions may “impose violent logics” on disabled individuals, such as those with autism or mental illness, as their rhetorical actions are historically positioned by neoliberal logics as involuntary, unproductive, and dependent (Yergeau, 2018, pp. 9-10).

### **Framework for (Re)constructing Mission Statements**

As my analysis recognizes and reveals (Walton et al., 2019), mission statements may, unknowingly, circulate ableism across universities through their adherence to



standards. I thus recommend that WPAs and compositionists reject and replace (Walton et al., 2019) such tendencies by “cripping” their documentation practices. To “crip” means to be “non-compliant” and “anti-assimilationist” by upholding disability as “a desirable part of the world” (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 2). In “cripping” documentation strategies, we can resist the assimilative impulses documented across my findings and consider disability not as a problem to be resolved but as a generative source of institutional transformation (Dolmage, 2014, p. 96). To “crip” documentation practices, I recommend that compositionists consider insights from TPC, which recognizes how documents “construc[t] reality and determin[e] what--and more relevantly, who--counts as normal” (Browning & Cagle, 2017, p. 443) by endorsing specific “identities, social practices, ideological positions, discursive statements [and] social groups” (Slack et al., 1993, p. 28) within institutional spaces.

In this way, TPC documents directly impact who is recognized as belonging within institutional spaces and, consequently, who is granted citizenship in those spaces. I thus turn to social justice and, more specifically, disability justice in offering a framework for TPCers to engage with more equitable and accessible document construction. As articulated in previous chapters, social justice scholarship asks us as composers of documents to interrogate how seemingly neutral discourse, documentation, and design practices may contribute to larger systems of oppression (Walton, Moore & Jones, 2019). Further, as noted in earlier chapters, disability justice contextualizes this examination in relation to larger systems of ableism. Specifically, disability justice extends the work of DS by helping us recognize the systemic nature of ableism and its connection to other oppressive systems. In this section, I offer three general guidelines

for crippling mission statements through the application of TPC and disability justice insights to my findings: articulating anti-assimilationist multiplicity, validating students' embodied agency, and advocating for collaborative interdependence. Across this section, the use of each guideline is modeled through revisions to analyzed mission statements from my corpus. In offering these revisions, I recognize their limitations as distanced from each program's initial intentions.

**Articulating anti-assimilationist multiplicity.** My findings indicated that these missions seek to align students and instructors with standard structures and productive practices. Consequently, those whose communication styles fall outside established norms, such as disabled individuals, may be invalidated. As TPC indicates, “normative commonplaces” that dictate “rigid ideals” across institutional spaces may contribute to the ongoing exclusion of disabled individuals (Konrad, 2018, p. 135) by confusing inclusion with assimilation. In other words, by attempting to align individuals with normative structures, institutional stakeholders may foster conditional understandings of inclusion that encourage individuals to erase or overcome their disabilities. Similarly, such practices reinforce medical understandings of disability as a personal lack. This disregards the disability justice principle of wholeness, which recognizes disabled people as whole people and resists attempts to assimilate disabled experiences with the larger status quo (Berne et al., 2018). By attending to how disabled students experience academic spaces as uniquely embodied, whole people, we can better understand and challenge “professional discourses... [that may] reinforce normalcy and marginalize the embodied knowledge” of disabled individuals” (Palmeri, 2006, p. 50). Composers of

mission statements might thus identify and resist such normalizing tendencies by embracing the potential for multiplicity. To do so, I recommend the following:

***Avoid norm-prescribing language.*** Across the missions, able embodiments were prioritized through assumptions related to productive success. This is illustrated in the repetition of “can” and “will” across the statements and in the presence of ableist language like “see,” “vision,” and “voices.” By assuming able bodyminds, such normative language disregards other forms of engagement that may not align with anticipated standards; for example, such language may disregard the experiences of deaf and blind students. As TPC has recognized, by interrogating normalcy, we can identify and disrupt ableism in institutional spaces (Moeller & Jung, 2014). I thus recommend that mission statements avoid norm-prescribing language. To demonstrate the impact of this shift, I offer a revision of text from my corpus:

Original Text: “Students **need to** become more globally aware and better equipped to **navigate nimbly** a broader and...rapidly shifting world...but they also can find it difficult to get their ‘local’ **voices heard.**”

Revision: In these courses, **students become more globally aware and better equipped to grapple with** writing situations across **diverse local contexts** amidst rapidly shifting cultural and global **dynamics.**

This revision rejects ableist language like “nimbly,” “voices,” and “can,” and replaces them with words like “grapple” to demonstrate the challenging nature of the writing process. Likewise, it exchanges necessary mandates for processes that students may engage in across “diverse local contexts.” By embracing a “non-compliant” and “frictional” idea of access that resists assimilation (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 10) in

composing mission statements, WPAs and compositionists can facilitate increased access for disabled students and challenge problematic norms. Composers of mission statements may thus resist neoliberal goals of normative assimilation by avoiding language that assumes students and faculty of able bodyminds and rejecting statements that frame certain behaviors as imperative. In this way, composers of such documents can resist neoliberal impulses that position disability as lack by embracing the frictional possibility reflected by understandings of disabled individuals as whole bodyminds. Through such methods, compositionists can reject neoliberal articulations that understand access as assimilation and replace them with articulations of access as a frictional opportunity to both critique and move beyond established structures (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019).

*Cultivate multiplicity.* Similarly, my findings indicate that these missions offer individuals equal access to the same, standard knowledge. In this way, as TPC explains, these statements “hol[d] bodies and texts to normative ideals” (Boyle & Rivers, 2016, p. 31) by offering “alternative ways into the same thing” (p. 37). This may enforce homogeneity while negating alternative forms of engagement. Consequently, I recommend the generation of multiple forms of knowledge-making and end goals attuned to diverse embodiments. To indicate how this shift might be accomplished, I offer the following revision to corpus text:

Original Text: The “department is dedicated to enlightening students about the world and inculcating in them the ability to think critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives.”

Revision: **Students and faculty** in the department **engage with diverse methods** of critical thinking and communication by examining and **expanding** traditional

communication practices through considerations for **a multiplicity of personal and professional experiences.**

This revision emphasizes diversity in the knowledge-making processes associated with written communication. Specifically, it rejects ideas of knowledge-making as a process of “inculcating” in students a singular, static ability and replaces them with understandings of knowledge-making that are grounded in diversely embodied experiences. Knowledge is here characterized by multiplicity and possibility, rather than standardized, neoliberal ability. Such revisions may also foster what Casey Boyle and Nathaniel Rivers (2016) refer to as “multiple ontologies,” or multiple ways of being and knowing. Challenging accessible initiatives that offer individuals various routes to standardized constructions, Boyle and Rivers call for an idea of access that promotes multiplicity through accommodations that expand, deepen, and potentially challenge dominant structures. The revisions offered here thus not only resist assimilation with neoliberal standards but also challenge such standards by multiplying rhetorical possibilities. In this way, such tactics facilitate understandings of disabled experiences not only as whole experiences but as integral to social change.

**Validating students’ embodied knowledge.** As demonstrated by my findings, mission statements may obscure the needs of unique embodiments by universalizing experiences. As TPC scholarship has found, composers of documents often assume an audience of “unproblematic and disembodied” users (Melonçon, 2013a, p. 69) and consequently disregard the unique needs of diverse bodyminds. In addition, TPC scholars have found that like all embodiments, disability is experienced dynamically by individuals “depending on the time of day, specific physical environment, and condition

of their body at any particular moment” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 275). By assuming an audience of consistent ability, composers of documents may fail to provide the flexible resources that disabled individuals need (Wendell, 1996, p. 39). To pursue more embodied understandings of users that frame disabled students as leaders in classroom spaces, I recommend attention to the disability justice principle of sustainability. This principle understands embodied experience as integral to knowledge-making practices (Berne et al., 2018). To foster this principle, I recommend the following:

*Value embodied difference.* The embodiment of neither students nor faculty is discussed across the missions; all are positioned as reflecting universal abilities, cultures, and experiences. While such generalization can promote flexibility across contexts, it upholds standards that may exclude disabled individuals. Consequently, I recommend that mission statements prioritize embodied difference through attention to intersectionality, or how personal experiences of “privilege or oppression” are mutually and complexly informed by embodied identity categories like disability, race, gender, and sexuality (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227). As TPC has recognized, composers of documents must avoid “mechanistic” understandings of audience and instead attend to the complex and uniquely situated nature of human experience (Gutsell & Hulgín, 2013, p. 92). To demonstrate considerations for intersectional context, I offer the following revision of text from my corpus:

Original Text: “We emphasize writing **skills**, critical thinking, and creativity **as a means of preparing students** for the increasing demands on **their literacy** in the workplace and in **their communities.**”

Revision: **Students examine the complex rhetorical expectations of** workplace contexts and communities by **drawing upon and developing their intersectionally diverse skills in** writing and critical thinking.

While the original version positions “we” as active agent and students as passive recipients of “skills,” the revision positions students as agents drawing on their own diverse skills and intersectional knowledges. This allows all students, including disabled students, to think critically about literacy practices through the active co-construction of knowledge. It likewise expands notions of critical thinking by anticipating a diverse range of critical thinking forms. In this way, composers of mission statements may reject neoliberalism's standardized, ableist understandings of writing and critical thinking and replace such constructions with intersectionally embodied understandings of knowledge construction (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227). Such tactics ensure that a range of intersectional identities may be sustained by our composition classrooms and larger departments.

*Promote student agency.* Across the corpus, students were positioned as passive recipients of faculty and departmental efforts. Such constructions deny students the capacity to influence classroom knowledge and writing structures. Instead, as TPC relays, compositionists should “value...diverse embodied experiential knowledges in the construction of our information products,” specifically in relation to populations who may be historically marginalized by normative constructions (Smyser-Fauble, 2018, p. 88). I thus recommend that mission statement position students as active agents so that students may influence classroom epistemologies and practices. To exemplify how missions might be reconstructed to consider student agency, I revise text from my corpus below:

Original Text: “**We provide** cutting-edge training in writing for first-year students.”

Revision: **Students individually and collectively develop** writing skills and **co-construct knowledge** by integrating classroom content **with diverse literacy experiences.**

Through this revision, the writing process is re-envisioned as a collective and dynamic experience, rather than a set of skills to be passed on. By fostering an environment that allows students to influence knowledge construction, mission statements can reject constructions that center department or faculty as those who relay knowledge and replace them with constructions that center disabled students as agentive constructors or knowledge (Dolmage, 2017, p. 127). Such a redesign promotes the DS value of universal design, or design for as many individuals as possible, by situating all students as co-constructors of classroom knowledge and understanding all knowledge as experientially situated (Hitt, 2018; Dolmage, 2017). Furthermore, this advances the goals of disability justice by fostering learning environments able to sustain a range of disabled embodiments specifically through efforts that facilitate leadership by disabled individuals most impacted by design (Berne et al, 2018).

**Advocating for collaborative interdependence.** Collectively, the missions do not account for students’ ranging abilities, but instead rely on phrases like “students can” and “students will.” Such statements promote able ideals by advocating for an understanding of productive independence that disregards students who may engage with class materials in unanticipated ways or with access to resources others do not have. I thus recommend a shift to statements that encourage collective interdependence and that



demonstrate how “relational circuits between bodies, environments, and tools” (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 12) influence individual autonomy. As disability justice articulates, the principle of interdependence recognizes that individual autonomy relies on collective access efforts. To show how documentation strategies might consider collective interdependence, I offer the following recommendations:

***Remove insider/outsider markers.*** As my findings suggest, the use of pronouns across the mission statements establishes boundaries of belonging that may promote adherence with a standard status quo. I thus recommend that composers of mission statements avoid using pronouns that may articulate unequal power dynamics, such as “us” and “them.” Likewise, rather than positioning students as passive recipients of faculty efforts, classroom agency might be communicated as collectively mitigated between and among faculty and students. To demonstrate these tactics, I offer a revision of selected text from my corpus:

Original Text: “Because [literary] texts in their infinite variety take as **their** subjects **our** fellow humans, **our** histories, and **our** cultures, **we** aim in effect to equip **our** students both to read the world and write the future.”

Revision: Because [literary] texts engage **diverse** histories, cultures, and personal perspectives, **students and faculty collectively examine** course texts by **dialoguing across different their different** histories, cultures, and positionalities to both read the world and write the future.

By removing “our” and “we” and framing textual examination as driven by difference, this revision anticipates students’ and faculty’s varying positionalities rather than expecting individuals to assimilate with prescribed standards. Likewise, by understanding

the collective nature of this process, this revision prioritizes disability justice's goal of interdependence, which resists neoliberalism's individualizing impulses through collective efforts to include and support differently abled individuals as they are (Berne et al., 2018, pp. 227-228).

***Promote collaboration.*** As my findings indicate, phrases like “every student” frame learning as an individualized process of meeting standard expectations, which may erase differences like disability. I thus recommend the prioritization of difference through constructions that anticipate and draw on a myriad of dynamic experiences. As TPC indicates, disability should offer “transformative insight” (Palmeri, 2006, p. 57) that challenges normative structures (Konrad, 2018). To illustrate considerations for disability, I offer a revision of text from my corpus:

Original Text: “FYW aims to **develop each student’s** capacity to understand and adapt to new writing situations.”

Revision: In FYW courses, **students and faculty collectively and critically work to** understand and adapt to new writing situations.

Rather than positioning “students” as objectively “developed” by FYW, this revision frames students and faculty as collaborators in navigating writing situations. Likewise, this statement reframes “understanding” as a process that requires collective, critical effort rather than denoting a static, individualized process. In addition, I recommend that departments and instructors incorporate student feedback in the review and revision of materials so that they might reflect student experiences as closely as possible (Smyser-Fauble, 2018, p. 87). Such tactics reject neoliberal goals of independence and replace them with understandings of learning as a collective process between students and

faculty. They likewise support universal design by directly involving students in the ongoing redesign of classroom spaces and the documents, like mission statements, that organize behavior in them (Hitt, 2018; Dolmage, 2017). By embracing disability justice's principle of interdependence, composers of mission statement documents may thus foster understandings of autonomy grounded in collective access and action.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has recognized and revealed the implications that standardizing language may have, particularly for disabled individuals and has offered guidelines for documentation strategies that reject and replace such tactics. Importantly, these guidelines reflect a starting point for such resistance; they can, and should, be developed further for departments' unique needs. In offering these guidelines, I recognize that many mission statements are constructed in response to the assessment practices of institutional structures or accrediting organizations. While such practices aim to ensure that students receive consistent educational experiences, this chapter illustrates that such standard goals may contribute to the circulation of an ableist rhetoric that marginalizes disabled individuals. Future research thus might examine these impacts and pursue non-assimilative forms of assessment. Likewise, as this piece employed discourse analysis, future research might analyze the embodied impacts that mission statements can have on students and faculty. As neoliberal standardization continues to permeate higher education, it is vital that compositionists acknowledge and assess its impacts on documentation practices. By crippling mission statements and other documents through considerations for DS, disability justice, and TPC, compositionists may celebrate

difference and expand documentation beyond ableism's violently neutral bounds.

### **Chapter 5 Preview**

In Chapter Five, I continue my analysis of ableism's rhetorical circulation by examining care-based documents on university websites. In this chapter, I demonstrate how ableist rhetoric can circulate through university care-based documents using thematic coding. I offer a brief review of relevant scholarship, provide insight into my choice of analytical sites data collection process, and explain my site-specific research methods. In this chapter, I offer readers data-driven recommendations for composing care-based documents that are grounded in disability justice and are attuned to the complexly intersectional and dynamically vulnerable nature of disability.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERROGATING NEOLIBERAL NOTIONS OF CARE

#### **The Ableist Assumptions of Self-care**

Self-care denotes a popular, yet problematic buzzword grounded in neoliberal ideals. As defined in Chapter Two, neoliberalism positions the free market as central to human action and value by prioritizing goals of productivity, efficiency, and expediency (McGuire, 2017, p. 413). Specifically, neoliberal discourse frequently endorses as healthy the bodyminds that can most effectively advance the interests of the larger capitalist market. Likewise, neoliberalism seeks to further the market's productivity by establishing an ideal of health for public pursuit and consumption that relies on a combination of medical and technological intervention. In this way, neoliberalism contributes to the circulation of ableist rhetoric across institutional spaces by framing certain bodyminds as more able, productive, and healthy than others and by advocating for the erasure of embodiments deemed unproductive by such standards, like those of disabled folks.

Recognizing how neoliberal notions of wellness may contribute to medical understandings of disability as an individual problem in need of erasure or overcoming, I analyze in this chapter the assumptions reflected by self-care documents circulated on three universities' websites to offer methods for identifying ableist influences and, ultimately, for replacing potentially ableist warrants with those more equitable. The concept of care reflects

both a practice and a value. As a practice, it shows us how to respond to needs and why we should. It builds trust and mutual concern and connectedness

between persons. It is not a series of individual actions, but a practice that develops, along with its appropriate attitudes. (Held, 2006, p. 42)

In other words, care is a social practice complexly influenced by sociopolitical relationships and discourse. To understand the influence of university care-based documents on institutional practices and values related to care, this chapter specifically draws from a theoretical combination of rhetorics of health and medicine (RHM), disability studies (DS), and technical and professional communication (TPC) to examine how the language used across self-care initiatives intended to support student wellness may rely on and contribute to ableist assumptions. As James L. Cherney (2019) explains, ableism perpetuates an “idealized norm” regarding “what it means to be human” and functions as “a framework of interpretation” based in “linguistic codes and assumptions that govern interpretation” (p. 11). In this way, self-care documents can have material impacts on disability access in universities because they engage discursive assumptions that position certain bodyminds as more *normal* or *human* than others,

This chapter thus calls for the interrogation and (re)construction of university self-care documents by applying Walton, Moore, and Jones’s (2019) 4R’s: recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing documentation practices that can contribute to oppressive systems. To demonstrate the potentially problematic impacts such documents can have on disabled individuals, I model methods for recognizing and revealing how ableist assumptions may arise in care-based documents by analyzing the language used by three university self-care websites associated with Arizona State University, Denison University, and the University of Texas at Austin. Each self-care program is either housed in the university’s counseling center or in a separate wellness program. Based on

my findings, I offer guidelines for rejecting and replacing ableist warrants with assumptions grounded in DS principles (Smyser-Fauble, 2018; Hitt, 2018; Browning and Cagle, 2017; Melonçon, 2013a) and disability justice (Berne et al., 2018; Wheeler, 2018; Mingus, 2011). Through this transformative shift in assumptions, I assert that composers of care-based documents can move away from composing documents that aim to align individuals with standard notions of wellness and more justly and equitably engage in rhetorical discourse that supports a range of students, faculty, and staff.

This chapter draws from the fields of RHM, DS, and TPC to trace neoliberalism's impact on health-related documents and to demonstrate how such documents may contribute to ableism's circulation. In combination, these three disciplines can help us to recognize and reveal the discursive and material impacts of publicly circulated care-based discourse on disabled individuals. Understanding embodied experiences of health as rhetorically influenced by social discourse, RHM can facilitate critical examination of how care-based document discourse may influence the embodied realities of disabled individuals through the norms they rely on and reinforce. Specifically,

scholars studying RHM argue that the field is concerned not only with the discursive aspects of health and medicine...but also with how health-care and medical issues circulate in all the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of our world...The rhetoric of health and medicine is principally concerned with gaining a better understanding of the conceptualization and representation of health and the complex ways in which culture (broadly construed) influences the delivery and consumption of health care. (Melonçon et al., 2020, p. 1)

In other words, as a discipline and theoretical lens, RHM fosters the interrogation of social, cultural, economic, and political influences on public notions of health; RHM thus helps us to understand health-related discourse and knowledge as rhetorically, socially, and culturally “situated” (Lynch & Zoller, 2015, p. 500).

As Drew Holladay and Margaret Price (2020) explain, the efforts of RHM may be complemented by DS as both fields analyze how medical discourse related to health and wellness may have embodied implications for disabled individuals. As discussed in Chapter Two, DS recognizes the detrimental impacts medical language can have for disabled individuals when it is used to define disability as “a personal defect or lack in need of medical or therapeutic intervention” (Melonçon, 2013a, p. 5). DS thus postulates that disability arises from the complex interaction between certain embodiments and “environmental and technological barriers that prevent people from having equal access to goods, services, interfaces, and information” (p. 5). In this way, DS encourages us to critically reflect on and reject problematic medical discourse that positions disabled individuals as “problems to be fixed” and to instead pursue “social change by analyzing the present social formations that contribute to maintaining the walls of exclusion” (Browning & Cagle, 2017, p. 443). Thus, DS understands disability as both an embodied personal experience and, simultaneously, as a discursively social one.

To trace the impact of institutional documents on discursive understandings of disability, scholars like Lisa Melonçon (2013a) advocate for the simultaneous application of TPC and DS. TPC allows us to better understand the role of documents in constructing and reinforcing normative structures. Noted in previous chapters, technical and professional communicators (TPCers), as articulators of meaning (Slack et al., 1993),



“facilitate, sustain, generate, and disrupt relations of power” (p. 15) by anticipating and reinforcing certain “identities, social practices, ideological positions, discursive statements, [and] social groups” (p. 28) in the documents they construct. Consequently, TPC is implicated in “constructing reality and determining what--and more relevantly, who--counts as normal” (Browning & Cagle, 2017, p. 443), based on the design decisions they make across their work with institutional documents. As Natasha N. Jones (2016) indicates, the communicative practices that individuals use across documents and design reflect “certain perspectives, viewpoints, and epistemologies” (p. 345). The discourse and design decisions made in document construction are thus never neutral but instead uphold certain values based on who or what they anticipate. In this way, TPC frameworks can inspire not only the critique of normative constructions of health that may disenfranchise disabled folks, but also the revision of these documents so that they are more equitably accessible to as many individuals as possible at the forefront of their design.

Collectively advocating for rhetorical analysis, RHM, DS, and TPC position “agency as distributed, knowledge and meaning as contingent, and discourse as always embedded in and mediated by context” (Derkatch & Spoel, 2020, p. 22). Specifically, this disciplinary combination can help us to better understand how neoliberal discourse circulated in care-based documents can influence institutional and sociopolitical understandings of health. Furthermore, this disciplinary fusion allows us to examine how neoliberal notions of health may privilege and empower able bodyminds and contribute to ableism’s circulation by reinforcing medicalized notions of disability as problematic and antithetical to health.

## **Neoliberalism's Deregulation of Disorder**

In deregulating the health industry, neoliberalism deleteriously impacts sociopolitical understandings of ability. As noted in Chapter Two, neoliberalism prioritizes the free market as a guide for all action and endorses able behaviors grounded in individual choice, responsibility, freedom, and flexibility (McGuire, 2017, p. 413). DS scholar Anne McGuire (2017) explains that:

As the dominant political and economic system of our time, neoliberalism is a discreet historical period characterized by emphasis on global, economic expansion, privatization, and individual responsibility. It is a system that, above all, works to ensure the freedom and flexibility of the market--any ideological or physical barriers that inhibit the free flow of capital are strategically dismantled, collapsed through all manner of de-regulation. (p. 413)

Associating normative behaviors with notions of choice, freedom, and flexibility, neoliberalism frames individuals as responsible for their own lives; neoliberalism thus transfers accountability for human wellbeing from state, federal, and other institutional spaces to individuals themselves.

Integral to neoliberalism's goals of deregulation is a spectral notion of health, or an understanding of health as existing on a continuum. As evidence of this shift, Anne McGuire (2017) discusses changes to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5), a manual for diagnosing mental health disorders. As she explains, this document switched in the 1980s from a categorical approach to disability (which labels one as disabled or not), to a spectrum approach that assumes disability and measures the degree to which one is disabled. Under the spectrum model, "Normalcy and

pathology are no longer imagined to be diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive but are reconfigured instead as oppositional poles anchoring a graded spectrum of diagnostic possibilities” (p. 407). In other words, the spectrum model not only diagnoses more individuals as disabled, but it likewise determines the degree of “severity” to which they are disabled. By identifying one’s degree of disability, this model encourages individuals to invest their time, energy, and finances in their individual remediation. Consequently, the spectrum model offers “the private sector...opportunity to profit from an already booming mental health market” (p. 418). Thus, while the spectrum model “deregulates” disorder, it simultaneously increases “regulation of the bodies and movements of people” (p. 413) by identifying the degree to which individual deviance must be remediated.

In measuring individuals against spectral models of health, neoliberalism draws from standardized concepts of wellbeing and risks of disorder/defect. Wellbeing denotes “one’s good, quality of life, utility, self-interest, and flourishing” and is associated with ideal qualities and habits that further one’s “self-interest” by offering certain “advantage[s]” and “prudential value[s]” (Campbell & Stramondo, 2017, p.153). To perpetuate itself, neoliberalism equates the qualities that allow individuals to participate in the free market most effectively and efficiently with understandings of “wellbeing.” Further, RHM helps us to recognize how seemingly neutral understandings of health may privilege “white, middle-and upper-class, nondisabled, Christian, heterosexual, gender-conforming, slender, [and] cisgender” populations and the values endorsed by these dominant populations, such as “self-reliance, individualism, autonomy, [intelligence] and choice” as integral to healthy personhood (Kopelson, 2009, p. 387). Associating such identities and qualities with a healthy ideal, neoliberalism frames them as wellness

“goals” towards which all individuals are expected to strive (Clare, 2017, p.173). As Eeva Sointu (2005) explains, “Discourses of wellbeing often perform a dual role in enforcing norms of docility and effectiveness at work, albeit through dressing these normative demands in individualistic and caring disguises” (p. 267). In other words, neoliberalism encourages individual “docility” by framing dominant embodiments and behaviors as “healthy” and therefore desirable.

That which is deemed detrimental to neoliberalism is thus framed as unhealthy, harmful, “costly,” “bad,” and risky (Campbell & Stramondo, 2017, p. 153). In tandem with wellbeing, neoliberalism relies on risk-related terms like “disorder,” and “defect” to designate that which is deemed unhealthy. Such terms are integral to neoliberalism’s spectral concept of health in that they designate certain conditions, qualities, and embodiments as pathological and in need of erasure through often costly medical cures. As DS scholar Eli Clare (2017) explains,

Defectiveness wields incredible power because ableism builds and maintains the notion that defective body-minds are undesirable, worthless, disposable, or in need of cure...In today’s world where ableism fundamentally shapes white Western cultural definitions of normal and abnormal, worthy and unworthy, whole and broken body-minds, any person or community named defective can be targeted without question or hesitation for eradication, imprisonment, and institutionalization. The ableist invention of defectiveness functions as an indisputable justification not only for cure but also for many systems of oppression. (p. 23)

The concept of defectiveness further naturalizes dominantly neoliberal health-related norms and may contribute to oppressive systems by positioning certain embodiments as problematic, in need of intervention, and requiring cure. Similarly, the concept of “disorder” is “used to constrict or confine, devalue or pathologize” (p. 42) embodiments that exist beyond dominant, neoliberal norms. Designating certain identities, qualities, and ways of being as defective or disordered, neoliberal care discourse justifies the “curing” of certain bodyminds through their alignment with the status quo. Further, by encouraging individuals to measure themselves against normative frames, neoliberal discourse may invalidate self-knowledge like that of disabled individuals, as it may misalign with normative structures (Campbell & Stramondo, 2017; Clare, 2017). In addition, disability is often positioned as a potential health consequence in risk-related communications. Specifically, as Jason Palmeri (2006) explains, risk-related communications often frame disability as a consequence of nonnormative, unhealthy, or unsafe behaviors; as he articulates, “safety and normalcy are inextricably bound” (p. 54). Drawing from medical conceptions of disability as a defective condition or consequence of avoidable risk, neoliberalism frames position disability as antithetical to health.

Grounding the pursuit and maintenance of healthy, productive ability in logics of choice, neoliberalism contributes to the circulation of ableism by promoting what Robert McRuer (2006) refers to as compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006). Specifically, by encouraging the individualized, compulsive pursuit of behaviors and embodied qualities associated with health, ability, and productivity, neoliberalism commodifies these collective concepts. A product of ableism, which, as explained in Chapter Two, involves the epistemological positioning of any aberrance from “presupposed norm[s]” as

“deviant” or “lacking” (Cherney, 2019, p. 8), compulsory able-bodiedness involves an individual’s ongoing pursuit of ability through means of individual, medical, and technological intervention. Further, in locating bodies in “a matrix of referenced pathologies deviating from narrow (and, ultimately, fictitious) norms of health” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 39), neoliberalism’s biomedical understandings of wellness motivate “medical intervention” (Derkatch, 2012, p. 6) through services and products that support one’s alignment with normative structures (Mitchell & Snyder, p. 41).

Further, through the circulation of health information across diverse public, web-based spaces, individuals are made responsible for monitoring their own health. Referred to as internet health, or “e-health,” modern patients can “acces[s] electronic health records, consul[t] physicians by email, [and] sho[p] online for pharmaceuticals” (Segal, 2009, 352). With access to health-related information across a variety of platforms, “healthy subjects [are expected to] seek out, assess, and act upon an endless stream of knowledge on the latest health threats” (Cairns & Johnston, p. 156). E-health thus serves as a normalizing technology by encouraging individuals to engage in ongoing acts of “self-control” and “self-improvement” (p. 156) regarding their health, ability, and productivity. Neoliberal articulations of health specifically rely on biomedical logics, which involve “innovations and interventions” grounded in individualized “forms of self-governance that people apply to themselves” across their daily lives (Clarke et al., 2003, p. 165). Through the means of e-health, neoliberalism positions individuals as “accountable” for making choices that contribute to their own self-improvement (Gill & Donaghue, 2015, n.p.). Under neoliberalism, wellbeing becomes “a social and moral responsibility, and...a matter of ongoing moral self-transformation” (Clarke et al., 2003,

172). Like all matters of the market, health so becomes a “good” for which individuals are morally responsible.

Framed as a personal and social “good,” wellbeing is integral to neoliberal concepts of citizenship. As Annemarie Mol (2008) explains:

By definition, a citizen is someone who controls his body, who tames it, or who escapes from it. ‘Citizens’ owe their ability to make their own choices to the silence of their organs. But this implies that you can only be a citizen in as far as your body can be controlled, tamed or transcended... Thus patient-citizens have to bracket a part of what they are. As a patient, you may only hope to be a citizen with your healthy part. Never completely, never as a whole. (p. 35)

In other words, neoliberalism understands the body as a phenomenon that can be individually controlled and transcended in one’s pursuit of wellness. Consequently, communications related to self-care encourage individuals to monitor their embodiments and behaviors to ensure that they maintain normative standards of health (Cairns & Johnston, 2015, p. 158). In addition, neoliberal logics encourage perpetual “optimisation” (En & Pöll, 2016, p. 48) and contribute to a “culture of [individual] surveillance” (Derkatch, 2012, p. 5) that continuously locates individuals against prescribed norms.

Neoliberal notions of self-care rely on and contribute to the circulation of ableist rhetorical assumptions by reinforcing specific embodiments, behaviors, and identities as worthy of citizenship and framing others as in need of care, remediation, and erasure. Consequently, neoliberal initiatives intended to care for and support individuals often translate into “self-care, self-love, and self-help” programs aimed at making “stressed and overworked employees...productive with the help of positive thinking, meditation, and

breathing instead of organizing and unionizing to change their working conditions or rally for public healthcare” (Michaeli, 2017, p. 52). Further, in framing wellness as an individual responsibility, neoliberalism occludes the “social, economic, and political sources of physical, emotional, and spiritual distress and exhaustion;” disregards the ways in which one’s “gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and other markers of privilege” may impact one’s access to and need for care; and depoliticizes individual experiences by encouraging self-regulation rather than social change (Michaeli, 2017, p. 53). That is, in framing wellness as an individualized phenomenon, neoliberalism disregards its contextual and intersectional nature. Through the concept of self-care, neoliberalism “place[s] responsibilities for health and welfare firmly with individual citizens...[and] obscures the collective responsibility of the state to provide adequate care for its citizens” (L. Ward, 2015, p. 46). In this manner, neoliberalism shifts concerns for care and wellness from collective efforts to individualized responsibilities.

Neoliberal biomedical understandings of wellness thus reinforce the normality of existing power structures; justify the inclusion of able subjects in that normative system; and blame the “unfit” or disabled for their exclusion (Kopelson, 2009, p. 388). Such programs so “obscur[e] the role of society and structural sociopolitical reasons for pain and injustice” by framing health, and thus care, as a matter of individual responsibility (Michaeli, p. 52). In other words, neoliberal notions of self-care fail to recognize how existing norms related to health not only disregard disabled individuals but, in many ways, contribute to their ongoing marginalization. Such constructions ensure the perpetuation of oppressive systems and disregard how one’s intersectional identity has direct implications on one’s access to and experience with care (N. Ward, 2015).



## **Tracing Ableism's Circulation Across Self-care Documents**

Universities frequently promote self-care initiatives to support their students, faculty, and staff. Specifically, university self-care sites consist of documents, resources, and applications that encourage students, faculty, and staff to “self-monitor” and “self-govern” for the sake of their “mental fitness” (Weinberg, 2021, p. 8). These documents are frequently found on university websites, associated with counseling centers or with university-specific wellness initiatives. They often offer guidance to individual students, faculty, and staff for monitoring their health or engaging in identified health habits. For example, self-care is reflected in a range of university interventions that help individuals build “resilience” by “managing stress, managing conflict, managing time, managing difficult colleagues, and so on” while disregarding the “structural consequences of a system placing intolerable demands” on its members (Gill & Donaghue, 2015, n.p.). Rather than encouraging a broad adjustment by institutions to the needs and experiences of diverse individuals, this care model mandates individuals to continuously adjust to and comply with the status quo (Webster & Rivers, 2019, p. 4).

University self-care initiatives and the documents that guide them may thus function as “technologies of the self” by normalizing some identities and behaviors and designating others as problematic and in need of remediation. Likewise, encouraging individuals to “‘manage time,’ ‘manage change,’ ‘manage stress,’ demonstrate resilience, [and] practice mindfulness,” such programs may leave “the power relations and structural conditions of the neoliberal university untouched and unchallenged. In this way, they... [can render] social and political issues into matters of individual success or failure” (Gill & Donaghue, 2015, n.p.). Upholding notions of meritocracy, these documents position

health as a matter of good conduct and illness as personal failure. Like all documents circulated across institutional spaces, self-care documents thus have real, embodied implications for those that use them, as they reinforce, empower, and normalize certain behaviors, beliefs, and identities while disempowering others (Slack et al., 1993).

Consequently, rather than anticipating a range of bodyminds in their articulations of health, university self-care documents may rely on and perpetuate normative assumptions of ability. By framing care as a matter of individual self-management, neoliberal concepts of wellness disregard “structural factors of ill health, including social and economic inequality” (Weinberg, 2021, p. 8) and fail “to challenge the underlying socioeconomic, political, and institutional structures that impact mental health” (p.18). Such understandings of care do not account for how institutional structures, practices, and expectations may contribute to the lack of time, increased stress, and ill health experienced by students, faculty, and staff. Likewise, as previous scholars have noted (Keränen, 2014; Gouge, 2018; Weinberg 2021), university wellness initiatives can discursively reinforce ableist assumptions related to intelligence, independence, productivity, and resilience for students, faculty, and staff. Promoting qualities like “productivity,” “grit,” and “resilience” (Weinberg, 2019, p. 6) as integral to personal wellbeing, universities may reinforce ableist articulations of wellness that disregard a range of embodiments. As Walton et al. (2019) articulate,

our academic programs, research contexts, and other communities are filled with people whose experiences have been all but ignored because systems of oppression have dictated...a mythical norm...[by centering] some experiences

over others....We would do well to consider the way the mythical norm has shaped the assumptions we make about the places we live and work. (p. 137-138)

Recognizing the tendency of self-care documents to prioritize dominant, able embodiments over other identities, it is vital that we critically reflect on the discursive implications of these documents in university spaces.

As care-based documents dictate which bodyminds are valuable and accepted as citizens in higher educational spaces, these documents hold immense social justice implications. As noted across previous chapters, TPC work with social justice has examined how seemingly neutral documentation practices may contribute to dominant and oppressive systems and “investigates how communication, broadly defined, can amplify the agency of oppressed people--those who are materially, socially, politically and/or economically under-resourced” (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 242). Consequently, I turn to Walton et al.’s (2019) call to recognize, reveal, reject and replace documentation practices that may perpetuate oppressive systems and practices when using language that “render[s] particular social groups powerless and keep[s] them at the margins” (p. 20). Specifically, I interrogate the assumptions driving self-care documents to recognize and reveal how they might contribute to the circulation of ableist assumptions. In the section that follows, I offer examples of such documents along with insight into my methods for identifying and analyzing the ableist assumptions that may be circulated and reinforced by self-care documents across university spaces.

## **Methods**

Due to my interest in recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing ableist assumptions in university self-care documents, my methodology is grounded in Walton et

al.'s (2019) social justice-oriented 4R's. As self-care documents often reinforce normalizing ideals of wellness, this chapter is likewise driven by a cripistemological methodology because it seeks to challenge ableist epistemologies related to wellness. Specifically, it is motivated by a cripistemological approach by revealing how self-care initiatives may systematically oppress the behaviors, knowledges, bodyminds, and identities that challenge prescribed ableist structures (Johnson & McRuer, 2014).

**Choice of sites for analysis.** To determine my sites of analysis, I examined the wellness initiatives of each university that received an Active Minds Healthy Campus Award, which “recognizes and celebrates U.S. colleges and universities that are prioritizing health and making significant progress toward creating a campus that promotes mental health, physical health, and well-being of its students” (“Healthy Campus”). Between September 2021 and December 2021, I reviewed all university programs previously recognized by the Active Minds organization; awards were granted in 2020, 2018, 2016, and 2015 (“Previous Awardees”). To analyze these self-care programs, I conducted a Google search of each university’s name along with “self-care” and “wellness” to review their public documents. As there were 23 universities listed, I narrowed sites based on the types and amounts of documents included, choosing programs that featured over ten documents that discussed various dimensions of health, including mental, financial, physical, and/or spiritual health.

I ultimately chose to analyze the University of Texas at Austin’s care-related documents, Arizona State University’s Wellness @ASU program, and Denison University’s health and wellness model. I evaluated student-focused documents, as these were publicly accessible. Each set of public-facing documents reflected a dimensional

view of health as involving a series of interrelated components, which each university articulated in a unique way. Denison University's health and wellness program articulates an understanding of wellness as encompassing "personal well-being," "community well-being," "financial well-being," and "intellectual well-being." Specifically, it explains that their wellness model promotes "a healthy lifestyle for students" by helping them to "build habits that will contribute to a healthy life" ("About," n.p.). Arizona State University's wellness program, or LiveWell@ASU, supports students' "health and wellbeing journey" by addressing how students "live," "feel," "learn," and "engage" ("Live well," n.p.). Their wellness model identifies and addresses four wellness components: mind, body, spirit, and community relationships. Based in the Counseling and Mental Health Center, The University of Texas at Austin's wellness program offers a range of preventative and self-care tips aimed to promote student wellness. While their program does not reflect a formal model, they break down understandings of wellness into a range of 34 components, including matters such as stress, building relationships, mindful eating, and cultural adjustment ("Common student concerns").

I analyzed 7 out of 16 documents listed on Denison University's "Healthy Living and Habits" portion of their wellness initiative. I chose documents that included at least one page of text and that examined more general discussions of health and wellness, excluding specific topics such as yoga, sexual health, and alcohol/drugs, as I was interested in analyzing general conversations related to health concerns. I also chose documents representative of the various branches associated with Denison's wellness model. Refer to Appendix B1 for a list of these analyzed documents.

In analyzing Arizona State University's Live Well @ ASU program, I examined 9 out of 22 documents. I again chose documents that included at least one page of text and excluded specific documents, such as those dedicated to recovery, biking to campus, hydration, brain health, and grief and loss, as these were very situation-specific concerns rather than general health-related topics. In addition, I analyzed documents representative of the various aspects of the program's wellness model, including mind, body, spirit, and relationships. Refer to Appendix B2 for a list of these analyzed documents.

I then analyzed 10 out of 36 total documents in the University of Texas at Austin's wellness program. Once again, I chose documents that were at least 1 page in length and excluded specific documents such as those related to stalking, veteran's issues, test anxiety, and problematic internet use, as these were situation-specific rather than reflective of general health conversations. Again, I focused on documents that related to the program's varied dimensions of wellness, specifically analyzing documents regarding mental, physical, and relational health. Refer to B3 for a list of analyzed documents.

**Document analysis.** Using concept coding (Saldaña, 2016), I examined the rhetorical warrants upon which these care-based documents relied. My codes arose from Cherney's (2019) discussion of ableist warrants. As Cherney explains, warrants "are the assumed rules of interpretation called and recalled into practice by texts that rely on them to produce comprehension" (p. 12). This concept of warrants "rests on the assumption that audiences and readers always interpret information... whenever assigning meaning or comprehending something" (p. 12). In other words, warrants reflect the logical assumptions from which individuals draw in interpreting new situations or information. Rhetorical acts of comprehension thus require that audiences "construc[t and draw from]

interpretive framework[s built] from preexisting opinions, values, and views” in order to construct meaning (p. 13). Specifically, Cherney argues that in making meaning, audiences may draw from and reinforce ableist warrants, or assumptions, that presume cultural understandings of disability as a personal lack. Thus, while documents and those composing them may not directly articulate ableism, such views may be indirectly communicated through the underlying assumptions that documents make.

I thus designed my codebook to examine the assumptions from which care-based documents drew and to determine whether such assumptions reinforced or challenged ableist understandings. In examining assumptions, I used the following codes:

Table 1

*List of Wellness Codes*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Well as able	Discussions that equate wellness with physical ability/standards
Well as rational	Discussions that equate wellness with rationality and happiness
Well as productive	Discussions that equate wellness with productivity and improvement; overcoming; measuring
Well as independent	Discussions that position wellness as an independent, individualized, and/or personal responsibility
Well as different	Discussions that understand wellness as unique to every individual
Well as environmental	Discussions that frame wellness as determined by one’s social context
Well as collective	Discussions that position wellness as an interdependent, collective phenomenon
Well as vulnerable	Discussions that frame wellness as human and as valuable beyond capitalist productivity

This combination of codes was helpful in examining whether assumptions contributed to standard, ableist ideas of wellness or demonstrated potential for social and environmental change. I first coded individual rhetorical warrants across my corpus at the sentence-level; specifically, I calculated how often each code appeared in the context of individual sentences across each document. I then calculated how frequently each coded warrant appeared across an individual university's documents and across my whole corpus. This allowed me to analyze how the frequency of specific warrants might impact normative understandings of care and wellness, particularly in relation to disability.

Also interested in tracing the relationships between coded warrants, I then coded the frequency of pairs of warrants, or instances when two warrants occurred together at the sentence-level. Again, I first calculated how frequently each pair appeared in single sentences across individual documents. I then calculated the total coded pairs associated with each individual university and the whole corpus. Through this analysis, I hoped to better understand how certain warrants might either reinforce or complicate others. To ensure credibility and consistency in my coding process, I coded all documents three times, continuously clarifying my coding scheme.

## **Findings**

In this section, I offer an overview of my findings. I first discuss the results of my level-1 coding of individual assumptions. I then discuss my level-2 coding, which examines the interactions between coded warrants.

**Level 1 coding.** In my level-1 coding, I identified single warrants across individual documents and then calculated the total amounts of individual codes per



university (refer to Appendix B5-B7) and across the whole corpus (refer to Appendix B4). In this section, I provide an overview of my findings, organized by frequency.

***Most frequent warrants.*** As indicated by Appendix B4, the warrants coded most frequently overall included *well as independent* (597 instances), *well as able* (286 instances), *well as rational* (283 instances), and *well as productive* (235 instances). *Well as independent* (597 instances) was the most frequent warrant coded across all three sets of documents. This warrant positioned wellness as a universally individual responsibility. For example, *well as independent* was common in UT Document 7, “Managing Stress.” As the document title indicates, this warrant’s frequency in this document is unsurprising since stress is positioned as something one individually “manages.” Occurring 67 times, (refer to Appendix B7), the warrant *well as independent* contributes to understandings of as something over which one has independent control. For example, the document notes, “Make a reasonable schedule for yourself and include time for stress reduction as a regular part of your schedule.” Relying on assumptions of *well as independent*, this statement positions stress as a universal experience that may be reduced by standardized efforts and disregards disabled individuals, like those with acute anxiety or autism, who may not have physical control over their stress reduction. Likewise, this disregards those with academic, professional, or familial obligations who may not be able to easily “schedule” time for “stress reduction.” The warrant *well as independent* also makes standardized assumptions related to students that fail to account for uniquely intersectional positionalities. Similarly, in framing health as a personal responsibility, these documents fuel false understandings of health as a matter of individual control and do not account for the vulnerable, unpredictable nature of the human body.

The second most frequent warrant across the documents was *well as able* (286 instances, refer to Appendix B4). This warrant equated able norms with wellness. As Appendix B6 indicates, this warrant was most frequently reflected in ASU's Document 3, "Physical Activity and Exercise" (44 instances). Reliant on the warrant *well as able*, this document continuously assumes an able-bodied audience while offering guidance related to care. For example, the document notes, "Did you know that walking burns 3-5 times the calories that sitting does?" and explains "simply standing up increases energy and blood flow, boosts metabolism and improves posture." Such statements presume that standing is a "simple" task that all student readers can do. Likewise, the statement disregards individuals who may have significantly lower energy levels than standard rates, such as those with chronic fatigue syndrome. By associating wellness with habits of able bodies, such documents disregard the experiences of disabled individuals and fuel discourse that such individuals are unwell.

*Well as rational* (283 instances, refer to Appendix B4) was the third most frequent warrant coded across my corpus. This warrant presumes certain standards of rationality as imperative for wellness. As Appendix B7 reflects, this warrant was most common in UT Austin's Document 8, "Self-esteem" (40 instances). The prevalence of this warrant in this document is unsurprising, as the document is predominantly concerned with mental health and wellbeing. For example, the document notes, "Healthy self-esteem is based on our ability to assess ourselves accurately and still be accepting of who we are." Although this statement encourages self-acceptance, it also assumes a general standard of assessment that all individuals are expected to measure themselves against to determine "who they are." Such a statement connects self-esteem to one's capacity for self-

evaluation according to prescribed norms. Similarly, the document articulates, “Low self-esteem can have devastating consequences. It can: create anxiety, stress, loneliness, and increased likelihood of depression [and] cause problems with friendships and romantic relationships.” This statement not only reinforces a standard, rational level of self-esteem by referencing “low” self-esteem, but it likewise positions low self-esteem as causing relationship problems, loneliness, and conditions like anxiety and depression. Statements such as these disregard the impact of biological, relational, and environmental factors on one’s self-esteem by positioning it as a personal responsibility. Likewise, such statements reinforce notions of standard, universal self-esteem with which many individuals, including but not limited to disabled individuals, may not align.

The fourth most frequent warrant was *well as productive* (235 instances, refer to Appendix B4). This warrant equated notions of wellness with notions of productivity; in other words, those bodyminds deemed most productive were understood as those most well. This warrant was most common in ASU’s Document 8, “Peak Performance” (34 instances, refer to Appendix B6). The prevalence of this warrant is unsurprising based on the document’s focus on performing to one’s greatest potential. For example, the document notes, “By performing work and rest intervals, individuals...have discovered a quick, easy and enjoyable way to increase productivity, focus, and intelligence.” Here, wellness is equated with increased productivity, focus, and intelligence. Such statements assume standards of productivity, focus, and intelligence against which all are measured. Similarly, the document encourages student readers to “Identify and reflect on emotions when they start to impede your ability to do your best work.” In this case, productivity is equated with health, and an inability to do one’s best work is framed as indicative of

emotional problems. This statement does not consider how the presence of certain emotions, like anger or frustration, may indicate unhealthy environmental conditions. Similarly, such statements disregard the fact that emotions dynamically fluctuate. Likewise, an inability to do one's work when faced with certain emotions may indicate that working conditions have not been established with consideration for all bodyminds and instead favor those deemed most able. By coupling wellness and productivity, these documents position capitalist goals of productivity as integral to wellness and occlude the vulnerably dynamic nature of the human condition.

***Somewhat frequent warrants.*** As demonstrated by my coding, somewhat frequently occurring warrants included *well as collective* (200 instances) and *well as environmental* (125 instances, refer to Appendix B4). The frequency of these warrants was quite surprising, as the most consistently occurring warrants all positioned wellness as an individual experience and responsibility. The frequency of these warrants suggests a potential starting point for complicating the standard notions of wellness predominantly expressed in the corpus. *Well as collective* positions wellness as influenced by one's collective relationships; this undermines articulations of wellness as an individual responsibility. This warrant was most common in UT Austin's Document 9, "Healthy Relationships" (24 instances, refer to Appendix B7), which discusses how relationships may impact health. For example, the document notes the importance of "paying attention to each other's needs and taking each other into account when making decisions that affect both of you." As the document indicates, individual decisions frequently influence the lives of others. In addition, the document articulates that in pursuing healthy relationships, individuals may need the assistance of others. For example, it notes that

“Counseling can...help you identify and address patterns in your relationships.” Such discursive moves contradict assumptions that health is an individualized matter.

Similarly unexpected was the frequency of *well as environmental* (125 instances, refer to Appendix B4) across the corpus. In drawing on this assumption, documents position wellness as influenced by one’s environmental and contextual surroundings. This warrant was most frequent in ASU’s Document 7, “Stress and Resilience” (28 instances, refer to Appendix B6). The frequency of this warrant was surprising in this document, particularly as notions of resilience reflect individual responsibility. However, despite the focus on resilience, the document frequently indicated understandings of wellness as dynamically and often unpredictably impacted by contextual factors. For example, the document articulates, “The constant demands of academic and personal life can build up stress levels without allowing us to unwind and become fully relaxed. This can lead to stress overload or distress.” Such statements indicate that personal efforts to “relax” are often undermined by external factors. Similarly, the document reflects that “Ongoing everyday chronic stressors commonly faced by college students can be grouped into the following categories: school, time commitments, financial concerns, relationships.” This statement demonstrates that although stress is experienced individually, it is directly influenced by external factors such as school, finances, and relationships. Such awareness of health as a contextual matter contradicts ableist assumptions of health as independently governed.

***Least frequent warrants.*** Least frequently occurring warrants across the corpus included *well as vulnerable* (60 instances) and *well as different* (46 instances, refer to Appendix B4). This was unsurprising due to the corpus’s emphasis on wellness as a

personal responsibility and reliance on standard concepts of physical and mental wellness. *Well as vulnerable* was most frequently coded in ASU Document 7, “Stress and Resilience” (10 instances, refer to Appendix B6) and UT Austin Document 8 “Self-esteem” (10 instances, refer to Appendix B7). Its presence in UT Document 8 was most surprising, because it contradicts the prevalence of the frequently used *well as rational* (40 instances, refer to Appendix B7) warrant by highlighting the vulnerability of the human condition. For example, UT Austin Document 8 articulates, “As humans we all make mistakes, and we are all impacted by external factors that we can't control... Recognizing that mistakes are an inevitable part of being human helps us to be more compassionate with ourselves and others.” This statement defies the idea of wellness as an individual responsibility by understanding humans as complexly influenced by external factors. It likewise frames as human individual mistakes and self-compassion in relation to those mistakes. This demonstrates a value for the human condition that challenges neoliberalism's capitalist frames.

The warrant *well as different* (46 instances, refer to Appendix B4) was likewise infrequent. This warrant indicated assumptions that wellness is uniquely experienced by every individual. *Well as different* was found most frequently in UT Austin's Document 9, “Healthy Relationships” (9 instances, refer to Appendix B7). This document not only discussed wellness as experienced relationally and collectively, but also framed it as a phenomenon unique to everyone. For example, UT Austin Document 9 notes, “Do not demand that a partner change to meet all your expectations and respect each other's unique interests, priorities, and goals.” As this statement reflects, all individuals have unique interests, priorities, and goals that influence their understanding and experiences

of wellness. Similarly, the document notes, “Conflict resolution does not mean one person always gets their way - no one should feel pressured to compromise their values or boundaries.” In this instance, Document 9 articulates that the goal of conflict resolution, integral to healthy relationships, is not to reach unified consensus, but to instead recognize and respect each other’s values and boundaries. This warrant thus articulates an idea of wellness as unique.

**Level 2 coding.** In this section, I provide an overview of my level-2 coding. In this phase, I sought to recognize the most frequently co-occurring warrants to better understand how warrants may influence each other. Specifically, I hoped to identify how certain assumptions may relate to or contradict each other. This section discusses the six most frequent, four somewhat frequent, and four less frequent warrant pairs.

***Most frequent co-occurring warrants.*** The first most frequently co-occurring warrants were *well as able* and *well as independent* (105 instances, refer to Appendix B8). This is a logical co-occurrence, as normative notions related to ability generally presume independence. As Appendix B10 reflects, this co-occurrence was most frequent in ASU Document 2, “Healthy Eating” (18 instances). Across the corpus, these two warrants reinforced each other. For example, ASU document 2 notes, “Eat until you feel content - take your time when you eat, and savor each bite.” Document 2 positions responsibility for healthy eating on the individual through the directive to “eat until you feel content” and presumes that readers will collectively be able to reach a standard feeling of “contentment” by eating in a slow, balanced way. This statement disregards disabled individuals, such as those with depression, anxiety, or eating disorders, who may not be able to identify a standard feeling of “contentment.” It also disregards the dynamic

nature of the human body and the environmental factors that influence eating habits by not accounting for how individuals may eat more or less on any given day depending on their physical activity, emotional state, or active commitments. The occurrence of these warrants thus articulates that one's wellness reflects a matter of individual alignment with able, static, normative standards.

The coded warrants *well as productive* and *well as independent* (76, refer to Appendix B8) also frequently arose together across the corpus. The pairing of these warrants was expected because productivity and independence both reflect highly capitalist values and since the latter is often deemed integral to the former. This pairing occurred most often in ASU Document 8, "Peak Performance" (16 instances, refer to Appendix B10). For example, the document notes, "There are a few key concepts that we can take from this research [on peak performance] that we can apply to all areas of our lives to help us be successful in our academic endeavors, work or in our personal lives." This document holds individuals responsible for making healthy choices that further their academic and personal success. Across the documents, these two warrants collectively position success and productivity as integral to one's health and frame both health and productivity as determined by individual choice. In using such meritocratic reasoning, these co-occurring warrants presume that health is an individual responsibility.

The co-occurrence of *well as independent* and *well as collective* (75, refer to Appendix B8) was likewise frequent. This co-occurrence was unexpected and suggested a potentially generative point of tension, with collective understandings of wellness challenging independent, meritocratic understandings. This co-occurrence was most frequent in UT Austin Document 9, "Healthy Relationships" (23 instances, refer to



Appendix B11). Across the documents, the co-occurrence of these warrants articulated health as a collective phenomenon complexly influenced by one's relationships. For example, UT Austin Document 9 encourages readers to "Establish a pattern of mutual respect and accountability." In this way, the document recognizes that one's individual wellness is directly impacted by one's relationships with others. However, the presence of *well as independent* upheld the corpus's overall emphasis on health as an individual responsibility. For example, UT Austin Document 9 also notes, "It is also important to check in with yourself and assess if you feel safe, comfortable and respected in your relationship." Here, the document recognizes that relationships may impact wellness, but still positions responsibility for health on the individual. The document consequently asks students to measure their experiences against certain normative standards.

Similarly frequent was the co-occurrence of *well as rational* and *well as independent* (63, refer to Appendix B8). A relationship between these warrants was unsurprising, as independent thought processes are often associated with normative understandings of rationality. This relationship was most frequent in UT Austin's Document 7, "Managing Stress" (10 instances, refer to Appendix B11). In many cases, this co-occurrence positioned rational thought as a matter of individual mindset; consequently, this warrant pair frequently encouraged individuals to align with standards of rational thinking. For example, UT Austin Document 7 relays, "What would happen if you committed yourself to actively noticing the positive moments throughout your day?" This statement frames positive thinking as not only the rational goal of one's thought process, but also as a personal choice. This disregards individuals with anxiety, depression, or other disabilities that may be unable to simply choose to be positive.

Likewise, by positioning positivity as a personal choice, these documents disregard the collective and environmental nature of mental wellness.

*Well as able* and *well as productive* were likewise frequent across the documents (60 instances, refer to Appendix B8). This pairing was similarly expected, as productivity is associated with normative notions of ability. This co-occurrence was most frequent in ASU Document 3, “Physical Activity and Exercise” (21 instances, refer to Appendix B10). This pairing articulated that healthy, able-bodied individuals align with capitalist notions of productivity. For example, Document 3 notes, “Exercise is physical activity that is planned, purposeful, and structured.” This document upholds universal standards of productivity associated with able bodyminds by presuming that individuals can exercise in “structured” and “purposeful” manners. This pairing thus positions ability as integral to wellness and self-care as something attained by following normative standards. This is made further apparent when the document encourages students to “engage in a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most preferably all days of the week OR engage in vigorous-intensity physical activity 3 days per week for a minimum of 20 minutes per session.” Such expressions as this articulate that productive, healthy individuals can exercise in able ways.

***Somewhat frequently co-occurring warrants.*** The co-occurrence of *well as rational* and *well as productive* (49 instances, refer to Appendix B8) was somewhat frequent across the documents. The pairing of these two warrants was expected, particularly due to the aforementioned co-occurrence of *well as rational* and *well as independent*. This pairing was most frequent in UT Austin Document 3, “Perfectionism” (9 instances, refer to Appendix B11). Together, these two warrants communicate that a

well mind engages with productively standard, rational thought. For example, the document notes, “Those who strive for excellence in a healthy way take genuine pleasure in trying to meet high standards.” This statement reinforces a universal standard of excellence by differentiating “healthy” striving from “unhealthy” striving, or perfectionism. This statement likewise assumes that all healthy individuals are driven by goals of productively meeting high standards; such assumptions disregard that “healthy” striving is subjective and based on an individual’s dynamic circumstances. In addition, such statements posit that for one to be healthy, one must be productive.

*Well as able* and *well as rational* (41 instances, refer to Appendix B8) were also frequently paired together across the corpus. This pairing was least surprising, as it communicates that able bodyminds are healthy bodyminds. This was most frequent in ASU Document 9, “Emotional Wellness Tips (7 instances, refer to Appendix B10). For example, the document explains, “Being mindful can include meditative breath exercises, long strolls and simply taking the time to clear your head.” This example articulates that healthy individuals take “long strolls” and “clear” their heads, and it disregards individuals who are physically unable to walk or those with mental disabilities like anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder, or autism, who may be unable to “clear” their heads. Such articulations of wellness may consequently exclude disabled folks.

Another somewhat frequent pairing of warrants included *well as able* and *well as collective* (20 instances, refer to Appendix B8). This co-occurrence indicated an unexpected tension between assumptions of wellness as based in individual, able bodies, and in collectively communal endeavors. This co-occurrence was most frequent in Denison Document 2, “Mindfulness” (4 instances, refer to Appendix B9). For example,

the document notes, “The Mindful Denison initiative supports well-being among Denison students, staff, and faculty by bringing mindful practices to our campus via workshops, contemplative spaces, and support for people and communities of practice.” Here, wellbeing is positioned as a standard phenomenon that individuals may achieve through “mindful practices.” While such standard language aims to overcome individuals’ embodied differences, it disregards the fact that wellbeing may manifest differently for each person. However, this statement likewise recognizes that wellbeing involves a collective effort through the sharing of resources. This co-occurrence thus indicates a generative point of tension between individualized standardization and collective action in public understandings of wellness.

Similarly indicative of a generative tension was the co-occurrence of *well as able* and *well as environmental* (18 instances, refer to Appendix B8). The pairing of these two warrants indicates tension between individualized articulations of ability and relationally collective understandings of it. This pairing was most frequent in UT Austin Document 10, “Sleeping Better” (5 instances, refer to Appendix B11). For example, the document discusses the importance of going to bed at the same time each day to maintain healthy sleep habits. The document explains, however, “This can be difficult to achieve with MWF classes being different than TTH classes, but greater consistency will improve your sleep habits.” Here, the document positions consistent sleep habits as more healthy and “able” than others and notes the challenge of maintaining consistency due to external factors like varying class times. However, the document ultimately positions responsibility for good sleep on the individual.

*Less frequently co-occurring warrants.* Finally, there were four co-occurring warrants that appeared less consistently (between 10 and 15 instances each) across the corpus. I have included these here as each reflected unexpected and potentially generative points of tension for revising self-care documents. First, the pairing of *well as independent* and *well as different* (14 instances, refer to Appendix B8) indicated tension between discourse advocating for individual alignment with existing wellness standards and recognition that health is a unique phenomenon for all individuals. This co-occurrence was most common in UT Austin Document 7, “Managing Stress” (6 instances, refer to Appendix B11). For example, the document notes, “As you begin to understand more about how stress affects you, you will develop your own ideas to help relieve tension.” This statement recognizes that everyone will have methods for managing their own stress; however, it simultaneously presumes that everyone is able to “relieve” the tension they experience. This does not account for the fact that not all tension can be relieved and that all individuals experience varying degrees of tension in dynamic and unpredictable ways.

The co-occurrence of *well as independent* and *well as environmental* (13 instances, refer to Appendix B8) also indicated a less frequent but potentially generative pairing of warrants. This pairing demonstrated tension as it reinforced wellness as an independent phenomenon while also framing wellness as relationally environmental. This pairing was most frequent in ASU Document 7, “Stress and Resilience” (4 instances, refer to Appendix B10). For example, the document articulates that resilience “is a quality that can be developed throughout life as we experience disappointment, change, adversity and loss.” As this document reflects, this pairing positions responsibility for

wellness on the individual, yet recognizes that external factors, such as “disappointment, change, adversity, and loss,” may directly impact one’s individual experience of wellness. While this pairing thus recognizes that wellness is heavily influenced by environmental factors, it reinforces wellness as an individual concern.

Another potentially generative co-occurrence of warrants was reflected by *well as independent* and *well as vulnerable* (12 instances, refer to Appendix B8). This co-occurrence endorses an idea of wellness as an individual concern but likewise recognizes the vulnerability of the human condition. It was most common in UT Austin, Document 6 “Loneliness” and UT Austin, Document 8 “Self-esteem” (4 instances each, refer to Appendix B11). For example, the document recommends “reminding yourself, ‘This is hard, but everyone feels like this at times’” in order to “take action to improve your situation.” Although this co-occurrence recognizes loneliness as a human condition, it also positions loneliness as a problem in need of individual resolution. Although this pairing continues to position wellness as an individual responsibility, it likewise indicates a generative point of potential transformation through its understanding of the vulnerable nature of the human condition.

One final potentially generative co-occurrence of warrants was reflected by *well as rational* and *well as collective* (10 instances, refer to Appendix B8). This co-occurrence was most frequent in ASU Document 9, “Emotional Wellness Tips” (2 instances, refer to Appendix B10). It positions rationality as integral to wellness while recognizing wellness as influenced by collective groups. For example, the document notes, “Social connections are essential to maintaining positive mental health.” This co-occurrence illustrates how one’s mental wellness is directly influenced by one’s

relationships with others; however, it still positions one's mental wellbeing as a matter of personal responsibility. Like the other less frequent co-occurrences, this indicates a potentially generative opportunity space for revising care-based documents.

## **Discussion**

My findings allowed me to recognize how these seemingly neutral self-care documents may contribute to the circulation of ableism across higher educational spaces. Further analysis of my findings revealed four major problematic trends across the documents that may reinforce ableist assumptions in higher educational spaces: 1) wellness equated with standardized notions of ability, 2) wellness understood as an individual responsibility to conform, 3) productivity positioned as integral to wellness, and 4) wellness framed as apolitical. In my discussion of these thematic trends, I demonstrate how each trend furthers neoliberalism's circulation of ableist rhetoric. I also indicate how identified tensions may support the efforts of university professionals to reject and replace (Walton et al., 2019) potentially ableist assumptions.

**Wellness equated with standardized notions of ability.** Upon analyzing my findings, I first recognized that the care-based documents in the corpus collectively equated wellness with standardized notions of ability. This was demonstrated by the previously noted high frequency of the warrant *well as able* (286 instances), reflected in Appendix B4. Across the corpus, the documents predominantly discussed well bodyminds as those that align with standardized, ableist assumptions. For instance, in its discussion of health, ASU Document 2 expresses that individuals should engage in exercise and physical fitness, which “may include running, lifting weights, aerobic classes, and flexibility training.” Such statements presume that healthy bodies can engage

in such physical activities. As Appendix B4 indicates, the warrant *well as rational* (283 instances) was similarly frequent, further grounding wellness in standardized notions of ability. For example, ASU Document 8 explains that healthy students “reframe negative feelings into...helpful positive experience[s].” This indicates that negative emotions are “unhealthy” and in need of positive reframing. The prevalence of ableist notions of wellness across the document was also indicated by the frequent co-occurrence of the *well as able* and *well as rational warrants* (41 instances), as reflected by Appendix B8. For example, Denison Document 6 notes, “When your body is able to get enough rest, nutrition, and some moderate to vigorous exercise, your stress levels lower, and your general outlook and well-being are improved.” Here, ableist capacities like “vigorous exercise” are framed as leading to a more “positive outlook,” or able mindset, which improves one’s “well-being.” Collectively, these documents contribute to neoliberalism’s circulation of ableist rhetoric by equating physical and mental ability with wellness and reinforcing ideas of disability as a health concern in need of overcoming and erasure.

However, the documents also revealed opportunity spaces for rejecting such assumptions. For example, the co-occurrence of *well as able* and *well as collective* (20 instances), as indicated by Appendix B8, demonstrated how collective understandings of wellness might combat assumptions that position wellness as an individualized concern. For example, in discussing Denison University’s mindfulness agenda, Denison Document 2 notes that “Mindful Denison draws on evidence-based practices to support well-being.” Although this expression ends with a universalized understanding of wellness that endorses neutral and potentially ableist assumptions of wellness, it likewise recognizes wellness as a phenomenon that requires collective action and resources. The presence of



these understandings of wellness indicated opportunity for generative revision. Similarly, the co-occurrence of *well as able* and *well as environmental* (18), reflected in Appendix B8, indicated a point of constructive tension. For example, UT Austin Document 7 notes that in managing stress, students should “Be as physically comfortable as the situation will allow.” Although the expression disregards individuals’ unique experiences with comfort and pain, it perceives comfort as influenced by situational constraints. This co-occurrence thus challenges ableist assumptions of health as an individualized, standard phenomenon by indicating its contextually dynamic nature. This suggests a shift from neoliberal individualism and towards a contextual and collective concept of wellbeing.

**Wellness understood as an individual responsibility to conform.** The next theme to emerge in the findings was wellness as reflecting an individual responsibility to conform with standardized assumptions. This was indicated through the prevalence of the *wellness as independent* (597 instances) warrant (refer to Appendix B4). For example, UT Document 1 discusses the implications of rejection and failure, recommending to students, “Be patient with yourself; changing your mindset in order to look at failure and rejection differently is a gradual process that takes practice.” This statement endorses an individualized understanding of wellness by positioning it as a matter of personal responsibility, while also encouraging a change in mindset toward a universal and, likely, ableist standard. This was similarly reflected by the co-occurrence of the warrants *well as able* and *well as independent* (105 instances), which mutually reflected an understanding of wellness as involving individual alignment with ableist standards (refer to Appendix B8). For example, ASU Document 7 notes, in relation to stress and resilience, “unmanaged stress or hard to handle stressors can compromise well-being” and that

consequently, “It is important to learn to manage stress to reduce these stress symptoms.” Here, stress is positioned as a sign of ill health and its management is framed as an individualized responsibility. This co-occurrence thus positions disability, like stress, as something that must be individually managed and overcome to allow individuals to align with standardized notions of wellness. The idea of wellness as an individualized process of aligning with ableist norms was likewise indicated through the co-occurrence of the warrants *well as rational* and *well as independent* (63 instances), reflected by Appendix B8. For example, Denison Document 1 discusses stress management, noting, “The key is not to try to remove stress from your life but to learn an appropriate level of stress and the skills to manage that stress in your daily life.” This document endorses an ableist understanding of rationality by framing certain stress levels as “appropriate,” or normal, and positioning individuals as responsible for managing stress in a way that maintains the status quo. These documents thus circulate neoliberal, ableist ideals through articulations of wellness that reinforce able-bodied independence. The documents also further neoliberalism’s circulation of ableist rhetoric by advocating for the erasure or overcoming of disability through compulsory, individualized efforts.

However, the corpus likewise revealed how composers of such documents might combat ableist assumptions. For example, the pairing of the warrants *well as independent* and *well as collective* (75 instances) was surprisingly frequent (refer to Appendix B8), with a collective understanding of wellness demonstrating a capacity for challenging these predominant, individualized notions of health. For example, in framing healthy habits for students, Denison Document 4 articulates, “When things don’t go well, seek out faculty and staff who can help you learn from the experience, participate in some of

the programs we are offering across campus on developing good life habits, and be with peers.” Although responsibility is placed on individuals to seek assistance from others, the presence of these collective understandings of wellness counter neoliberalism’s independent goals. The pairing of the *well as independent* and *well as different* warrants (14 instances) indicated another unique opportunity space for revising these documents. For example, UT Document 7 expresses, “Stress affects each of us in different ways, and it is important to be aware of your unique stress ‘signals.’” Although this pairing still frames wellness as an individual responsibility, it likewise understands how all people have unique stress-related “signals.” In recognizing the nuanced nature of embodied experiences, this pairing indicates an opportunity space for rejecting standardized and individualized notions of wellness that may contribute to neoliberalism’s circulation of ableist rhetoric and compulsory able-bodiedness.

Although less frequent (12 instances), the co-occurrence of *well as independent* and *well as vulnerable* also indicated a point of generative opportunity for revising self-care documents (refer to Appendix B8). For example, in discussing depression, UT Document 5 explains that “Depressive feelings are common, and we have given you some ideas about how to work on them yourself.” Although the document once again individualizes wellness, it likewise recognizes that depressive feelings are common; this combats understandings of able bodyminds as neutrally rational. Similarly, the pairing of *well as environmental* and *well as vulnerable* (3 instances, refer to Appendix B8) indicated an opportunity space by combating neoliberalism’s ableist standards. Specifically, while discussing self-esteem, UT Document 8 explains, “Our self-esteem evolves throughout our lives as we develop an image of ourselves through our

experiences with different people and activities.” This statement frames self-esteem as a dynamic phenomenon that naturally changes over time for all individuals. Collectively, these co-occurring warrants offer generative insights for rejecting and replacing neoliberal assumptions of wellness that fuel ableism’s circulation.

**Productivity positioned as integral to wellness.** The positioning of *productive* as well (235 instances) also emerged through deeper analysis, reflected by Appendix B4. For example, UT Austin Document 3, which discusses perfectionism, notes that “blocks to productivity and success result from the perfectionist's focus on the final product.” Here, perfectionism is framed as negatively influencing productivity and success; this document thus positions productivity as integral to health. Similarly, the document notes, “Those who strive for excellence in a healthy way take genuine pleasure in trying to meet high standards.” Health is thus equated with pleasure in meeting productively high standards. This emphasis on productivity as a matter of health is also indicated through the co-occurrence of *well as able* and *well as productive* (60 instances), indicated by Appendix B8. For example, in discussing healthy eating, ASU Document 2 explains that “Research also shows that standing and moving improves attention and focus, and boosts productivity.” Not only does this statement make neoliberal, ableist assumptions that students can stand and move in universal ways, but it likewise positions such ableist movement as integral to improving one’s mental health and productivity. In neoliberal fashion, this pairing consequently frames productivity as integral to health.

This emphasis on productivity was similarly reflected by the co-occurrence of *rational as well* and *well as productive* (49 instances), demonstrated by Appendix B8. Collectively, these documents frame rational thoughts and emotions as contributing to

one's productive performance. For example, in discussing goals of "peak performance," ASU Document 8 encourages students to "Identify and reflect on emotions when they start to impede your ability to do your best work." Here, emotions that negatively impact one's productivity are positioned as unhealthy and in need of individual management. Similarly, the consistent pairing of *well as productive* with *well as independent* (76 instances), reflected by Appendix B8, aligns wellness with neoliberal goals of productive independence. For example, in discussing conflict resolution, ASU Document 6 encourages students to "accept conflict [because] conflict serves as an opportunity for growth, new understanding and improved communication." This statement encourages students to accept conflict as healthy due to its productive capacity for improving one's communication skills. This statement does not consider that some types of conflict may, in fact, silence certain perspectives like those of disabled individuals due to unequal power relations. Inherently neoliberal, such statements prioritize and depoliticize notions of productivity in ways that contribute to ableism's rhetorical circulation.

However, there were also generative moments across the documents that demonstrated opportunities to challenge productive notions of health. Although infrequent, *well as different* (46 instances, refer to Appendix B4) contradicted assumptions of productivity as integral to wellness. For example, in discussing self-esteem, UT Document 8 notes that "Recognizing that mistakes are an inevitable part of being human helps us to be more compassionate with ourselves and others." Such statements counter neoliberalism's productive drive by valuing vulnerability as integral to humanity. Similarly, the co-occurrence of *well as productive* and *well as environmental* (7 instances), while infrequent (refer to Appendix B8), demonstrated a site for potentially

generative revision. For example, in discussing rejection and failure, UT Austin Document 1 notes that an “explanation for our difficulty in handling failure lies in the cultural messages we receive equating a person's success with their value.” Here, the document points out how social messages heavily influence an individual’s desire for productive success; while productivity is still heavily positioned across the document as integral to health, such statements, if used more frequently, might promote more critical understandings of neoliberalism’s productive values. Likewise generative, albeit infrequent, was the co-occurrence of *well as environmental* and *well as vulnerable* (3 instances, refer to Appendix B8). For example, UT Austin Document 1 notes, “Media sources constantly bombard us with messages that tell us, both indirectly and directly, ‘Buy this product and be successful, loved and valued.’ It's easy to buy into these ideas, even though everyone experiences failure and rejection throughout life.” This statement not only recognizes the human condition as dynamically subject to contextual forces like the media, but it also rejects the neoliberal idea that failure and rejection are unhealthy by describing them as inherently human. Collectively, these moments suggest generative opportunities for resisting the productive impulses of neoliberal ableism.

**Wellness framed as apolitical.** The last major theme identified through an analysis of the findings was an understanding of wellness as apolitical. This was most apparent in the corpus’s emphasis on *well as independent* (597 instances; refer to Appendix B4). For example, in discussing self-care, UT Austin Document 4 notes, “Practice gratitude: One simple way to practice gratitude is by writing down 3 things you're grateful for everyday.” Here, the document positions gratitude and acceptance of one’s current conditions as integral to health; this fails to consider that some bodyminds

may be subject to political inequities and imbalances of power in certain contexts. Similarly indicative of an apolitical understanding of wellness was the frequency of the *well as productive* and *well as independent* (76 instances, refer to Appendix B8) co-occurrence. For example, in discussing conflict resolution, ASU Document 6 articulates, “Remember, conflict management skills and strategies take practice to master, and every step you take to implement these skills will help you ultimately manage conflict in a more constructive way.” As demonstrated in a previous example, conflict here is positioned as something one should independently and productively manage. This neoliberal emphasis on productivity disregards how certain intersectional aspects of identity, like disability, may disempower certain identities in specific contexts. Further, by encouraging constructive conflict management, such documents may inspire neoliberal consensus, which frequently favors dominant positionalities over others. Such constructions may thus disregard the highly political nature of personal experience.

However, there also were moments of generative tension that might allow composers of care-based documents to counter these apolitical leanings. For example, the corpus documents emphasized the assumption of *well as collective* (200 instances), as demonstrated by Appendix B4. For instance, in discussing financial wellness, Denison Document 5 notes, “Red Thread Grants: When students face hardships, like the need for prescription medicines, winter clothing, co-curricular participation expenses, and professional expenses, Red Thread microgrants can help bridge those financial gaps.” Such statements are significant in that they resist neoliberalism’s meritocratic emphasis on independent efforts by recognizing that some students face hardships that others do not and that such students may require institutional support.

Similarly generative was the frequency of the warrant *well as environmental* (125 instances), as indicated by Appendix B4. For example, in discussing self-esteem, UT Austin Document 8 explains, “When we were growing up, our successes, failures, and how we were treated by our family, teachers, coaches, religious authorities, and peers, all contributed to the creation of our self-esteem.” This warrant illustrates the intersectional way in which one’s social relationships impact one’s wellbeing. Furthermore, *well as environmental* frequently co-occurred with *well as able* (18 instances), as demonstrated by Appendix B8, countering apolitical assumptions related to ability. For instance, in discussing stress and resilience, ASU Document 7 notes, “However, the constant demands of academic and personal life can build up stress levels without allowing us to unwind and become fully relaxed.” Although responsibility for relaxation remains with the individual, this statement recognizes that external demands contribute directly to personal experiences of stress. Also generative was the co-occurrence of the *well as different* and *well as collective* warrants (9 instances), reflected in Appendix B8. For example, ASU Document 6 on conflict resolution notes, “Share your interests: to solve interpersonal conflict, all parties must talk about their interests or the why behind their positions.” Veering away from neoliberal goals of independence, this statement recognizes that conflict resolution requires collective efforts; rather than encouraging consensus, it also positions all individuals as having their own goals and needs. This co-occurrence is generative in that it might enable those constructing self-care documents to articulate the intersectional and collectively political nature of health more directly.



## **Rejecting and Replacing Ableist Assumptions of Wellness**

In this section, I offer a series of guidelines to support university professionals in rejecting neoliberalism's ableist assumptions and replacing them with warrants that support a range of student bodyminds. As TPC scholar Marie Moeller (2014) notes, composers of documents should not only interrogate how their individual writing may "objectif[y], individualiz[e], [and] pathologiz[e] certain bodies, but they must also consider ways to demonstrate how "social systems work insidiously to normalize and construct bodies" (p. 75). An important first step demonstrated by my findings is to interrogate how the assumptions driving the construction of wellness documents may contribute to a "structural ableism" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 53) across universities. To do so, I assert that composers of university documents must account for the intersectional complexity of disability, the need for frictional understandings of access that resist normative assimilation, and the connection of ableism to other oppressive systems like racism and sexism.

Consequently, I offer guidelines grounded in disability justice principles, as I recognize that ableist notions of wellness and care may impact the capacity of certain bodyminds to participate equitably in higher education institutional spaces. As noted in previous chapters, disability justice centers "the needs, experiences, and efforts of "sick and disabled people of color, queer and trans disabled folks of color, and everyone who is marginalized in mainstream disability organizing" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, p. 22). Further, disability justice recognizes ableism's systemically oppressive nature. In addition, disability justice emphasizes the intersectional nature of disability and understands a need for institutional change based in collective social efforts. Specifically,

disability justice encourages us to move away from “equality-based model[s] of sameness” like those represented in my corpus and instead towards a “model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered ‘normal’ on every front” (Mingus, 2011, n.p). In other words, disability justice understands that equitable accommodations value and celebrate difference rather than providing individuals with equal access to dominant, ableist structures.

As previous TPC scholarship has recognized (Wheeler, 2018; Bennett, 2022; Bennett & Hannah, 2022) the lens of disability justice can help TPCers promote more equitable and ethical understandings of disability access that are attuned to disability’s complex, dynamic, nuance. Disability justice is thus important in revising university care-based documents and the ableist assumptions in which they are founded. In this section, I offer a series of guiding questions grounded in disability justice values to help composers of university care-based documents shift from potentially ableist assumptions to those that anticipate and support disabled individuals as equitable citizens in university spaces. These questions include:

- How might this document presume the vulnerable and dynamic nature of the human condition?
- How might this document move beyond capitalist assumptions of productivity as integral to wellness?
- How might this document presume the intersectional, dynamic, and contextual nature of wellness?
- How might this document presume wellness as political, promote disability access, and encourage leadership by those most impacted?

Unlike Chapter Four, which offers revisions of select mission statements due to a concern with standardizing language, this chapter offers guiding questions to allow university stakeholders to challenge underlying, ableist warrants in order to move beyond them. Such questions might be taken up by individual administrators of care-based programs or committees designed to examine and evaluate care-based documents. As these guiding questions are grounded in my analysis of the warrants present across three specific universities' care-based documents, I encourage university professionals to adjust them based on their own contexts.

**How might this document presume the vulnerable and dynamic nature of the human condition?** As the findings indicated, neoliberal articulations of care often rely on and reinforce warrants that equate wellness with standardized notions of ability. Specifically, this was indicated through the frequency of the warrants *well as able* (286 instances), *well as rational* (283 instances (refer to Appendix B4) and their co-occurrence (41 instances, refer to Appendix B8). In presuming students of neutrally able bodyminds, university care documents may contribute to medicalized assumptions that position disability as a mental or physical lack in need of overcoming or erasure. In addition, while encouraging individuals to measure themselves against normative frames, such assumptions can impede engagement with alternative forms of self-knowledge (Clare, 2017). Neoliberal articulations of care may consequently legitimize some ways of being as normal and invalidate alternative embodied perspectives by framing them as disordered, defective, or disabled. This disregards the value of the embodied knowledges and experiences of individuals who may not fit neatly into these normative structures (Campbell & Stramondo, 2017, p. 158). By drawing from assumptions that anticipate

“normal” individuals, composers of university self-care documents may disregard disabled individuals’ diversely embodied needs (Melonçon, 2013b, p. 75). Further, disregard for the vulnerable nature of the human condition in such constructions may indirectly reinforce the idea that embodied vulnerability, like that represented by disability, reflects an aberrant defect or disorder in need of remediation. As Dolmage (2017) articulates, “The social construction of disability on campus often mandates that disability exist only as a negative, private, individual failure. Very little real space is made for the building of coalitional, collective, or interdependent disability politics” (p. 56). The care-based documents in my corpus thus contribute to ableism’s circulation in higher education spaces by drawing from an understanding of disability as an individualized problem in need of resolution.

Yet, findings also indicated generative opportunity spaces for resisting such constructions, through documents that recognized *well as diverse* and *well as vulnerable*. In contrast to such articulations of disability as a “disorder” or “defect,” disability justice encourages individuals to recognize disabled bodyminds as “whole” bodyminds. As Patricia Berne et al. (2018) explain, disability justice values individuals “as they are, for who they are,” understands that “each person is full of history and life experience,” and posits that “disabled people are whole people” (p. 228). Rather than encouraging individual alignment with normative constructions of health, disability justice emphasizes that each individual is themselves a whole person. To support understandings of all individuals as “whole people,” composers of university care-based documents should recognize that well bodyminds are not standard bodyminds but are instead diversely unique and inherently vulnerable. As a myriad of bodyminds may thus be considered

“well,” care likewise can and should look different for all individuals (Michaeli, 2017, p. 55). Consequently, I recommend that those composing care-based documents exchange disembodied, neutral understandings of their readers that may contribute to ableism’s circulation for discourse that identifies a range of bodies as healthily whole.

In addition, when articulating awareness of the vulnerable nature of the human condition, care-based documents should recognize the relationally contextual nature of experiences of ability and disability. As my findings indicated, warrants related to *well as collective* and *well as environmental* were generative in disrupting assumptions of *well as able*. Advocating for what she refers to as a “three-dimensional model...of technological embodiment,” Melonçon (2013b) urges those in TPC to recognize individual embodiment as directly influenced by larger social and technological contexts. As she explains, when those composing documents “only imagine an ideal user of the system in ideal circumstances, then [they], consciously or unconsciously, are ensuring that people with disabilities--either temporary or more permanent--will always be marginalized, inhibited, or discouraged” (p. 76). Instead, through networked understandings of embodiment attuned to the complex relationality between a unique body and a particular social or institutional context, those composing such documents may recognize disability and ability as dynamic phenomena (p. 76). Therefore, I also recommend that in accounting for the human condition’s vulnerable, dynamic nature, composers of care-based documents not only recognize how their own documentation practices have discursive impacts on individual experiences of ability and disability, but likewise account for the relational way in which documents, design strategies, and sociopolitical environments may influence individual experiences of vulnerability and privilege. By

presuming student embodiments as inherently vulnerable and dynamic, composers of care-based documents can move beyond assumptions that contribute to ableism's institutional circulation.

**How might this document move beyond capitalist assumptions of productivity as integral to wellness?** Findings demonstrated how the corpus of care-based documents collectively emphasized understandings of productivity as integral to wellness through the prevalence of the warrant *well as productive* (235 instances, refer to Appendix B4) and the frequent co-occurrences of the warrants *well as able* and *well as productive* (60 instances) and the warrants *well as rational* and *well as productive* (49 instances, refer to Appendix B8). The warrants reflected by the corpus of self-care documents collectively positioned productivity as a primary goal of wellness, contributing not only to the circulation of neoliberal, capitalist ideals but likewise to ableism in framing certain bodies and minds as more productive and, consequently, desirable than others. While intended to support students, these self-care documents collectively retrofit individuals into existing systems through tactics that allow them to align more effectively with ableist norms. As Dolmage (2017) explains, “The ethic of higher education still encourages students and teachers alike to accentuate ability, valorize perfection, and stigmatize anything that hints at intellectual (or physical) weakness” (p. 3). By drawing on ableist warrants of productivity as integral to wellness, such documents may contribute to the circulation of ableist rhetoric across higher educational spaces.

Referring to such discursive practices as products of an “ethic of accommodation as expediency,” Moeller (2014) notes that they confuse equitable inclusion with goals of

maximizing capital; in other words, these self-care documents may foster conditional access when prioritizing practices of inclusion aimed at increasing institutional and individual efficiency for the sake of institutional, capitalist gain (p. 63). Furthermore, Moeller argues that an ethic of accommodation as expediency can occlude “harmful biopolitical logics...by meshing...dominant narratives with an ethic of altruism” (p. 54-55). Framing certain biopolitical behaviors and ways of being as inherently and productively “good,” university care-based documents may rhetorically obscure the ableist assumptions driving such discourse and contribute to disability’s institutional erasure across higher educational spaces.

My findings, however, also revealed generative methods for discursively resisting this problematically ableist warrant. Specifically, through the co-occurrence of *able as productive* and *able as environmental* (7 instances) and the pairing of *well as environmental* and *well as vulnerable* (3 instances, refer to Appendix B8), these documents challenged assumptions of independent productivity as natural and of wellness as a matter of personal responsibility by instead highlighting the vulnerable nature of the human condition and a networked understanding of health. Such warrants move us away from capitalist goals of productivity and towards an understanding of human value beyond neoliberalism’s capitalist bounds. Recognizing the generative potential present through these warrants, I recommend that composers of care-based documents embrace what disability justice refers to as an “anti-capitalist politic,” or an understanding that as “the very nature of our body/minds resist conforming to a capitalist ‘normative’ level of production” human value should be measured beyond one’s productivity (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227). By rejecting and replacing assumptions that

equate productivity with wellness, composers of university care-based documents can resist neoliberalism's circulation of ableism and expand notions of wellness in ways that include, anticipate, value, and celebrate disabled bodyminds.

**How might this document presume the intersectional, dynamic, and contextual nature of wellness?** My findings also indicated that the assumptions in the documents in my corpus tended to encourage students' individual alignment with standardized wellness ideals. This tendency was suggested by the frequent use of the warrant *well as independent* (597 instances, refer to Appendix B4) and the consistent pairings of the warrants *well as able* and *well as independent* (105 instances, refer to Appendix B8) and warrants *well as independent* and *well as rational* (63 instances, refer to Appendix B8). Such warrants position wellness as a personal responsibility and communicate that a lack of health is the individual's fault. Likewise, by encouraging individual alignment with standard notions of health, these documents collectively endorse specific bodyminds and behaviors as normal, or appropriate, and others as requiring intervention. Such articulations fail to recognize the contextual and complexly intersectional nature of agency, particularly in relation to one's health. These documents thus confuse agency with one's capacity for "mastery-and-control" and thus reinforce "compliance" with certain standards that many bodyminds may be unable to meet (Gouge, 2018, p. 127). Likewise, as Steve Graby and Anat Greenstein (2016) explain, "autonomy has traditionally been associated with a concept of the 'independent individual' which pathologises disabled people as inherently deficient, dependent, and incapable" (p. 228). Such ideas of control presume that all individuals possess individualized, independent agency across all contexts. However, as they further explain,



the ability to make choices “is produced through social and relational contexts” (p. 247). Specifically, one’s capacity as an agent arises from one’s access to larger systems of “social support” (p. 247). In other words, independent notions of agency disregard how all individuals rely on external resources to make seemingly independent choices. Further, Nicki Ward (2015) notes that one’s intersectional identity directly influences one’s access to support systems. As she writes,

a contextual sensitivity can enable us to identify the ways that temporal, spatial, and political locations, along with different social and cultural understandings, may all serve to construct different intersectional experiences of identity that in turn influence people’s lived realities. (p. 62)

One’s agency is thus contextually influenced by one’s access to external resources and the ways in which one’s dynamic, intersectional identity directly influences experiences of privilege in certain sociopolitical settings.

Yet, my findings also indicated how such problematic warrants might be undermined. Specifically, the co-occurrence of the warrants *well as independent* and *well as collective* (75 instances), *well as independent* and *well as different* (14 instances), and *well as independent* and *well as vulnerable* (12 instances, refer to Appendix B8), move the documents away from static understandings of health and towards a concept of health as heavily intersectional, contextual, and dynamic. I therefore recommend that composers of care-based documents embrace disability justice’s attention to intersectionality, which recognizes that

each person has multiple identities and that each identity can be a site of privilege or oppression. The mechanical workings of oppression...shift depending upon the

characteristics of any given institutional or interpersonal interaction; the very experience of disability itself is being shaped by race, gender, class, gender expression, historical moment, relationship to organization, and more. (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227)

By allowing the disability justice principle of intersectionality to replace decontextualized, static notions of agency, composers of care-based documents can help to resist logics that contribute to ableism's circulation in higher education. Such assumptions can foster a more critical understanding of care by recognizing that wellness is complexly influenced by contextual relationships that contribute to individual experiences of privilege and empowerment (N. Ward, 2015, p. 59). In this way, composers of such documents can foster an understanding that decisions related to wellness are heavily influenced and facilitated by "social and relational contexts" (Graby & Greenstein, 2016, p. 247).

**How might this document presume wellness as political, promote disability access, and encourage leadership by those most impacted?** As the findings reflect, wellness was framed as an apolitical phenomenon. This was suggested through the frequency of the warrant *well as independent* (597 instances, refer to Appendix B4) and the co-occurrence of the warrants *well as productive* and *well as independent* (76 instances, refer to Appendix B8). In presuming understandings of wellness as an independent concern that may impact one's productivity, the findings collectively frame wellness as a personal quality impacted by one's actions and efforts; in other words, wellness was largely individualized. This was unsurprising, as neoliberalism historically shifts responsibility for health "from state-level public agencies to individuals as

consumers within a market economy” (Derkatch & Spoel, 2020, p. 23). Specifically, neoliberalism applies

personal inadequacies, guilt feelings, conflicts, and neuroses to replace abstract, almost invisible social influences, such as globalisation, market forces, cultural and political institutions, in other words the tendency for ‘social and cultural influence to be discounted in favour of narrow psychological contemplation.’

(Bendelow, 2010, p. 471).

In this way, neoliberalism obscures the responsibility of cultural and political institutions to support a range of individuals through care-related resources by personalizing responsibility for health. Further, the ideals of “self-reliance” and “responsibilization” characteristic of the neoliberal “medical power structure” promote the idea that “only the fittest of subjects” may be included in institutional spaces, “keeping the unfit unseen,” “constituting the unfit as at fault for being so,” and “keeping the power structure itself un-interrogated” (Kopelson, 2009, p. 388). In other words, neoliberalism not only obscures the political inequities characteristic of care but also ensures the ongoing exclusion of certain populations, like disabled individuals, deemed unfit by neoliberalism’s capitalist ideals. Consequently, by framing certain bodyminds and behaviors as healthy and others as unhealthy, neoliberal assumptions like those reflected by these self-care documents influence who is granted access as a citizen in certain institutional spaces.

However, as noted previously, the documents likewise reflected potential methods for rejecting and replacing these problematic assumptions, particularly through the recognition of *well as collective* (200 instances), and *well as environmental* (125 instances, refer to Appendix B4). Thus, I posit that the rejection and replacement of

apolitical warrants regarding wellness and care should be grounded in disability justice's understandings of collective access. As Berne et al. (2018) explain, those committed to disability justice believe that

We create and explore new ways of doing things that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity...we can share responsibility for our access needs, we can ask that our needs be met without compromising our integrity, we can balance autonomy while being in community, we can be unafraid of our vulnerabilities knowing our strengths are respected. (p. 229)

To reject apolitical understandings of wellness that strengthen neoliberal institutions and the normative values that they uphold, composers of care-based documents should draw on discourse that recognizes that disability access demands collective efforts from a range of individuals, including disabled folks. To do so, composers of documents should shift articulations of care from understandings that place responsibility on individuals themselves to collective or "networked" understandings of care that recognize care as a political phenomenon that often privileges and empowers certain identities and ways of being over others (Barnes et al., 2015, p. 47).

Likewise, recognizing the collective nature of wellness and care, composers of care-based documents also should promote the disability justice principle of leadership by those most impacted (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227) and create opportunities for those most impacted by care-based documents, such as students, faculty, and staff in institutional spaces, to review and influence such constructions. As Jeffrey Grabill and Michele Simmons (1998) explain, risk communications impact who is and is not anticipated as a citizen across institutional spaces; consequently, they argue that all

members of institutional communities should directly influence risk-related articulations. Following the assertions of Grabill and Simmons, I thus recommend that composers of documents provide diverse stakeholders in higher educational institutions opportunities to review and influence care-based communications. Specifically, I urge those composing these documents to engage directly with individuals who represent a range of intersectional identities, including disabled folks, to allow for the expansion of the types of bodies, minds, and behaviors deemed well, able, and valuable in higher educational spaces. As Dolmage (2017) articulates, “when disabled people lead the process, we can more specifically address the power imbalances that lead to exclusive spaces, interfaces, and pedagogy” (p. 129). To do so, composers of care-based documents should offer individuals opportunities for providing feedback on the spaces and documents with which they engage. By eliciting feedback from a range of document users, composers of university care-based documents can account for and model more networked understandings of care that foster a collective “reimagining” of wellness and construct “new possibilities” (Konrad, 2018, p.137) in relation to institutional norms. As Natasha N. Jones et al. (2016) argue, socially just understandings of inclusion involve “respect for everyone’s voices, stories, and knowledges” (p. 219). To demonstrate this respect, composers of care-based documents need to include a range of perspectives in the construction and review of circulated documents. Collectively, such tactics can inspire a shift from self-care documents that individualize wellness experiences to a networked understanding of care that recognizes wellness’s contextual and intersectional nuance.

## **Conclusion**

As articulations of wellness directly influence citizenship in higher educational spaces, it is vital that university professionals interrogate which bodyminds are privileged and empowered by neutral assumptions present across care-based documents. I encourage readers to apply the methods that I offer here to identify and analyze the impact of neutral warrants across care-based documents. This chapter's guiding questions offer a generative starting point for shifting documents away from the use of ableist assumptions and towards constructions that anticipate and celebrate the needs, knowledges, and experiences of diverse bodyminds including disabled individuals.

As this chapter was limited in scope to the discursive analysis of three universities' care-based documents designed for promoting student wellness, it offers a strong starting point for future research projects. Specifically, future research might compare the assumptions driving care-based documents composed for students with those written for faculty and/or staff. Likewise, future research might engage in more extensive analysis of self-care programs by comparing the underlying assumptions of a wider range of university initiatives. In addition, recognizing disability as both an embodied and discursive experience, I urge researchers to engage with more user-centered and user-experience practices that might provide insight into the lived experiences of disabled students, faculty, and staff with documents like those analyzed in this chapter. Finally, understanding access as a matter of social justice and recognizing, as does disability justice, that ableism is inherently connected to other sources of oppression, I encourage future researchers to examine the intersectional implications of seemingly neutral

assumptions across care-based documents to better understand how these documents may impact individual experiences of power and privilege.

As this chapter demonstrates, through the theoretical and practical combination of RHM, DS, and TPC, composers of university care-based documents can better understand how the assumptions circulated by wellness discourse can have far-ranging impacts on diverse bodyminds, including disabled students, faculty, and staff. Recognizing the potentially violent impacts of ableist warrants on disabled students, faculty, and staff, I encourage composers of such documents to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace neoliberal standardization with more accessible and equitable constructions inspired by disability justice that celebrate disability as integral to wellness.

### **Chapter 6 Preview**

In Chapter Six, I continue my analysis of ableism's rhetorical circulation by analyzing the design of digital classroom interfaces. This chapter illustrates how ableist rhetoric can circulate across digital classroom spaces by applying semi-structured interviews grounded in user-experience design. In this chapter, I engage relevant scholarship, provide insight into my choice of research participants and my process of data collection, and explain my site-specific research methods. This chapter ends by providing readers with data-driven recommendations for collaboratively working with students to promote more accessible digital classes through user-experience methods that position students as co-designers of digital learning spaces.

## CHAPTER 6

### TRACING ABLEISM IN DIGITAL INTERFACES

#### **A Need to Interrogate Digital Classroom Interfaces**

Scholars in disability studies (DS) and technical and professional communication (TPC) have recognized that digital classroom interfaces may contribute to ableist rhetorics through the normative assumptions they rely on and reinforce regarding students embodied needs, experiences, and knowledges (Moeller & Jung, 2014; Oswal & Melonçon, 2014; Oswal & Melonçon, 2017; Hitt, 2018; Nielsen, 2018). Many presume that digital interfaces are inherently more accessible than in-person learning environments due to the flexible learning practices that they facilitate (Selfe & Selfe, 1994). Yet, despite its digital nature, online learning is a complexly material process in which a range of intersectional bodyminds engage. Further, posthuman scholarship (Mara & Hawk, 2010; Clinkenbeard, 2020) enables us to understand how ableism can circulate trans-situationally through the design of digital classroom interfaces and how seemingly neutral design decisions may marginalize disabled users. Consequently, it is vital that instructors and administrators examine whether and how such spaces anticipate a range of student embodiments, needs, and experiences in their design. Such work is vital to ensure that these online spaces do not rhetorically “normaliz[e] all of our students in a homogenous whole” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 285). When unchecked, such spaces may contribute to assimilative understandings of access by encouraging individual alignment with a normatively able status quo.

This chapter therefore offers methods through which instructors may work collaboratively with student users to interrogate online digital interfaces. Grounded in



user-experience strategies that recognize access as a matter of social justice, this chapter offers methods and insights to instructors and program administrators through which they might work directly with students to facilitate the construction of online digital interfaces that recognize and respond to students' unique embodiments and needs. As Natasha N. Jones and Rebecca Walton (2018) explain, "Social justice research...investigates how communication, broadly defined, can amplify the agency of oppressed people--those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced" (p. 242). Challenging the concept of neutrality, social justice theory encourages designers to interrogate how seemingly neutral practices may contribute to the oppression of various populations. As TPC scholars Rebecca Walton, Natasha N. Jones, and Kristen R. Moore (2019) relay, the pursuit of social justice requires individuals to "recognize the ways their work may be rooted in the oppressive practices of cultural imperialism and exploitation, to understand the violence that language can do, and to confront the ways our programs, practices, and organizations render particular social groups powerless and keep them at the margins" (p. 29). The act of addressing access as a social justice concern therefore requires us to examine how digital classroom interfaces may participate in oppressive systems by interrogating the neutral design decisions, discourses, and practices supported by these spaces.

As social justice pedagogy requires "students' involvement in the solution to injustice" (Wheeler, 2018, p. 95), I turn to user experience design (UX). UX demonstrates attention to socially just design by empowering users as evaluators and designers of digital interfaces (Greer & Harris, 2018, p. 14-18). To support this engagement with socially just design, I likewise apply Walton et al.'s (2019) 4R's. As

noted in previous chapters, the 4R's involve recognizing "injustices, systems of oppression, and our own complicity in them;" revealing them as "a call-to-action and change;" rejecting "injustices, systemic oppressions, and opportunities to perpetuate them" and replacing "unjust and oppressive practices with intersectional, coalition-led practices" (p. 133). In this chapter, I thus apply the 4R's through UX strategies that collaboratively work with students in recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing neutral design strategies, discursive practices, and behaviors in digital classroom interfaces that may contribute to ableism's institutional circulation. However, as UX methods have been critiqued for disregarding disabled users (Oswal, 2019, n.p.), I also apply principles of universal design (UD) to these UX efforts. UD advocates for design strategies that consider as many bodyminds as possible in the initial design of space and in the interrogation and ongoing redesign of space. By modeling collaborative efforts grounded in a combination of UX and UD and offering insights from my own use of such methods, this chapter articulates understandings of access not as a process of normative assimilation, but as one of frictional possibility by positioning student users as co-designers of digital classroom interfaces.

### **Access's Impact on Positionality, Privilege and Power**

Historically, online classes have been credited for removing normative barriers frequently found in physical campus environments as they integrate tools and practices that promote accessibility, such as screen-reading technologies, asynchronous conversations, flexible attendance, and the sharing of information in multiple formats (Kent, 2015, n.p.). Broadly, the International Organization for Standardization defines accessibility as the "extent to which products, systems, services, environments, and

facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of characteristics and capabilities to achieve a specified goal in a specified context of use” (ISO, 2014, n.p.). Access is generally understood as an individual’s capacity to use and engage with systems and products. Specifically in a university setting, accessibility denotes a “legal obligation to create genuine opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of university life” through the modification of “practices, facilities, or services that prevent the inclusion and participation” of disabled students (Jung, 2003, p. 92).

Motivated by ADA compliance mandates, universities frequently facilitate accessibility by granting accommodations, or “procedural changes and modifications in teaching” (Jung, 2003, p. 92) on a case-by-case basis to allow students to engage with spaces and activities as they have been designed. However, access demarcates not only one’s capacity to enter and use physical spaces, but likewise one’s ability to equitably participate in those spaces and activities (Appleton Pine & Moroski-Rigney, 2020).

While individual accommodations may appear to level the playing field for disabled individuals, these acts of retrofitting often offer conditional access reliant on the erasure or overcoming of disability. Rather than promoting equitable engagement through the transformation of existing structures, such practices may facilitate students’ access to the structures that exclude them by design.

Digital classroom interfaces may thus become “site[s] of normalcy” by disregarding difference and reinforcing seemingly neutral standards with which all are expected to align (Moeller & Jung, 2014, n.p.). As noted in Chapter Two, design is never neutral but instead reveals the values and beliefs of “designers, architects, and planners” in relation to “who will (and should) inhabit the world” (Hamraie, 2013, n.p.).

Specifically, as seemingly neutral technologies have been historically associated with the military-industrial complex, such digital spaces often prioritize “male, white, middle-class, professional [and ableist] cultures” (Selfe & Selfe, 1994, p. 486). A form of technological interface, digital classroom spaces may thus perpetuate cultural assumptions that limit disabled and other marginalized students’ equitable classroom engagement. In this way, digital interfaces may contribute to ableism’s rhetorical circulation across university spaces by rewarding “bodies and minds and forms of communication and sociality that are the right (constrained) shape” (Dolmage, 2017, p.70) and excluding those who do not or cannot align with such prescriptions.

Recognizing the impact of design on disabled bodyminds, TPC scholars have called for the critical consideration of DS and ableism studies in the (re)design of classroom interfaces (Palmeri, 2006; Walters, 2010; Oswal & Melonçon, 2014; Oswal & Melonçon, 2017; Hitt, 2018; Smyser-Fauble, 2018; Bennett, 2022b). Through attention to how our design decisions “construc[t] reality and determin[e] what--and more relevantly, who--counts as normal” (Browning & Cagle, 2017, p. 443) in our classrooms, the combination of DS and TPC encourages instructors to design “assignments, classroom spaces, communications, and other pedagogical materials” (p. 444) that center disabled bodyminds (p. 444). Understanding that interface design may grant and deny individuals citizenship in a public space, the interrogation of these spaces has been designated as a matter of social justice. Specifically, as noted in previous chapters, Walton et al. (2019) assert that by critically reflecting on our participation in neutral structures through the use of what they refer to as the 4R’s, we can identify discursive practices, procedures, and assumptions that may contribute to larger oppressive systems. As noted across previous

chapters, this process involves recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing neutral discourses and design decisions that may contribute to these problematic structures.

This section identifies some of the ways in which previous scholars have recognized and revealed (Walton et al., 2019) the capacity for digital classroom interfaces to empower some identities while potentially marginalizing others. In this discussion, I draw from another framework integral to Walton et al.'s social justice work: the 3P's. As noted in Chapter Two, the 3P's examine the impacts of a practice, space, document, organization, or institution on the positionality, privilege, and power experienced by a range of bodyminds. In this section, I use this 3P's framework to articulate the value of TPC scholarship in helping instructors recognize how ableism may circulate across digital interface platforms. As noted in previous chapters, while instructors may not identify as TPCers, all instructors engage with technical communication when designing class materials (Huntsman et al., 2018, p. 13) and digital classroom interfaces. In the sections that follow, I utilize the 3P's to highlight key TPC insights regarding the value and practice of recognizing and revealing ableist strategies in digital classroom design.

**Understanding access as a negotiation of positionality.** As Walton et al. (2019) indicate, the concept of positionality helps us to recognize that identity categories such as disability “are not essential but rather are fluid and contextual” (p. 63) and that, as a whole, identity is “relational, fluid, particular, situational, and contradictory” (p. 65). Positionality allows us to consider the relational and situated nature of individual experiences and identities. For example, in some contexts, one's identity markers may be “associated with stereotypes that correlate with institutional values” and may thus provide one with advantages, while in other contexts “identity markers...[may] conflict

with values of the institution” and require individuals to “work especially hard to overcome negative default assumptions” (p. 69). In other words, one’s positionality is directly influenced by one’s contextual and intersectional interactions.

Because of the complex and dynamic way in which spatial design may negate or validate individual identities, it is important that we critically reflect on and examine the impact of design on experiences of access. As Clay Spinuzzi (2007) explains, accessibility, like identity, denotes a complex “information ecology” involving “sets of texts and other information sources that collectively [and dynamically] mediate an individual’s or group’s user experience” (p. 198). Because of accessibility’s complex, ecological nature, it becomes “a moving target” and thus reflects a “rhetorical enterprise” based across “overlapping and contradictory activities” (p. 198). Rather than something that is achieved, accessibility is continuously negotiated by individuals across diverse networks. Consequently, as argued throughout this dissertation, understandings of systemic phenomena like access and ableism require us to shift from situational understandings of rhetoric towards understandings of rhetoric as ecologically trans-situational (Chaput, 2010). Posthumanism (Mara & Hawk, 2010; Clinkenbeard, 2020) offers a useful lens for tracing the trans-situational, ecological, and ongoing negotiations between user positionality, design, and access. Specifically, posthumanism understands aspects of one’s positionality, such as one’s identity, behavior, and beliefs, as constrained by dynamic, complex, and rapidly changing networks of “human intentions, organizational discourses, biological trajectories, and technological possibilities” (Mara & Hawk, 2010, p. 3). Posthumanism thus frames individual positionality as heavily

influenced by “interdependences of interaction,” or informed by one’s engagement across complex networks (Clinkenbeard, 2020, p. 121).

Furthermore, posthumanism recognizes that the impacts of design are always “material-discursive” as design “communicate[s] meaning about what kinds of material and social relations should be possible” (Hamraie, 2013, n.p.) and what positionalities are valuable. That is, posthumanism helps us understand how the discursive aspects of design have material implications for a range of bodyminds. Consequently, posthumanism allows us to analyze the potential impact of technological interface design on identity. Likewise, as Lisa Melonçon (2013b) notes, posthumanism demonstrates that as participants in a networked ecology of technological interfaces, users of technology may challenge and expand what, and who, is anticipated by existing technology. Referring to this as “a three-dimensional model” of technology, Melonçon explains that there is an integral relationship between the “user, text, technology, space, and author” and that it is thus vital to examine technology as dynamically and relationally impacting embodiments (p. 76). By coupling a posthuman lens with the concept of rhetorical circulation, we can trace how one’s engagement with technologies, texts, and material spaces may both impact individual access and contribute to ableism’s institutional circulation.

**Recognizing how access privileges the agency of some over others.**

Furthermore, one’s positionality and consequential experiences of access are integrally influenced by the technological networks with which individuals engage. In tandem with positionality, Walton et al. (2019) encourage us to interrogate the impact of our discourse and design decisions on individual experiences of privilege. Like positionality, privilege emerges complexly through a person’s engagement across social and material networks.

Understanding privilege as “enmeshed” in “embodied interactions of assemblages,” posthumanism helps us analyze how the design of space may foster access and thus agential privilege for some, while denying it to others (Clinkenbeard, 2020, p. 122). To better understand users’ complex experiences with agency across digital interfaces, many TPC scholars have recommended that designers of documents and spaces engage directly with users through user-centered and UX design methods (Johnson, 1998; Petrie & Bevan, 2009; Greer & Harris, 2019; Oswal, 2019). While usability examines an individual’s satisfaction with a product or environment’s capacity to help them achieve “specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specified context of use” (ISO, 1998, n.p), UX design “takes a more holistic view, aiming for a balance between task-oriented aspects and other non-task oriented aspects...of eSystem use and possession, such as beauty, challenge, stimulation and self-expression” (Petrie & Bevan, 2009, p. 4). UX moves beyond usability’s focus on effective and efficient use by allowing researchers to explore a more “holistic” understanding of users’ embodied experiences with technology.

Specifically, while usability testing may examine a user’s perception of a digital interface’s “effectiveness” or “efficiency” in helping them complete a task, UX evaluates their “subjective reactions,” “perceptions,” and “interaction[s]” (Petrie & Bevan, 2009, p. 4) while engaging with digital interfaces. As Michael Greer and Heidi Skurat Harris (2018) demonstrate, “The overarching goal of user experience research is to discover what users need, and to design interfaces, products, and experiences that meet those needs” (p. 14). UX is thus helpful in exploring users’ experiences of privilege and agency



in relation to online systems as it allows designers of digital spaces to gain insight into users' embodied experiences with technology.

Furthermore, as a form of user-centered design, UX privileges users as practitioners, producers, and citizens in technological spaces and helps us consider the uniquely embodied ways in which individuals engage with technology (Johnson, 1998, p. 64). UX can thus aid designers of documents and spaces in tracing “the complexities of human-technology relations” (Clinkenbeard, 2020, p. 118) and their impact on individuals' embodied experiences with privilege. Applying theories of UX to higher educational contexts, Greer and Harris refer to the need for instructors to embrace a “student-experience mindset” (p. 17). Grounded in empathy, a student-experience mindset prioritizes “students' needs and goals” by eliciting “continuous, ongoing, meaningful response and engagement from [student] users” in the design and evaluation of technology (p.17). A “student-experience” mindset offers instructors direct insight into students' diversely embodied experiences with technologies across their courses. As this dissertation is similarly concerned with higher education contexts, this chapter specifically applies a “student-experience” mindset to examine the impact of digital interfaces on the lives of students.

**Promoting empowerment by combining universal and user-experience design.** In combination with privilege and positionality, Walton et al. (2019) encourage us to consider power, or how particular practices may contribute to larger oppressive systems and individual experiences in them (p. 109). UX is helpful in better understanding how certain design strategies may empower some identities while contributing to the marginalization of others. However, despite UX's equitable intentions,

it has been critiqued as ableist due to its historic disregard for disabled users. Because of this inattention to disability, many scholars have called for the specific consideration of DS in UX efforts (Oswal, 2019; Palmer et al., 2019; Melonçon, 2018) to explore and promote the empowerment of disabled users in design. By incorporating the perspectives of disabled folks through participatory design practices, we can move away from “ableist aspects of UX practice and brea[k] the boundary between designers and disabled users through specific accessible design practices emerging out of these embodied experiences” (Palmer et al., 2019, n.p.). In other words, by blurring the divide between designers and users, UX may reposition disabled individuals from their assumed roles as passive recipients of technology to active producers of that technology.

To promote disabled agency and empowerment in UX design practices, TPC scholars have argued for the application of UD, and, more specifically in the realm of education, universal design for learning (UDL) strategies (Ellcessor, 2016; Walters, 2010; Hitt, 2018). As a design strategy, UD encourages us to anticipate as many bodyminds as possible at the forefront of our design processes in order to promote access for all (Hitt, 2018). As does UD for general concepts of design, UDL challenges “the notion that there is one standard way to learn or engage with information by offering flexible, adaptable pedagogical practices” (Hitt, 2018, p. 53). UDL therefore aims to make classroom spaces accessible to all students by facilitating practices that promote “flexible” and “adaptable” student engagement and that “reduce barriers in the learning environment that allow learning goals to be achievable by all students” (Wilson, 2017, n.p.). Specifically, UDL calls for instructors to provide course content across diverse media, to offer students multiple means for class engagement and participation, and to

provide students various ways to demonstrate their acquired knowledge (Dolmage, 2017, p.145). By coupling a student-experience mindset with goals of UDL, designers of digital interfaces can gain further insight into the accessibility of classroom spaces by better understanding students' embodied experiences in them.

However, while UDL seeks to empower all students through access, it is important that disabled bodyminds remain central to such efforts. By confusing “universal” for “normative,” discussions of universal, “good design” can inspire a “flexibility” and “freedom” that reinforces neoliberal ableism’s problematic understandings of disability as an individual, personal problem. As Dolmage (2017) explains, “Neoliberalism takes the values of free choice, flexibility, and deregulation and translates them into market reforms and policies designed to maximize profits, privatize industry, and exploit all available resources” (p. 139). To keep efforts of UD and UDL from being repurposed as neoliberal “marketing tools” that empower dominant bodyminds at the cost of disabled agency, it is vital that discussions of disability remain central to both UD and UDL. To do so, UDL efforts should emphasize the sociopolitical nature of disability and prioritize the needs and experiences of disabled folks at the forefront of design (Hamraie, 2016, p. 4).

Recognizing the need to explore the impact of digital interfaces on students' experiences of positionality, privilege, and power, this chapter combines UDL values with a student-experience mindset. To do so, I engage directly with student participants, particularly those who have experienced disability in some way, to gain insight into their embodied experiences with online courses. As users of digital interfaces, students can “propose solutions of their own which are often rooted in their daily practice of problem-

solving...while fording the gaps present in everyday ableist physical and cyber environment[s]” (Oswal, 2019, n.p.). In this chapter, I thus collaborate with student users to examine the implications of their past and more recent engagements with digital classroom interfaces and explore how digital class design has impacted their experiences with positionality, power and privilege. As each user experiences technology “from a different vantage point shaped by their social, physical, and educational experiences” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2017, p.70), this chapter seeks to uncover insights from specific students’ experiences to inform future decisions regarding digital course design.

### **Methods**

To better understand how decisions related to digital classroom interface design may, unknowingly, contribute to and participate in larger oppressive systems, this chapter is grounded in Walton et al.’s (2019) concept of the 4R’s. Motivating this chapter’s efforts to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace participation in ableist systems is a cripistemological methodology, which resists standardizing epistemologies by constructing alternative knowledge informed by disabled experiences. Cripistemology thus recognizes disability as an embodied experience complexly influenced by social discourse (Johnson & McRuer, 2014).

To recognize and reveal the potentially problematic, standardized assumptions that may motivate digital class design, my methods involve the application of UDL to a student-experience mindset, specifically through semi-structured interviews with graduate student users enrolled in ASU Online, a degree-granting program offered exclusively online by Arizona State University. I specifically chose to interview students from this program because ASU Online courses are standardized, meaning that all

students who enroll in specific courses in the program will experience the same course curriculum. I recruited students according to a protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University (refer to Appendix C23). I sent a survey to students enrolled in a section of the Theories of Literacy course associated with the program during fall 2018 (refer to Appendix C1). Eight students responded to the survey; out of those eight, I chose five participants who discussed a range of experiences and embodied needs while enrolled in online classes. Rather than seeking participants who expressed exclusively positive or negative experiences with online learning, I chose participants who indicated a combination of the two on the recruitment survey. Among the chosen participants were two students who identified as having a disability. However, during subsequent interviews, all students discussed conditions that they either classified as a disability or that they characterized as disabling. I embraced a mētīc attitude by holding interviews via Zoom and adjusting the schedule of interviews based on participants' needs. Interviews thus took about six months to complete, beginning in December of 2018 and ending in May of 2019. Unfortunately, one interview participant stopped responding, which they later explained was due to the birth of a new baby. Another participant and I were unable to schedule a time to meet for her third interview. This chapter therefore includes interviews with three students.

I used Irving Seidman's (2006) "three interview series" to complete these interviews because, as discussed previously, this interview format allowed me to co-construct knowledge with participants by exploring with them specific experiences in digital classrooms (p. 20). Using Seidman's three interview series, the first set of interview questions asked participants to reflect on their previous online and in-person

academic experiences both at ASU and elsewhere. The second set of questions then asked students to reflect on their experience in their Theories of Literacy class as a comparative baseline for student insights. During the third interviews, I worked with students to collaboratively build knowledge based on insights from their previous interviews. For these first two interviews, I used standard interview questions, which I adjusted slightly for those students who identified as disabled (refer to Appendix C2-C3). Interview questions for third interviews were constructed uniquely for each participant based on their first two interviews to promote reflection on their specific experiences (refer to Appendix C4). After completing their third interviews, participants received a \$15 Amazon gift card for their time. Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. I transcribed all interviews for the purpose of my analysis.

As I recognize how “universalizing” claims about all students can often lead to alternative “normalizing” agendas (Moeller & Jung, 2014, n.p.), this chapter does not aim to make general claims about all students from this series of interviews, but to instead model methods for co-constructing knowledge with students regarding their class experiences and to identify considerations for future designers of digital interfaces. The analysis of my interviews consisted of four phases: 1) building a coding scheme for primary codes and subcodes, 2) analyzing and counting primary codes, 3) analyzing and counting subcodes, and 4) identifying prominent themes based on student discussions.

**Phase one: Primary coding.** To analyze my data, I used thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016). As noted in Chapter Five,

a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 198). Further a theme generally denotes “an

extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means. (p. 199)

As discussed in Chapter Three, themes allow researchers to analyze data in relation to “repeating ideas” and to reach broader theoretical conclusions by examining similarities, differences, and relationships between themes. Using thematic coding, I was able to better examine the themes across participant discussions and to cluster, or group, these themes to draw further insights.

Specifically, as I was concerned with whether, and how, digital classes consider UDL, my primary thematic coding scheme was grounded in the “five levels of accessibility” (refer to Table C1). When present, these five levels of accessibility promote a more universal, “deep” appreciation for accessibility beyond the promotion of wheelchair access. These levels include “movement,” “sense,” “architecture,” “communication,” and “agency” (Dolmage, 2017, pp. 118-119). Beginning with codes grounded in these five levels of access, I then expanded my codes to account for discussions of disability, time, productivity, and individual embodiment. After coding this data, I counted the total primary codes by interviewee and across my corpus.

**Phase two: Secondary coding.** After my phase one analysis, I recognized that each of my primary codes reflected a wide range of experiences for which primary codes did not account. Therefore, I further analyzed each primary code through a series of secondary subcodes to trace the nuance of each (refer to Table 2). I identified subcodes using what Saldaña (2016) refers to as in vivo coding. As mentioned in Chapter Three, in vivo coding involves prioritizing participant perspectives by building codes out of insights and trends across interview conversations. These subcodes thus reflect trends

related to participant discussions regarding each primary phenomenon. After this secondary level of coding, I counted all subcodes by interviewee and across my corpus.

Table 2 reflects an overview of my primary codes and secondary subcodes.

Table 2

*List of Digital Space Codes and Subcodes*

<b>Primary Codes &amp; Definitions</b>	<b>Subcodes &amp; Definitions</b>
<b>Movement:</b> References physical navigation across digital space	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Access:</b> Discussions of successful access in one's classroom movement</li> <li>2. <b>No access:</b> Discussions of a lack of access in one's classroom movement</li> <li>3. <b>Linear movement:</b> Discussions of movement as being linear (from point a to point b to point c)</li> <li>4. <b>Sideways movement:</b> Discussion of movement as non-linear, circulatory and/or ongoing</li> </ol>
<b>Sense:</b> References to participants' emotional engagement in the classroom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Satisfaction:</b> Discussions of satisfaction in the digital space</li> <li>2. <b>Dissatisfaction:</b> Discussions of dissatisfaction in the digital space</li> <li>3. <b>Stress:</b> Discussions of stress or tiredness in the digital space</li> <li>4. <b>Isolation:</b> Discussions of loneliness or isolation in the digital space</li> <li>5. <b>Belonging:</b> Discussions of a sense of belonging in the digital space</li> </ol>
<b>Architecture:</b> References to the built digital space or layout	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Class design:</b> Discussions of digital class design</li> <li>2. <b>Program Design:</b> Discussions of ASU Online M.A. program</li> <li>3. <b>Institution design:</b> Discussions of overall institutional design at ASU</li> <li>4. <b>LMS Design:</b> Discussions of the Canvas or Blackboard learning management system</li> </ol>



<p><b>Communication:</b> References to communication in digital classrooms or programs</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Connection:</b> Discussions of a sense of connection, community, or understanding in digital classroom or program spaces</li> <li>2. <b>Disconnection:</b> Discussions of a lack of connection, community, or understanding in digital classroom or program spaces</li> <li>3. <b>Monitored:</b> Discussions of communication in digital spaces as censored or monitored</li> <li>4. <b>Supportive:</b> Discussions of communication that fostered a sense of support</li> </ol>
<p><b>Agency:</b> References to participants' agency in shaping and participating in digital environments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Independence:</b> Discussions related to actions completed on their own (without assistance) grounded in a sense of productivity</li> <li>2. <b>Interdependence:</b> Discussions related to actions completed with the help and/or support of other people or resources</li> <li>3. <b>No Agency:</b> Discussions related to a lack of agency and/or capacity to participate in a space</li> <li>4. <b>Autonomy:</b> Discussions related to a sense of self-actualization or fulfillment in their participation</li> </ol>
<p><b>Disability:</b> References to a disability or a disabling condition</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Problem:</b> Discussions related to disability as a problem to be resolved</li> <li>2. <b>Diagnosis:</b> Discussions related to the diagnosis or identification of disability</li> <li>3. <b>Accommodation:</b> Discussions related to accommodations of disabilities</li> <li>4. <b>Diversity:</b> Discussions of disability as a different form of experience</li> </ol>
<p><b>Time:</b> References to time</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Without time:</b> Discussions of a lack of time</li> <li>2. <b>Deadlines:</b> Discussions of deadlines</li> <li>3. <b>Flexibility:</b> Discussions of flexible time</li> <li>4. <b>Standard:</b> Discussions of standard timelines</li> </ol>
<p><b>Productivity:</b> References to productivity, money or high grades</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Capital value:</b> Discussions of the productive value of grades and/or money</li> </ol>

	2. <b>Progress:</b> Discussions of their progress
<b>Embodiment:</b> References to embodiment and/or embodied difference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Geographic difference:</b> Discussions of diverse geographic locations</li> <li>2. <b>Embodied difference:</b> Discussions of differences of embodiment</li> <li>3. <b>Experiential difference:</b> Discussions of differences of experience</li> <li>4. <b>Universal:</b> Discussions of universal standards for all bodies</li> <li>5. <b>Class considerations:</b> Discussions of class design that considers embodied difference</li> </ol>

Through a combination of these codes and subcodes, I identified trends in the embodied negotiations that students make while engaging with digital classroom interfaces.

### Findings

In this section, I discuss my findings by primary code based on frequency (refer to Appendix C5), since frequency suggested which concerns were most prominent for student participants. Using these codes, I organize this section by students' most frequent concerns, somewhat frequent concerns, and least frequent concerns. In the discussion of each primary code, I highlight key insights based on my secondary coding (refer to Appendix C6-C14). Throughout this discussion, I refer to students by pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

**Most frequent concerns.** As reflected in Appendix C5, I first coded students' most frequently expressed concerns, which included *architecture* (348 instances), *communication* (183 instances) and *agency* (180 instances). Below, I discuss insights yielded from the primary and secondary coding of each of these key concerns.

**Architecture.** Across all three interviews, concerns related to *architecture*, or the design of digital spaces, were predominant (refer to Appendix C5). This was unsurprising, as these interviews were heavily focused on analyzing participants' experiences with the design of digital classroom spaces. As Appendix C6 indicates, interview conversations regarding architecture were most focused on issues related to *class design* (277 instances). Again, this was foreseeable as interview questions were focused on the design of digital classroom interfaces. However, as the secondary trends reflected by Appendix C6 indicate, participant concerns related to individual class design also connected to larger concerns regarding *program design* (41 instances), *LMS design* (20 instances), and *institution design* (10 instances). For example, in discussing the design of the Canvas-based discussion board features in one class, Sally noted that unlike in Blackboard, "It was difficult to go back and find the response...or the post-- that you wanted to respond to without [the] clickable titles." ASU institutionally changed their LMS from Blackboard to Canvas in 2018. Sally's statement indicates how the shift to Canvas resulted in a Discussion Board redesign that limited her capacity to navigate classroom conversations. This secondary analysis helped me recognize how student concerns related to digital class design may connect with larger institutional decisions. It likewise indicated for me that the design of digital interfaces can constrain both student movement in a space as well as instructors' capacities to make design decisions.

**Communication.** Although far less frequent than concerns related to architecture, *communication* (183 instances, refer to Appendix C5) reflected participants' second most frequent concern and suggested an area of both tension and future potential (refer to Appendix C7). Specifically, participants discussed a tension between experiences with

communication as offering both *connection* (78 instances) and *disconnection* (60 instances). For example, Lucy noted, “It’s been very helpful for me to have feedback from them [peers] so like I feel like when I read their feedback, then it makes me feel like we kinda have that relationship even though I’m not necessarily interacting you know with them, like even if I don’t respond to their response.” Peer reviews allowed Lucy to connect with her peers despite an absence of back-and-forth conversation. However, Lucy also indicated that while she was able to maintain long-term connections with professors through digital classroom communications, it was harder to do so with her classmates. This tension between communicative connection and disconnection was present across all three participants’ discussions. Likewise, this tension was indicated through students’ frequent discussions of digital communication as both *supportive* (25 instances) of student needs, yet also as *monitored* (20 instances), or constrained by instructor expectations. This suggested that digital spaces may both enhance and limit students’ privilege and power in relation to their communicative capacities. It likewise illustrated for me how students’ communicative behaviors are shaped not only by the instructor’s design decisions but also by the type of participation instructors endorse.

**Agency.** Participant interviews also frequently indicated concerns related to *agency* (180 instances, refer to Appendix C5). Students frequently discussed digital classroom spaces as fostering *independence* (62 instances) along with *no agency* (52 instances, refer to Appendix C8). While this suggests a point of tension, as independence and a lack of agency denote contradictory experiences, my findings revealed that students’ experiences with both were connected to class-related demands for productivity. For example, in her discussion of past digital classes, Sally noted that she

felt a lack of agency when she could not figure out “the kind of grader” a particular professor was. For Sally, a sense of independence came from knowing what a faculty member “wanted.” This student understood agency as one’s capacity to productively achieve instructor expectations. This indicated for me that students’ experiences with positionality, privilege and power directly correlated with their alignment with instructor notions of productivity. However, resisting these productive impulses were less frequent discussions of *interdependence* (35 instances) and *autonomy* (30 instances). While infrequent, the presence of these latter concepts reflected UDL’s potential influence on the digital interface, as these concerns embrace understandings of agency beyond productive independence.

**Somewhat frequent concerns.** I then examined students’ somewhat-frequent concerns. My findings in Appendix C5 indicated that there were three somewhat-frequently occurring concerns across participant discussions: *embodiment* (112 instances), *productivity* (102 instances), and *sense* (99 instances). Below, I discuss each of these primary concerns in relation to their correlating secondary trends.

***Embodiment.*** My findings indicated attention to *embodiment* (112 instances, refer to Appendix C5). Most frequent across these conversations were participant discussions that recognized a variety of *experiential differences* between themselves and their peers (38 instances) and discussions of *class considerations* for these differences (33 instances, refer to Appendix C9). Likewise, *embodied difference* (23 instances) was frequent across participant conversations. Similarly, considerations for *geographic difference* (7 instances) were somewhat common. These collective considerations demonstrated the generative potential of digital interfaces in promoting appreciation for difference, as these

participants identified the value of their peers' diverse embodiments in their learning. For example, Sally noted, "If you're a student and you're sitting in a large classroom and you feel like you need a particular situation to help you learn and you don't see other people asking for that unique or individual [situation]...I would feel like I'm such a pain...[However,] I think more people need those things than we verbalize." Here, Sally articulates how class materials helped her recognize that many students have complex needs in both online and in-person classes. Likewise, Sally and Harry both appreciated how one instructor offered multiple options for a final assignment, as it allowed students to shape their learning based on their needs and interests. However, participants did note occasional treatments of all experiences as *universal* in digital spaces (10 instances), indicating a potential site of tension regarding the inclusive capacities of digital classrooms. Specifically, Harry indicated that he wished materials were available in more diverse formats. Such findings suggest that digital spaces may consider differently embodied positionalities in many ways while simultaneously disregarding them.

***Productivity.*** As mentioned previously, my findings indicated that concerns for productivity impacted participants' classroom agency (refer to Appendix C10). *Productivity* (102 instances, refer to Appendix C5) was a common point of discussion, particularly for Sally and Lucy. Specifically, productivity was discussed in relation to concerns for *capital value* (89 instances), or the monetary value of courses and programs, as well as the value of certain grades. Although present, discussions of *progress* were less common (13 instances). However, my findings suggested a connection between these two subcategories, as an increase in capital or graded value often was connected to participants' discussions of progress. For example, Sally noted that Canvas's capacity to

calculate students' average assignment scores is a "double edged sword right, like I can imagine if someone is not doing well, the professor can say well look at your peers, do you see why you're not doing as well?" Here, Sally illustrates how this design feature promotes peer-to-peer comparison in evaluations of student success. Participant discussions thus revealed the complex connections between digital class design, LMS design, programmatic values, and students' understandings of personal positionality.

***Sense.*** *Sense* was also somewhat frequently discussed across participant conversations (99 instances, refer to Appendix C5). As Appendix C11 reflects, participants predominantly noted feelings of *satisfaction* in their interviews (39 instances), indicating that they were generally happy with their experiences across digital interfaces. However, feelings of *stress* (36 instances) were also common. This is unsurprising due to the 7.5-week length of ASU online courses, the high frequency of discussions related to productivity, and participants' emphases on independence. Though present, less frequently discussed were feelings of *dissatisfaction* (16 instances), *isolation* (4 instances) and *belonging* (4 instances). However, when discussed, dissatisfaction was often associated with a lack of agency as well as a lack of capital (in relation to grades or monetary value). This suggests a connection between students' positionalities, satisfaction, independence, and productivity.

**Least frequent concerns.** After identifying students' most and somewhat-frequent concerns, I examined their least frequent concerns. As Appendix C5 indicates, least frequent discussions across my findings included *time* (82 instances), *disability* (76 instances) and *movement* (71 instances). Although infrequent, I include them here as they offer significant insight into students' experiences.

**Time.** Although less frequently discussed, *time* (82 instances) was a common topic in participant interviews (refer to Appendix C5). As Appendix C12 relays, in relation to time, participants frequently communicated that they were *without time* (31 instances) and indicated concerns related to *deadlines* (21 instances). Though less frequent, participants also discussed time as treated in a *standard* way (7 instances). In contrast, participants also discussed a sense of *flexibility* (24 instances). However, upon further examination, this discussion was mostly from Harry, who had a time-based disability accommodation. Specifically, Harry's accommodation supported his engagement with flexible assignment deadlines. Harry's discussions of time indicated how accommodations for flexible time benefitted his agency by allowing him to submit assignments later, but also inhibited his capacity to connect with his peers as he would submit his work after peer feedback deadlines had passed. This suggests that while flexibility may foster privilege for disabled students by allowing them to complete work in a more comfortable timeframe, such accommodations can also isolate them.

**Disability.** Also infrequently discussed was the topic of *disability* (76 instances, refer to Appendix C5). Disability was most often discussed in relation to *accommodation* (38 instances) and as a *problem* to be resolved (20 instances, refer to Appendix C13). This suggests that participants predominantly understood accommodations as individualized acts of resolving personal problems. Interestingly, across the interviews, participants discussed the online environment as itself reflecting an accommodation. For example, as previously noted, Sally framed the digital space as an accommodation that eliminated environmental distractions. Lucy's conversations likewise indicated that it allowed her to attend class in ways that would have been impossible to do in-person



while she was experiencing immense emotional distress. However, she also discussed her digital class time as allowing her to compartmentalize her personal struggles for the sake of productivity. This suggests that while the design of digital spaces may promote increased disability access by eliminating environmental barriers, it may likewise uphold ableist notions of productivity. Less frequently, disability was discussed in relation to *diagnosis* (9 instances) and as embodied *diversity* (9 instances). The lack of discussion of disability as an embodied, productive difference by participants was likely due to participants' general understandings of disability as a medical problem to be resolved. Participant interviews thus suggested that digital interfaces may both prioritize and erase disabled embodiments.

***Movement.*** Least frequent across participant discussions was *movement* (71 instances, refer to Appendix C5). This was surprising to me, as design was such a predominant concern for participants and as design directly impacts one's movement through space. Across participant discussions of movement (refer to Appendix C14), *sideways movement* (46 instances) was most common. For example, Sally described digital classes as "spiraling through [her] daily life," which demonstrated her ongoing and recursive relationship with digital interfaces. *Linear movement* (9 instances) was discussed far less frequently. This indicates an interesting opportunity space for designers of digital courses, as aspects of digital course design may challenge productive notions of linear progress. In addition, participants more frequently associated digital spaces with *access* (13 instances) than they did with *no access* (3 instances). This suggests that, in many ways, digital spaces fostered accessible participant experiences by anticipating a range of positionalities.

## Discussion

In analyzing my findings, I identified a series of tensions that students had to negotiate in their digital classroom learning. This section draws from and expands on my findings through a narrative-based discussion of these negotiations and what they reveal regarding the potential for ableism's circulation across digital classroom interfaces. These negotiations include independent autonomy, assimilative participation, productive value, and embodied difference.

**Negotiations of independent autonomy.** Participant interviews first revealed tensions between the capacity for digital spaces to foster student independence and to facilitate student autonomy. Specifically, as Appendix C8 indicates, participant conversations suggested that while digital spaces frequently foster for students a sense of personal *autonomy* (30 instances) and collective *interdependence* (35 instances), such efforts often were undermined by demands for ableist *independence* (62 instances) and resulted in *no agency* (52 instances) for students. While independence is often understood as integral to one's autonomy, it demands a self-sufficiency impossible for many, including many disabled students. Demands for self-reliance may thus not only marginalize disabled students who rely on external support, but also disregard the integral nature of support systems in the achievement of autonomy for all individuals. In promoting neoliberal goals of independent autonomy, digital classroom interfaces may thus contribute to ableism's institutional circulation. This suggests a need to move away from design decisions, discourses, and documentation practices in online spaces that confuse autonomy for independence.

I thus recognized a tension in my findings between the capacity for digital spaces to foster student autonomy and the capacity for those spaces to compromise that autonomy through demands for independence. While conversations with all student participants conveyed this tension, it was most prevalent for Sally; as noted previously, Sally explained that ADD and sensory integrative dysfunction impacted her engagement in physical classes, particularly in relation to class conversations. Identifying digital learning as an “accommodation in itself,” Sally explained in her interviews that digital learning allowed her to autonomously “create that environment that I need in my own home or wherever I’m working, so that I’m able to focus and give my attention where I want it to be.” Online courses enabled Sally to tailor her learning environment to her own dynamic needs. Likewise, she explained that features like the Discussion Board provided her time to “build an argument and...focus my own thinking” before contributing to class discussions. Unlike a physical classroom environment that demands more rapid discussion, the digital interface allowed Sally to engage with the course material at her own pace in spaces conducive to her learning needs. This suggests that digital spaces may challenge neoliberal ableism and privilege the class contributions of a range of bodyminds often silenced by in-person class discussions by providing them additional time and space for engagement. Likewise, these insights indicate that online spaces have an inherently accessible capacity in that they allow students to determine and shape their learning experiences according to their unique lifestyles.

However, conversations with Sally likewise revealed a tension between this potential autonomy and simultaneous pressures for independent engagement. She discussed frustration with being unable to see her peers’ posts prior to submitting her

own; she noted that it would be “reassuring” to review these in advance. She specifically discussed an occasion when she retroactively compared her post to her peers’ posts and realized that she “totally missed the point of one of the readings.” She articulated that without reviewing those posts after the fact, she “would have not grasped that concept in the readings.” While this indicates that Discussion Boards were generative in allowing Sally to expand her knowledge, it likewise suggests that these independent assignments reinforced peer-to-peer comparisons.

In this way, Sally’s experiences demonstrate that while Discussion Boards can offer opportunities for interdependent knowledge construction, the independent nature of the posting process may encourage students to identify differences in their responses as gaps in learning. Furthermore, conversations with Sally suggested that while many instructors or designers of digital classes disable students’ capacity to see others’ posts before posting their own to encourage unique student contributions, this may, in fact, inspire more normative responses through students’ fears of not aligning with their peers. This indicates that efforts to promote independent knowledge construction in digital class discussions may endorse ableist forms of knowledge construction that excludes disability. Consequently, designers of digital classes might move away from reliance on assignments and design decisions that promote such independent engagement and instead consider ways to facilitate collaborative methods of student knowledge construction.

As did Sally, Lucy also described online learning as an autonomous experience because it provided her the time and space to make original insights. She explained that unlike an in-person classroom space where certain perspectives tend to dominate and, consequently, regulate the conversation, the online setting allowed her to have her “own

space” to interpret material in her “own way.” Online learning allowed Lucy to apply her experiences to classroom conversations and to use that knowledge to improve her own pedagogical tactics. However, Lucy also expressed frustration with expectations for students’ independent engagement both in digital classrooms and larger online programs. She brought up a specific class in which she could not meet instructor demands, noting, “I could never figure out what he wanted.” She described back-and-forth conversations in which she attempted to clarify instructor expectations, relaying, “I was like analyzing my stuff for days you know just trying to get it right and then it just wasn’t...I had no faith in myself or the work...I just never got a grasp on it.” As with Sally, my conversations with Lucy reflected concerns with meeting instructor expectations.

The analysis of this tension thus helped me to consider how digital interfaces may facilitate student agency by allowing students to engage with courses at their own pace and in settings of their own choosing; however, by compelling neoliberal goals of independent action in holding students accountable to prescribed or undefined standards of engagement, these spaces may contribute to disabled students’ marginalization. Lucy’s insights thus indicate how a digital course’s reliance on independent standards may deny students the agency necessary for experiences of autonomy in digital classroom spaces. Likewise, such standards may promote the pursuit of compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), with students continually aiming to align with standardized ideals.

**Negotiations of assimilative participation.** In addition, my semi-structured interviews allowed me to recognize how student users of digital interfaces negotiate assimilative participation in digital classes. For example, as my findings reflect (refer to Appendix C7), student participants collectively described their communications across

digital classes as *supportive* (25 instances) almost as frequently as they described them as *monitored* (20 instances). By further analyzing my findings, I recognized that this tension was heavily grounded in the tendency of digital spaces to both reinforce and resist ableist understandings of participation.

Collectively, student participants highlighted the supportive nature of online learning. For example, Lucy indicated satisfaction with digital courses, having enrolled in ASU Online due to her residency in Thailand and unusual work schedule. Her desire for online learning was further augmented after the death of her boyfriend prior to the program's start. She explained that his death left her emotionally distressed, leading to her hospitalization. In discussing her capacity to do her coursework, she noted, "I was having a [difficult] time sleeping and couldn't even do my work, let alone my job, let alone function or eat or anything. So, I mean, I would never have been able to get through anything without just the fact that I could go home and be depressed and be sad [while taking courses]." She explained that if her MA program had been in-person, "I would never have gone to class. I would have pulled out immediately, just because I was completely unable to cope...in society at the time." In this way, digital courses enabled Lucy to participate in class in what she described as a "vulnerable" state and to experience feelings of "depression" and "sadness" on her own terms, which would have been impossible to do in-person. This suggests that unlike in-person class environments that often endorse public performances of able-bodied normalcy, online digital interfaces may facilitate learning experiences for a range of dynamically vulnerable bodyminds. In other words, these online spaces may resist neoliberal standardization by valuing the unpredictable nature of the human condition.

Sally similarly explained that she felt like her learning was supported in digital class environments. As discussed in the findings section, Sally noted that features like the Discussion Board and Voice Thread provided her time to reflect on and craft her responses. However, she also expressed that she preferred when instructors engaged in these spaces, particularly to redirect unproductive conversation so that they might “move forward.” While this student celebrated the non-normative aspects of the Discussion Board and Voice Thread features, she preferred “curated,” professor-directed conversations.

However, feeling pressured to align with instructor expectations, Sally also noted what she referred to as time-consuming “perfectionism” when using the digital tool Voice Thread to record brief presentations for one class. She explained that on one occasion, “I think I recorded myself saying 60 seconds of audio like maybe a dozen times.” However, for her, this experience was preferable to “stumbling in front of a group of people when you’re speaking in front of them.” This suggests that digital tools like the Discussion Board and Voice Thread may empower disabled students like those with ADD or social anxiety by facilitating more time for reflective contributions; however, they may also contribute to the erasure of difference by motivating standardized class contributions. Specifically, when motivated by goals of linear progress, these spaces may circulate neoliberal ableism by silencing non-standardized forms of engagement. Sally’s discussions thus indicate how faculty interactions in digital spaces may, unknowingly, privilege particular forms of participation. Consequently, students and faculty should engage in critical efforts to resist assimilative forms of participation and instead recognize the value of a range of participatory styles in classroom conversations.

Lucy's interviews offered additional insight into the nature of students' negotiations with participation in Discussion Board spaces. Like Sally, Lucy enjoyed Discussion Boards, specifically as they allowed her to connect with her peers based on their academic knowledge and interests. However, she disclosed that one instructor encouraged students to heavily critique each other's work by monitoring and redirecting class conversation. She noted that in one instance an instructor replied to one of her peer responses by publicly stating, "No, that doesn't make any sense. You and I both know this doesn't make sense. You don't need to validate that." This instructor's engagement demonstrates how the Discussion Board may, in practice, serve as a neoliberal normalizing technology by privileging certain perspectives as valuably productive and designating others as consequently invalid. Rather than promoting diverse student engagement, Lucy noted that this instructor's interaction had the opposite effect. As she explained, "I noticed people didn't really do a lot of extra interacting, at least online, because...every time we'd respond, we were afraid...that [it] would count against our grade." In this way, the Discussion Board silenced student voices who articulated non-dominant positions. While Lucy noted that this professor may have hoped to cultivate "deeper, thoughtful conversation" in the Discussion Board, such tactics created a hostile environment for perspectives like her own and constrained classroom conversation within predetermined bounds. Lucy's experiences reflect the impact that instructors can have based on the kinds of discourse and behaviors they endorse. Through these insights, I recognized that instructors might promote a wider range of student contributions in their classrooms by encouraging students to recognize the situated nature of knowledge-



construction. For example, they might promote student dialogue across differences of perspective by having students validate and then expand on their peers' contributions.

Furthermore, my findings helped me to recognize how student participants experienced a sense of *connection* (78 instances) almost as frequently as *disconnection* (60 instances) across their participatory communications (refer to Appendix C7). Specifically, Harry noted that while he was able to connect with many of his instructors, he felt “unseen” by the students in his digital courses. For example, he noted that one instructor told him, “I love that you communicate with me and tell me you know what you think and everything because that really helps me.” In this way, his instructor not only listened to his concerns but also validated them. Likewise, he discussed how another instructor highlighted students' contributions to the Discussion Board in video format, noting that such tactics “made me feel like I mattered in the class, so I felt like I was in a good space/place and that people cared about me.” As this student expressed, his instructors' actions made him feel like an integral member of the classroom community with valid experiences, needs, and concerns. This illustrates that individualized accommodations and personalized efforts by instructors can help disabled students feel welcome and supported in digital courses. It likewise offers insights into ways instructors might help students mitigate the constraints associated with standardized 7.5-week courses like those in the ASU Online MA program.

However, having the accommodation of flexible time also resulted in Harry's isolation in his digital classes. He relayed that when using his flexible time accommodation, he did not get feedback from students, as his “peers ha[d] already made their feedback to everybody else.” He further explained that his instructors would

occasionally email “other students asking if they could go back” and give feedback, but that overall, his peers did not “really see me” and “weren’t really communicating with me.” In addition, Harry expressed a continuous desire for collaboration with his peers, particularly in relation to navigating more difficult course materials and readings. He clarified that while Blackboard offered the capacity for students to message their peers, his Canvas course shells did not allow him to communicate directly with his classmates. Although he noted instructor efforts to contact his peers for him, such attempts did not yield the collaborative learning experiences he craved. As he articulated, “nobody answered back, nobody really cared...It just seemed like the students in that class didn’t want to work with anybody to get things done.” Because Harry could not participate at the same normative pace as his classmates, he was denied peer support. Likewise, by promoting independent student engagement in disabling student-to-student contact, the design strategies applied in Harry’s digital courses limited his capacity to engage methods of interdependent knowledge construction. In this way, Harry’s conversations revealed how digital spaces may, unknowingly, reinforce normative, ableist understandings of presence that exclude disabled bodyminds. Harry’s insights thus demonstrate a need to move away from class design strategies that presume and promote participation in online learning as an independent learning process and towards strategies that endorse collaborative learning methods.

**Negotiations of productive value.** My findings also indicated that student participants were heavily concerned with notions of *capital value* (89 instances) both in relation to their own work and regarding the value of their digital courses and program (refer to Appendix C10). Though less frequent, students also expressed concerns

regarding notions of course *progress* (13 instances). One major concern that participants discussed in relation to negotiating productivity was related to instructor expectations. For example, Sally noted that she often “felt like...I didn’t know if I was on the right path or not” when submitting assignments and that during discussions she wondered if the class was “going in the right direction.” Sally understood productive classroom contributions as aligning with the “right” responses and methods. She further explained that in giving feedback, she wanted instructors to indicate what was “good” and “not good” about her work so that she might achieve their “version of good” when completing assignments. In this way, she measured the value of her contributions by her capacity to align with instructor designations of “right” and “good.” Sally’s insights here suggest that students in online learning environments may equate constructive classroom contributions with those that an instructor publicly designates as “right” or “good.” This suggests a need for collaborative efforts between both instructors and students to consider what meaningful classroom engagement entails in digital courses.

Sally further addressed this concept of normative productivity in her discussions about Yellowdig, a tool used by one of her professors to increase student interaction through diverse participation means like polling and hashtags. Sally noted that the tool tracks students’ class contributions by assigning a certain number of points to different forms of engagement. As she explained, “you had to earn a certain number of points on Yellowdig per week, or per module” and certain activities “qualif[ied] you for...so many points.” Based on Sally’s descriptions, this tool reflected for her a transactional model of learning, with certain forms of class engagement being more valued than others. Further, this transaction was immediate, as she explained, “it looked like you got the points as

soon as you posted.” Consequently, Sally disclosed that her class contributions became motivated by “the points, instead of like what I should be writing.” She expounded how the tool automatically constructed class comparisons, stating, “you can see the rankings of everybody in the class, and how active they are...all the things that they do on there.” Sally connected Yellowdig’s comparative tendency to the way the Canvas LMS indicates class averages on assignments. Sally’s experience with both Canvas and Yellowdig exemplify the capacity for digital interface tools to become normalizing technologies in practice by measuring and comparing students’ capacities to meet prescribed standards. Thus, while such tools may promote student engagement, instructors need to critically examine what values such engagement may endorse and which bodyminds are empowered by those values.

Similarly, Lucy equated both the productive value of her course contributions and experiences with meeting instructor expectations and achieving high grades. Like Sally, Lucy understood productive class engagement as “pleasing” one’s professor and “doing” what they asked. Further, throughout Lucy’s discussions, class performance was compared to a transaction; in exchange for productive efforts, she believed students should receive high grades. This transactional understanding translated into her discussions of other aspects of ASU Online. In speaking of the academic coaches employed by ASU Online, she noted, “I found their coaches useless, and it actually annoyed me because I knew that my money was going towards that.” Lucy understood paying for her MA program as a transaction through which she should be given access to useful services. In the same way she equated the value of her class experience with her final grades, she determined the value of her program experience based on its capital cost.

Lucy's conversations revealed that neoliberal, capitalist values may translate across students' evaluations of self, knowledge, and academic programs. Her discussions thus indicate a need for critical conversations between students, faculty, and staff regarding notions of productive value and available resources to support student success.

This value for productive linearity was also reflected by an instructional emphasis on meeting prescribed deadlines. As Appendix C12 reflects, student participants frequently communicated that they were *without time* (31 instances) and concerns related to *deadlines* (21 instances). Specifically, Harry indicated that time constraints resulted in his ongoing struggles with designated deadlines. He expressed that he always felt like he was "running out of time" in the online MA courses, particularly as they were only 7.5 weeks long. He explained that his accommodation for flexible deadline extensions "help[ed] relieve some of that stress and anxiety from doing the assignments." However, he continuously referenced attempts to achieve an unreachable sense of balance, even with his accommodation for flexible time. Describing digital learning as an experience of balancing "a whole semester on your shoulders," he explained that he felt perpetually "rushed" with readings and assignments. Harry likewise disclosed that his work schedule did not allow him to complete quizzes assigned exclusively on the weekends. Because of this restricted schedule, he noted that he would occasionally have to miss work to complete assignments. Harry's interviews suggest that by holding students accountable to productively linear, time-based standards, digital courses may disregard students' embodied needs and experiences. This points to a need for collaborative negotiations in the design of digital classroom spaces between both students and faculty to ensure that pressures for productive linearity do not impede students' equitable engagements.

**Negotiations of neutral embodiment.** Despite an emphasis on standard linearity, analysis of student interviews revealed that, in many cases, the design of online digital classes allowed students to move in manners responsive to their own embodiments and to recognize the value of their peers' embodied differences. As Appendix C14 indicates, student participants discussed movement across digital interfaces as *sideways* (46 instances) much more frequently than as *linear* (9 instances). For example, as noted previously, Sally described her experience in digital classes as “Surprisingly immersive... You have your phone with you all the time. I was surprised at how similar it was to an on-campus learning environment because it has that pervasive ‘always there’ feeling...As someone who can just open up a laptop or open up a cell phone and read comments or work on something I have that same all-encompassing feeling that I think I did as an undergraduate.” Sally described digital learning as an “all-encompassing experience” because she could engage with it at any time. Specifically, she explained that “having the ASU app and the Canvas app on my phone and just being able to like pull it out...like waiting online at the grocery store or whatever and be like, okay I have I have this to do, or this is coming up, or this alert is ready, I’ll do this when I get home, I think helped me keep thinking about what I was learning.” Because she was able to incorporate digital learning into her daily life, Sally indicated that it was, in fact, even more immersive for her than in-person education. However, because online learning involved a more “encompassing” movement, Sally noted that, at times, it was difficult for her to set boundaries between her personal and academic life. This indicates that while online learning may easily be shaped by a student’s embodied needs, there is also a need for students and instructors to set boundaries while engaging in online spaces.

Furthermore, as Appendix C9 indicates, student participants expressed that their digital classes helped them to recognize the value of their peers' *experiential differences* (38 instances), *embodied differences* (23 instances), and *geographic differences* (7 instances). They likewise discussed *class considerations* for these differences (33 instances). For example, Sally relayed that her peers lived all over the world, including countries like India, China, and Korea, which added layers of complexity to class discussions. Similarly, Lucy noted that her courses asked her peers and herself to draw on their personal and professional knowledge, allowing them to collectively learn from each other's experiences. In this way, Sally and Lucy's courses encouraged them to apply their individual, embodied knowledge and to learn from the experiences of others. This suggests that online courses have a strong capacity for fostering student engagement with and across difference in ways that challenge neoliberal goals of standardization.

Lucy, however, expressed that while instructors frequently considered students' embodied differences, these considerations were often absent from other aspects of ASU Online, such as the online coaching. For example, she mentioned that she had asked her online coach for advice on where to stay near campus when attending graduation in-person and was given resources for accommodations that she could not afford. She noted that she wished the coaches could support students reflecting a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Lucy likewise indicated that it would be helpful if coaches and instructors were more knowledgeable of the resources available to students and if there were more channels of communication between faculty and staff. Referencing her lack of knowledge regarding tutorial support, she stated, "Nobody talks to each other...It doesn't seem like anyone knows anybody. I mean, I don't." In this way, Lucy indicated that while there are

a range of student support services at ASU, a lack of communication between university professionals frequently occluded her knowledge of them. Lucy's insights here indicate a need for cultivating connection across university channels of communication, specifically in relation to instructors, coaches, and other on-campus service providers that may support a range of online students' embodied needs.

Student conversations related to movement and embodied difference also recognized their peers' embodied differences and considered ways that digital interfaces might account more closely for these complexities. For example, as noted previously, Harry discussed how his accommodations for flexible deadlines helped to create "a kind of work environment that was more flexible and definitely attuned to me...and my needs." Recognizing the benefit of this more flexible experience, he asserted that instructors should consider extending the same flexibility to other students, as many students "who need help don't ask for it or don't go into disability services or something." As Harry expressed, many online students may not request accommodations from Disability Services or may not realize that such accommodations exist. Similarly, as noted previously, Sally discussed how many students do not want to burden their instructors by requesting additional support; however, she noted that many students need similar resources. Sally recognized that changes to class design based on one student's needs may, in fact, accommodate a range of individuals. Sally and Harry's insights here reflect those of universal design, which argues that when we design for disabled positionalities, we can more effectively privilege and empower all (Walters, 2010; Ellcessor, 2016; Hitt, 2018). This suggests the value that universal design principles



might have in helping students, faculty, and staff collaboratively to foster collective understandings of access in digital classroom spaces.

### **Guidelines for Revising Digital Spaces**

Grounded in a combination of a student-centered UX mindset and UDL, my findings reflect that student engagement with standardized, digital classes is characterized by ongoing, dynamic negotiations between students, instructors, staff, and digital spaces. As demonstrated by my findings, student experiences with digital spaces are diverse and contradictory, as digital spaces may simultaneously and dynamically foster and deny privilege and power to specific positionalities under certain circumstances. UX is thus helpful in that it allows designers to move beyond the “technical aspects of accessibility” to prioritize the most integral “human” aspects (Pappas, 2013, p. 215) of design and to examine the intersectional complexities represented by these aspects.

Based on participant insights as well as theoretical findings from TPC, UDL, and student experience design, this section offers a series of guidelines for instructors and administrators designing and discursively moderating digital courses. These guidelines encourage designers of digital classes to reject and replace (Walton et al., 2019) practices, assumptions, and discourses that may foster ableism. To engage with more socially just design and documentation practices, I turn to disability justice. Kristin C. Bennett and Mark A. Hannah (2022) recommend engagement with disability justice to foster more ethical, socially just TPC documentation and design. I argue here that consideration for disability justice values should be extended to the design of digital classroom interfaces.

As noted in previous chapters, disability justice is a movement founded in the efforts of disabled people of color to resist “disability rights organizing’s white-

dominated, single-issue focus” (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 15). At its core, disability justice rejects and replaces neoliberal ableism by centering disabled ways of being and knowing; specifically, it understands disability as a dynamic and intersectional phenomenon impacted by other aspects of identity, such as race, gender, class, or sexuality and recognizes ableism as inherently connected to other systems of oppression like racism or sexism (Berne et al., 2018). Likewise, disability justice recognizes the systemic nature of ableism; consequently, this framework is helpful in examining how ableism can rhetorically circulate across digital classroom spaces.

My guidelines thus apply disability justice principles to the thematic negotiations reflected by my previous discussion. These guidelines include: 1) embracing design strategies that facilitate interdependence, 2) understanding access as frictionally collective, 3) exchanging capitalist productivity with an anti-capitalist politic, and 4) positioning students as leaders in course design. In my discussion of each guideline, I offer instructors practical tools for application. The guidelines I offer here indicate a starting point for larger pedagogical efforts. I thus encourage instructors to adapt these guidelines based on their own student populations. In addition, I recognize that provided guidelines may or may not be realistic for all faculty to incorporate, depending on their teaching course load or enrollment caps. This potential incapacity reflects a deeper need for departmental administration to consider how extensive teaching responsibilities may, in themselves, perpetuate inaccessible teaching practices. While I consider these potential constraints across my guidelines, I also recognize the need for additional research and critical evaluation by administrators in relation to the impacts of heavy teaching responsibilities on faculty capacities to design and deliver accessible digital instruction.

**Embracing design strategies that cultivate interdependence.** As participant interviews revealed, pushes for independent productivity may hold students accountable to ableist standards that exclude rather than include disability. I therefore recommend that instructors consider possibilities for promoting interdependent knowledge construction in their classes. As Patricia Berne et al. (2018) note, disability justice embraces interdependence as it recognizes that “the liberation of all living systems and the land [are] integral to the liberation of our own communities, as we all share one planet” (p. 228). Disability justice pushes back against understandings of ability and disability as products of individual bodyminds and instead recognizes agency as involving “relational circuits between bodies, environments, and tools” (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2013, p. 12). Disability justice thus understands all individual experiences as influenced by larger collective networks. In contrast, my interviews revealed that the design of digital classes may frame knowledge production and student agency as individualized phenomena. This was indicated across all participant interviews. While participants were able to expand their knowledge by engaging in peer-to-peer conversations through digital features like the Discussion Board and Voice Thread, they generally experienced courses independently. I thus recommend that instructors incorporate into their courses opportunities for interdependent learning that draw directly from students’ unique positionalities and validate a range of knowledge-making strategies. Based on insights from student interviews, some practical ways through which instructors and/or digital class designers might facilitate interdependent learning could include:

- ***Allowing students to see their peers’ discussion posts in the LMS prior to posting their own.*** By allowing students to see their peers’ contributions prior to

posting their own, instructors and/or class designers will ideally demonstrate for students that a range of response styles are acceptable and encourage them to move away from standardized contributions.

- ***Designing discussion board spaces as reading and peer review groups.*** Rather than relying on discussion boards that promote independent contributions and responses, instructors and/or class designers might design these spaces as collaborative writing and learning spaces in which students collectively work through ideas discussed in readings and gain feedback on their writing.
- ***Enabling students' capacities to message one another through the LMS.*** By enabling students' communication capacities, instructors and/or class designers can help facilitate student connections and encourage interdependent learning. Likewise, instructors might explain how this feature works and encourage students to use it so that students understand knowledge construction as a collaborative endeavor.
- ***Using Slack to allow students to directly communicate and collaborate with each other.*** Instructors also could divide students into specific reading and writing groups and create "channels" or threads on Slack in which students are encouraged to share their views on readings or peer work. Slack also allows students to directly message the instructor and other students for assistance.
- ***Creating a discussion thread or Slack channel in which the instructor and students can share a range of resources with each other.*** I specifically recommend that instructors and/or class designers offer students a space for collectively sharing information regarding support services available to students

both on-campus and in the surrounding community. By crowdsourcing with one another, students can not only gain additional insight into available tools, but also recognize that their peers use resources to support their academic autonomy. Such methods of crowdsourcing likewise facilitate student access to resources that can support a range of intersectional student identities and needs.

In these ways, designers of digital classroom interfaces can push back against independent standardizing goals that may disenfranchise disabled students and promote an interdependent sense of community across the digital spaces. Such interdependent styles of learning are grounded in UDL, as they facilitate community building and collective agency for a range of students (Dolmage, 2017, p. 118).

Likewise, as interdependence recognizes the collective nature of knowledge construction, I recommend that instructors and designers of digital classes expand considerations for what counts as knowledge-making in their courses. All student participants noted that when instructors highlighted their class contributions either through public discussion responses or general course announcements, they felt validated and recognized. However, Sally's comments suggested that such moves may indirectly communicate that certain contributions are more productive, or valuable than others. Likewise, as Lucy's interviews indicated, an instructor's critical responses may result in the monitoring and policing of student engagement according to prescribed norms. The goals of discussion should be to expand, rather than restrict conversations. I therefore recommend the following practical methods for fostering collective notions of autonomy:

- ***Designing student discussion board prompts that ask them to draw from their subjective experiences.*** By designing discussion questions that ask students to

connect classroom learning to their personal, professional, and social experiences, instructors and/or class designers can facilitate the co-construction of knowledge across differences of perspective and resist engagement with independent contributions that may reinforce standardized ideals.

- ***Modeling such embodied engagement through their own interactions in the online space.*** Specifically, in their own posts, instructors might draw from their own embodied experiences and previous knowledges. Likewise, when responding to students, they might validate a range of students' contributions to the classroom conversation as equitably valid.
- ***Highlight a range of student contributions in discussion overviews.*** When possible, I recommend that instructors recognize every student's contribution in these spaces to demonstrate the unique value that each student brings to class conversations. However, recognizing that many instructors teach course loads that do not enable such attention to individualized posts, instructors might also highlight a range of contributions. Such actions resist notions that certain forms of knowledge are more legitimate than others.

As Oswal and Melonçon (2017) explain, "Instructors have a responsibility...to create... content that reflects the differences of its users, and...technology choices that embrace these users' abilities and skill-levels" (p. 64). By providing guidelines and modeling styles of engagement that embrace difference as a tool for expansive possibility rather than as a problem to be reconciled, instructors and students collectively can implement UDL strategies that further the accessible potential of digital learning. Specifically, in fostering collaborative knowledge-making and support between students, instructors can

work with and beyond the constraints of standardized courses and heavy course loads. Importantly, these methods should be adjusted based on an instructor's constraints in relation to course loads and caps. However, in many cases, these strategies reflect efforts related to the initial design of the course itself. Thus, particularly in standardized programs like ASU Online, these efforts should be collaboratively pursued by designers of digital classes as well as those instructing them.

**Understanding access as frictionally collective.** My findings similarly indicated ableism's potential influence in restricting and normalizing student participation. As Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch (2019) recommend, I thus urge instructors to shift from understandings of access as "assimilation-based" to understandings of access as "frictional noncompliance" (p. 10). As disability justice articulates, the dynamic nature of access requires the engagement of all (Berne et al., 2018, pp. 228-229). Often, designers of digital interfaces understand access as founded in accommodations that help students engage productively in existing systems. For example, Harry expressed that the accommodation of flexible time helped him manage standardized course deadlines. However, as this student's experience reflected, such accommodations may provide limited class access, as other students do not have the same accommodations. In addition, such accommodations do not encourage designers of digital classes to critique how and why existing practices do not serve the needs of all student bodyminds, which may cause further inaccessibility for those students who may need accommodations but do not have them. For example, although Harry was the only participant with a disability accommodation, all three students referenced a lack of time across their interviews.

Instructors might therefore understand lapses in access like Harry's as frictional moments that invite us to critique seemingly neutral standards of engagement.

To move away from individualized understandings of accommodations that may exclude disabled students, instructors and/or class designers should move beyond understandings of access as offering “alternative ways into the same thing” and instead understand access as promoting “the copious generation of multiple things, each generated by particular affordances and constraints” (Boyle & Rivers, 2016, p. 31). As Casey Boyle and Nathaniel Rivers (2016) assert, no single body's “abilities” should “establish itself as a standard for any other body's abilities” (p. 36). Consequently, we need an understanding of access that “prioritizes multiplicity as standard and does not standardize multiplicity” (p. 36). For example, Sally and Harry noted that a particular faculty member offered them opportunities to create different types of assignments, explaining that such tactics allowed them to choose assignments that aligned most directly with their learning interests, professional goals, or lifestyle constraints. I thus recommend that instructors or designers of digital classes integrate a spirit of flexibility by including the following UDL tactics in their classrooms:

- ***Offering multiple means of representation.*** Specifically, instructors or class designers might incorporate pedagogical tactics that draw from “multiple modalities--vision, hearing, and touch” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 288) across course materials, which can encourage a range of students to engage with course content. By providing information to students through diverse media, including a combination of narrative-based content, visual content, and audio content,



instructors and/or designers of digital classes can better ensure that this information is comprehensive to a range of students.

- ***Offering students opportunities to contribute to collective knowledge-building.*** I encourage instructors or designers of digital classes to build opportunities for students to collaboratively teach themselves. For example, instructors might assign student discussion leaders throughout the semester and have students either design questions related to course content or compose thematic media for their peers such as a podcast or video lecture. In this way, knowledge-building efforts reflect a wider range of student learning preferences.
- ***Facilitating a range of ways for students to demonstrate knowledge.*** Specifically, UDL encourages us to “provide multiple means of action and expression” and “provide assignments in different formats” to help students express their ideas in a range of ways (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 288). The range of assignments that instructors or course designers offer might thus consider not only students’ learning differences and interests, but likewise the constraints they may be faced with in relation to their time or resources. For example, students might have the choice to complete a final reflection assignment as a typed narrative essay, a video, an infographic, or a podcast recording. Please refer to Appendix C15 for a specific example of such an assignment.
- ***Encouraging multiple means of participation.*** UDL also recommends that we offer students multiple means of engagement in our courses as students may “lack the operational means to connect with their instructors and classmates” (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014, p. 289). Consequently, instructors could include a range of

methods through which students might engage in their courses. Across my interviews, tools like Discussion Boards, Voice Thread, and Yellowdig were all discussed as cultivating a range of multimodal experiences for participants. Likewise, instructors and designers of digital classes might consider flexibility in relation to matters like deadlines. For example, they might use suggested deadlines and allow students to submit assignments over a wider timeframe.

- ***Complementing multimodality with accessible design.*** While multimodality is often understood as inherently accessible as it allows students to engage with modes most comfortable for them (Walters, 2010), each tool brings its own accessibility challenges. It is therefore important that instructors and/or course designers complement the use of multimodality with attention to accessibility. For example, auditory materials should be “accompanied by closed captioning, clear, thorough summaries, or...another text-based form” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 95), all images should include “descriptive <alt> tags, PDFS should be “in readable (non-image) format” and audio files should be included for “text-based lectures” (pp.101-102). Such tactics ensure that in using a range of technologies we are promoting access for as many students as possible.
- ***Cultivating a spirit of accessibility by incorporating student feedback on technology.*** Recognizing that technologies may either foster or deny access to certain student identities, instructors and/or designers of digital classes should likewise incorporate student feedback in relation to these tools (refer to Appendix C16-C21). In this way, instructors and designers of digital classes can ensure that

they are engaging with equitable and ethical UDL strategies that promote “a rich rhetorical experience for a range of diverse users” (Hitt, 2018, p. 62).

Such efforts can be used by instructors or designers of digital classes with attention to the constraints of their course loads or enrollment caps. However, by building opportunities for a range of engagement styles in the original design of a course, instructors do not necessarily need to engage with additional labor. For example, digital class designers might incorporate projects that allow students to choose from a range of multimodal project opportunities rather than creating individual projects that ask students to engage with specific media. Similarly, by positioning students as co-constructors of knowledge through methods like discussion lead activities, digital class designers may empower students as agents in the knowledge-making process in a way that, ideally, should not create more labor for instructors. Through such methods, instructors and designers of digital classes can promote more accessible classroom practices that both consider a range of student users’ needs and that recognize access as a collective effort between students and faculty. Through these tactics grounded in UDL, instructors and designers can build courses that resist ableism’s circulation.

**Exchanging capitalist productivity for an anti-capitalist politic.** Based on the overarching influence of ableist productivity on student participants’ experiences of positionality, power, and privilege in digital courses, I also recommend that instructors and/or course designers integrate values of disability justice in designing their digital courses, specifically through prioritizing values beyond capitalist productivity. As my findings indicated, student participants were heavily concerned with mirroring instructors’ notions of productive value. Further, students frequently discussed education

as a transactional process in which class contributions were evaluated against normative frames. I thus recommend a shift from goals of neoliberal capitalist productivity to disability justice's values of an anti-capitalist politic. As Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) explain, disability justice rejects "compulsory able-bodiedness...and mandates for... productivity" (p. 22). Further, as Berne et al. (2018) note, disability justice is "anti-capitalist" as it recognizes disability itself as resistant to capitalist demands for individuals to align with a "'normative' level of production" (p. 227). As such, disability justice understands human value beyond the limits of one's productive capacities.

I thus recommend that instructors and designers of digital classes apply an anti-capitalist politic to think critically about how different online activities may translate into processes of ableist normalization. Specifically, I recommend the following practices:

- ***Disrupting normalizing processes by complicating student dialogues.*** While engaging in digital spaces, instructors might disrupt conversations that promote productive standardization through questions and responses that complicate student thinking. For example, instructors might ask, "How do your own experiences and embodied knowledge inform this claim? How might one's perspective on this change depending on their specific background and experiences?" or "What makes you think that? What background knowledge informs your assumptions?" Such questions encourage a shift from standardized methods of knowledge construction and towards efforts that recognize the value of students' unique contributions.
- ***Coupling standardizing forms of assessment with critical awareness.*** When using tools like Yellowdig that quantify and rank student participation, instructors

might address the limits of such tools. Such critical discussions might be included in the introduction to each application and throughout the semester through class emails, announcements, and the instructor's own participation across these spaces (refer to Appendix C22 for an example of such framing). Likewise, instructors might grade student contributions in ways that recognize and measure different types of contributions as equivalent in value (Dolmage, 2017, p. 120). Through such tactics, instructors can engage UDL strategies that “transform restrictive ideologies and institutions and that create new, multiple understandings of the ‘right’ way to see, hear, think, and know” (Wilson, 2018, n.p). In other words, by helping students to question understandings of productive engagement, instructors can help students think critically about the values driving those evaluative responses.

- ***Repurposing normalizing technologies through communicative channels.***

Interestingly, potentially standardizing technologies like those reflected in student discussions can help instructors identify disengaged students. While such technologies may quantify student engagement only arbitrarily, they can assist instructors in identifying students, like Harry, who may be experiencing isolation in class. I thus recommend that instructors communicate directly with students with lower levels of participation to inquire about their course experiences. Such tactics may promote both student engagement by addressing any issues that might be occurring for students and more accessible course design by identifying access concerns related to certain technologies.

- ***Complicating understandings of students through considerations for intersectionality.*** In addition, when designing courses, instructors and course designers should consider factors of intersectionality, such as disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, and class. When digital classes are not designed with attention to intersectional aspects of identity, like age, gender, and class, some students may be marginalized by seemingly neutral course design (Wilson, 2017). This demonstrates how intersectional positionality directly impacts students' experiences of privilege in digital classroom spaces. By implementing methods that prioritize intersectional difference, instructors and/or designers of online courses can move beyond neoliberalism's productive standards and more effectively design courses that anticipate the knowledges, experiences, and values of a range of students.

Collectively, many of these considerations should be made in a course's initial design. However, when engaging these strategies during the semester, instructors and/or designers of digital classes should do so in ways attuned to their unique labor constraints. For example, critical engagement with the concept of productivity can be modeled not only in instructor responses but in the initial prompts themselves. Likewise, instructors need not respond to all students' posts in every discussion board space but might instead choose a range of student responses to address in order to demonstrate the value of diverse contributions. Likewise, instructors might choose methods for engaging student feedback on technologies in ways that complement their course loads and caps; for example, general surveys may be more manageable than individualized emails for those with heavy course loads. Through these methods, instructors and designers of digital

class interfaces can help students think critically about the meaning of productivity and to recognize the value of a range of class contributions.

**Positioning students as leaders in course design.** As my findings indicated, student participants grappled with agency and autonomy throughout their online courses, particularly as they often understood their role in class contexts to be that of meeting instructor expectations. In addition, my findings indicated that while online learning may be accessible in many ways, unanticipated access needs frequently arise for students navigating the class. Specifically, every user participates in:

online technologies and pedagogies from an entirely different vantage point shaped by their social, physical, and educational experiences. Similarly, each user interacts with multimodality differently depending upon the body they got, the adaptive technology they employ on their end, and the uses they have for multimodality in their repertoire of learning tools. (Oswal & Melonçon, 2017, p. 70)

In other words, all student experiences with digital spaces are unique to their intersectional positionalities. It is thus important that we move away from framing students as passive recipients of learning in our courses and instead position them as co-designers of the learning space. In other words, as disability justice argues, we should position those most impacted by design as leaders in it. I therefore recommend the following tactics in positioning students as co-designers of digital learning spaces:

- ***Engaging student feedback in the initial design of space.*** I first recommend that instructors or designers of digital classes inquire about students' learning needs prior to the start date of the course (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 7). By inquiring into students' past experiences with digital learning prior to the beginning of

class, instructors or designers of class interfaces can better account for intersectionally complex embodiments in their course design. Such inquiries might be made by means of individual emails or a general survey sent a week or so before the instructor begins designing their course shell in the learning management system. Inquiries could include questions about students' work schedules, learning spaces, styles of engagement, and past experiences with online courses. In this way, course designers can welcome a range of bodyminds into their courses as they are, rather than encourage students to retroactively fit into their courses. Alternatively, as many instructor contracts do not begin until the start of the semester, such early inquiries regarding students' learning needs might be made by staff, such as academic coaches from graduate programs like ASU Online. This data could be collected from students by coaches during the summer and distributed to faculty a few weeks prior to the semester's beginning. Please refer to Appendix C16 for a sample of such an initial inquiry.

- ***Offering students opportunities for providing ongoing feedback.*** I also recommend that instructors facilitate ongoing opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experiences in their courses. Further, UDL urges instructors to systematize such feedback in ongoing ways, “at diverse times, and through diverse channels” (Price, 2011, p. 130). As previous TPC scholars have noted (Oswal & Melonçon, 2017; Nielsen, 2018), pedagogies should be responsive to students' dynamically embodied class experiences. To foster such considerations, I recommend that instructors incorporate feedback methods like personalized email inquiries sent at multiple times during the semester;



anonymous class polls; informal conversations during office hours; and/or surveys of varying lengths administered at different points in the semester. Please refer to Appendix C16-C21 for examples of such survey tools.

- ***Understanding one’s class as open to ongoing revision.*** Importantly, student inquiries should be grounded in ongoing feedback loops, or ongoing processes in which instructors apply provided feedback to their course design (Greer & Harris, 2018). By implementing ongoing feedback loops, instructors can help students recognize their impact as co-designers of the learning space. For example, if a student notes that they would prefer to have more time to complete class readings, an instructor might make readings available sooner and follow up with the student to inquire about the impacts of that change on their learning experience.
- ***Incorporating focus groups or semi-structured interviews.*** Likewise, instructors, course designers, or staff might incorporate focus groups after a course has ended to learn more about students’ experiences (Oswal & Melonçon, 2017; Bennett, 2022b). Instructors might also, as I did, conduct interviews with select class members to gain insight into their experiences and work with students to collectively build knowledge to inform future course design. I recommend that instructors or class designers administer such methods after grades have been assigned so that students do not feel pressured to participate or to provide certain types of responses. Through these methods, instructors can demonstrate and validate “the lived experiences and material design practices” (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 7) of all students in their classes, particularly their disabled students.

Such methods should be, again, adjusted based on instructor labor expectations. I also highly encourage engagement with such methods not simply by instructors, but likewise by staff and class designers in standardized programs like ASU Online. These methods can, and should, be taken up by all stakeholders involved in the designing and administering of digital degree-granting programs. In many cases, standardized classes like those reflected by ASU Online do not offer instructors much room for adjustment; however, such tactics as these allow students and instructors to work with and beyond standardized courses to make sure that students are learning core concepts in equitable and accessible ways. Collectively, such methods can promote student experiences of agency and autonomy by helping instructors or class designers construct courses that respond dynamically to students' embodied experiences and by positioning students as integral to the design of digital learning spaces. Such efforts to facilitate student agency in digital course design can yield equitable and accessible class experiences.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter articulates, the combination of a UX-inspired, student-experience mindset with UDL provides a valuable method through which instructors may recognize, reveal, reject, and replace (Walton et al., 2019) the influence of ableism across digital spaces and foster more equitable understandings of access that privilege and empower a range of student positionalities. Specifically, Cynthia L. Selfe and Richard J. Selfe, Jr. (1994) explain that as designers of digital classes, “we have to learn to recognize...the interface as an interested and partial map of our culture and as a linguistic contact zone that reveals power differentials” (p. 495). Because access determines one's capacity to engage equitably as a citizen in public space, it is vital that we interrogate how class

design decisions and discursive practices may contribute to the marginalization of certain positionalities. I hope that provided guidelines offer instructors and designers of digital courses with practical methods through which to examine and replace ableist influences in their own digital classrooms.

As this chapter focused primarily on the experiences of disabled students with digital interfaces, future research might examine the implications that online digital interfaces have for disabled instructors. Likewise, as this study revealed potential connection between access limitations and high course loads or caps, future research might examine further the impacts of such constraints on accessible teaching and explore collaborative methods between faculty and administration in promoting more accessible teaching conditions. Finally, as this study revealed potential concerns related to the accessibility of standardized courses like those reflected by ASU Online, future research might study student experiences across multiple sections of the same course to better understand how such standards impact students' individual access experiences.

This chapter offers a brief starting point in applying student-experience and UD principles to the evaluation of digital classroom access. I, again, encourage instructors and designers of digital classes to expand on offered insights and guidelines in their own courses. As Dolmage (2017) relays, for our efforts in design to be transformative, “our work must be change-enhancing, interactive, contextualized, social; [it] must allow individuals to rewrite institutions through rhetorical action and must push us all to think broadly and generously” (p. 132). Through a combination of methods grounded in UX, UD, and crip technoscience, instructors and designers of digital classes might position embodied differences like disability as resources for transformative change and work

collaboratively with students to (re)write and (re)design institutional spaces that are more attuned to the needs, goals, and experiences of a range of bodyminds.

### **Chapter 7 Preview**

In Chapter Seven, I conclude my dissertation by offering implications from my collective findings. Specifically, I turn to the concept of cripistemological coalition to offer a framework for collective, coalitional efforts to interrogate ableism's rhetorical circulation across university spaces. As I argue in this final chapter, individual and department-specific efforts like those modeled in this dissertation can offer university stakeholders an important starting point for recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing ableism's circulation across higher education institutions. However, to address and undermine the systemic nature of ableism, such efforts must be complemented with interdepartmental, coalitional labor centered around a diverse range of intersectional positionalities that prioritizes disabled ways of being and knowing.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: CRIPITEMOLOGICAL COALITION

#### **A Turn to Cripistemological Coalition**

As the chapters of this dissertation have demonstrated, while the deregulatory agenda of neoliberal neutrality provides the allure of flexibility, it often upholds invisible, dominant, and potentially oppressive standards. Further, these chapters collectively indicate that when university spaces are grounded in such standardizing goals of neoliberal productivity, expediency, and efficiency, they may serve as normalizing technologies that contribute to disability's institutional erasure. In other words, when disregarding a range of student and instructor embodiments, university documents, discourse, and design strategies may marginalize and disenfranchise disabled identities and experiences while contributing to neoliberal ableism's institutional circulation.

In this section, I offer concluding insights based on my dissertation's holistic findings. Through my collective findings, this dissertation demonstrates the generative nature of discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, and user-experience methods in examining ableism's institutional circulation. However, recognizing the limits of individualized and departmental efforts, this final chapter calls for the expansion of such methods using what I refer to as cripistemological coalitions, or coalitions that center disabled epistemologies and ontologies. Building from Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones's (2019) and Karma R. Chávez's (2013) discussions of coalition-building, I illustrate the value of collective coalitions in disrupting and challenging ableism's circulation across university spaces. This section thus provides an

overview of the value and functioning of cripistemological coalitions across university spaces in the context of Walton, Moore, and Jones's 4R's.

### **Deepening the 4R's Through Cripistemological Coalition**

While the individual methods and guidelines provided by each previous chapter can offer a starting point for recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and ultimately replacing ableist assumptions, design strategies, and discursive practices across diverse sites of higher education, such isolated efforts are not enough in combating systemic ableism. As disability justice recognizes, ableism is inherently connected to other oppressive systems like racism and sexism (Berne et al., 2018); consequently, the combating of neoliberal ableism across university spaces requires coalitional efforts that exceed individual and departmental bounds to examine these spaces from a range of intersectional perspectives. Chávez (2013) specifically defines a coalition as “a [temporary] group that comes together around a particular issue to accomplish a specific goal” (p. 7). In other words, coalitions dynamically arise around certain issues, with membership and purpose shifting continuously according to what Chávez refers to as coalitional moments, or situations that require the efforts of an intersectionally diverse group of people. Such coalitions would thus form dynamically to address ableism's circulation across trans-situational sites in higher education at diverse moments.

Importantly, those most impacted by ableism's circulation should be central to such efforts. As Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) articulate, when engaging in social justice work, a “coalitional approach requires those who are not living at the intersections of oppression to approach change-making with humility; to listen more than they speak or lead; and to sometimes divest themselves of self-serving plans, ideas, and ways

forward” (p. 134). That is, coalitional efforts should be centered around the needs, values, goals, and experiences of those most marginalized by existing structures. Likewise, as disability justice explains, liberation from systemic forces like ableism requires that we “be led by those who know the most about these systems and how they work” (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227). In building coalitional organizations across university spaces, it is thus vital that disability and disabled experiences be central to collective organizing efforts. I thus call for the application of what I refer to as cripistemological coalitions, or coalitions that are centered around disabled ontologies and epistemologies. In the case of this dissertation, that means positioning disabled students, faculty, and staff as central agents in larger university change.

While disability should be central to such efforts, such coalitions must include the participation of a range of bodyminds. Because able bodyminds benefit from standardized documents, discourses, and design practices, these individuals are directly implicated in ableism’s circulation across university spaces. It is thus vital that these stakeholders be part of cripistemological coalitions to better understand the implications that such documents, discourses, and practices may have for their disabled colleagues and peers and to move away from practices that may contribute to systemic ableism. As Patricia Berne et al. (2018) articulate, disability justice understands access as mandating ongoing, collective efforts by individuals across a range of intersectional positionalities.

Furthermore, as this dissertation argues, in building cripistemological coalitions, we must move away from assimilative understandings of inclusion that foster conditional access upon the erasure or overcoming of disability and instead recognize access as a frictional phenomenon that requires collectively intersectional efforts. Specifically,

frictional understandings of access demand that we, as institutional stakeholders in higher education, ask ourselves, “How do we move together as people with mixed abilities, multiracial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across the orientation spectrum—where no body/mind is left behind?” (Berne et al. 2018, p. 229). As when responding to any systemic force, addressing ableism requires that we engage with diversely intersectional identities across disciplines to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace design strategies, documentation practices, and discourses that may contribute to disability’s marginalization. As disability justice recognizes identity, privilege, and oppression as highly intersectional, or shifting “depending upon the characteristics of any given institutional or interpersonal interaction” and frames disability as influenced by other intersectional aspects of identity like “race, gender, class, gender expression, historical moment[s], relationship[s] to colonization, and more” (p. 227), attention to intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016) would likewise be integral to these cripistemological coalitions.

Furthermore, by engaging with a range of intersectional perspectives and inspiring collective action, cripistemological coalitions would deepen institutional engagement with frameworks like Walton, Moore & Jones’s (2019) 4R’s. Below, I offer specific insights regarding how cripistemological coalitions might facilitate university-wide efforts to engage the 4R’s in resisting ableism’s circulation. Please note that I understand the 4R’s as inherently overlapping, which results in some repetition across my subsequent discussion.

**Recognizing the ableist nature of neoliberalism’s assimilative goals.**

Coalitional efforts can help us to better recognize how seemingly neutral structures may



have violent implications for already marginalized bodyminds. Cripistemological coalitions can specifically help us to recognize how “daily, mundane practices contribute to the marginalization, exploitation, and powerlessness of others” (Walton, Moore & Jones, 2019, p. 139). In other words, by centering efforts around disabled needs and experiences, university professionals can gain critical insight in relation to recognizing the marginalizing impacts of neutral documentation practices.

As illustrated by this dissertation’s analysis of mission statements, care-based documents, and digital classroom interfaces, higher educational spaces often confuse inclusion with normative assimilation by providing a range of ways for individuals to engage with the status quo. Such understandings of access promote a conditional form of inclusion that encourages the erasure or overcoming of disability for the sake of individual productivity. The chapters of this dissertation reflect that such tactics may not only fail to critique systems that exclude certain bodyminds by design but they, in fact, may further strengthen them (Puar, 2017). University stakeholders must therefore move away from capitalist goals of productivity that, as discussed in Chapter Five, can contribute to an ethic of accommodation as expediency aimed at increasing institutional productivity rather than including individuals as they are (Moeller, 2014). To promote this shift, I recommend that universities engage cripistemological coalitions grounded in what disability justice refers to as an anti-capitalist politic (Berne et al. 2019) by moving from goals of productive assimilation to those of multitudinous opportunity. A cripistemological coalition would do so by prioritizing the differences represented by its membership. Specifically, such a committee would consist of a range of individuals, including professors, instructors, adjunct faculty, administrative staff, graduate teaching

assistants, graduate students, and undergraduate students, of diverse intersectional and disciplinary backgrounds. Further, these individuals would reflect varying races, sexualities, ethnicities, abilities, classes, genders, and other intersectional identities.

In addition, a cripistemological coalition would apply a critical understanding of intersectional positionality and recognize how experiences of privilege and power result from the complex relationality between an individual and their larger sociopolitical context (Walton et al., 2019). Aligning with user-experience design (UX) and universal design (UD), such committees would enable diverse university stakeholders to be directly involved in critiquing the impacts of systemic forces like ableism across seemingly neutral university documents and spaces. In analyzing the systemic impacts of ableism and other oppressive structures across diverse university documents, discourses, and spaces, such coalitions would likewise consider the connection between neoliberal ableism and other systems of oppression like racism and sexism. In recognizing the potentially problematic impacts of neutral commonplaces grounded in productive goals, such a coalition would prioritize understandings of value beyond a bodymind's productive capacity (Berne et al., 2019).

**Revealing the political implications of access by validating embodied experiences.** Cripistemological coalitions can also help us to engage in acts of revealing that serve as larger “call[s] to action” and encourage us to “hea[r], recogniz[e], and accep[t]” (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019, p. 140) perspectives that may contradict dominant frameworks and structures. Collectively, the chapters in this dissertation reveal the impact of universities' lack of attention to the intersectional nuance represented by embodied experiences with disability. Instead, university stakeholders frequently attempt

to overcome difference through a reliance on universal, standardized structures. However, this dissertation's chapters collectively argue that reliance on such standards can contribute to the erasure of difference across university spaces by disregarding the uniquely embodied nature of all experience. Cripistemological coalitions would exchange standardizing structures for those that reveal complex embodiment as central to individual experience and knowledge-making practices. As Chávez (2013) notes, "coalitional thinking...account[s] for the complexity of people's lived experiences" (p. 9). Recognizing this, cripistemological coalitions would not only center embodiment as a vital source of knowledge but also situate embodiment as both dynamic and vulnerable. In this way, cripistemological coalitions could resist standardizing assumptions regarding student, faculty, and staff bodyminds that frequently inspire a compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006) which may contribute to disability's institutional erasure.

To further these efforts of revelation, such coalitions might also consider Paula Moya's (2002) realist theory of identity. This theory postulates that one's personal and intersectional experiences are dynamically impacted by social structures and recognizes the rhetorical way in which individual experiences influence knowledge construction. Furthermore, this theory validates personal experience as a source of social and political knowledge for understanding "fundamental aspects of our world" (p. 43). Applying a realist theory of identity, cripistemological coalitions would approach individual members' accounts with documents as uniquely valid and would recognize the underlying sociopolitical implications of these personal accounts. Members would then collectively identify patterns across experiences and appreciate unique differences. In addition, by revealing how ableism can circulate through individual bodies by means of

institutionally prescribed assumptions and behaviors, cripistemological coalitions would encourage critical self and group reflection regarding commonplace logics. In this way, cripistemological coalitions would validate personal experiences as revealing vital sociopolitical insights regarding systemic institutional oppression. Likewise, these coalitions would embrace the complex way in which individual lives interconnect and diverge in relation to cultural, political, and social phenomena (Chávez, 2013).

**Rejecting ableism by embracing a frictional and interdependent access.** In addition, engagement with cripistemological coalitions can further our use of the 4R's by helping us collectively to reject problematic practices in ways that individuals, particularly those in precarious positions, may not be able. As Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) articulate, "individuals can rarely reject, let alone replace, unjust practices alone, and recognition on one person's part is often prompted by another's revealing" (p. 142). That is, by engaging with cripistemological coalitions, individuals collectively can reflect on and support one another in pursuing greater institutional change. As my dissertation demonstrates, when university spaces communicate understandings of access, inclusion, and care as grounded in equal usage of the same standardized structures, they may contribute to ableism's circulation by confusing inclusion with normative assimilation. Such constructions likewise may encourage an independent individualization that reinforces ableist standards of productivity and disregards the collective and collaborative nature of knowledge-making across university spaces. I thus recommend that cripistemological coalitions reject the individualizing and ableist nature of standardized discourses, documentation, and design practices and instead understand access, inclusion, and care as grounded in frictional interdependence. Through this epistemological shift,

cripistemological coalitions can reject notions of autonomy that require alignment with neoliberal, ableist goals of independence and embrace an autonomy that recognizes agency as rhetorically influenced by one's access to diverse sociopolitical contexts and resources. Similarly, this construction rejects independent understandings of knowledge construction and instead recognizes intellectual inquiry as requiring frameworks grounded in diversely situated knowledges.

This shift to cripistemological coalition also recognizes disability not as a problem in need of resolving, but as a generative source of information. Specifically, by embracing frictional frameworks of access, care, and inclusion, cripistemological coalitions would celebrate disabled experiences as offering vital insight in relation to critiquing and challenging the existing status quo. In this way, cripistemological coalitions can help university stakeholders reject neoliberal discourses, design efforts, and documentation practices that may strengthen ableism's circulation. By building from coalitional efforts of recognizing and revealing ableism's systemic influences, cripistemological coalitions would thus motivate the rejection of seemingly neutral, problematic standards that contribute to ableism's circulation in university spaces.

**Replacing ableist normalization by embracing mēt̄ic differential consciousness.** Ultimately, the replacement of oppressively ableist practices may be furthered by cripistemological coalitions. In fact, "replacement requires the consultation of others, the humbling of one's own idea about what should happen and how a problem should be addressed in light of what others say" (Walton, Moore & Jones, 2019, p. 143). Cripistemological coalitions require all members to critically reflect on how they individually might be impacted by and contribute to larger systems of oppression. While

this dissertation demonstrates the impact that individual or departmental efforts may have in resisting ableism's circulation, such efforts can, and must, be complemented with collective activism through methods like cripistemological coalition.

Drawing from this dissertation's insights in relation to UX and UD methods that empower users of university spaces as leaders in the evaluation of those spaces, I propose that cripistemological coalitions be grounded in methods that position those most impacted by university design, discourses, and documentation practices as leaders in programmatic evaluation and redesign. Positioning disabled and other historically marginalized populations as leaders, cripistemological coalition would not only inspire a critique of the status quo but, more importantly, facilitate a metacognitive shift in thinking. Specifically, these cripistemological coalitions would foster what I refer to as mēt̄ic differential consciousness. The concept of mēt̄ic differential consciousness builds from Chela Sandoval's (1991) concept of differential consciousness, which recognizes sociopolitical change as most effective "in and from within" existing institutional structures and ideological systems (p. 3). Differential consciousness demands "alienation, perversion, and reformation...[and] permits functioning within yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology" (p. 3). That is, differential consciousness draws from individuals' unique positionalities in social systems to uncover systemic inequities and pursue large-scale social change. By acknowledging the lived, often violent impacts of seemingly innocuous social realities, differential consciousness challenges social norms in ways that can facilitate the recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing of marginalizing discourses, assumptions, and design strategies.

Further, in advocating for mētīc differential consciousness, I recommend that cripistemological coalitions fuse understandings of differential consciousness with what Jay Dolmage (2014) refers to as “mētīs epistemology.” Discussed in Chapter One, a mētīs epistemology demonstrates that “all understanding and communication is embodied” (p. 60) and “holds that we all, intracorporeally, shape realities” (p. 289). As it positions all knowledge as “embodied” rather than universal, mētīs calls for a replacement of universalizing standards with discourses, documentation practices, and design strategies that center difference. Specifically, a mētīs epistemology advocates for an “intellectual and material movement against normativity” (p. 157); like differential consciousness, it thus provides critical insight into the constructed nature of ideology from inside the bounds of ideology itself. Fusing the concepts of differential consciousness with mētīs, a mētīc differential consciousness would result from the insights of a range of intersectional identities and their embodied experiences in resisting neoliberal standardization across institutional spaces.

A mētīc differential consciousness would specifically offer university cripistemological coalitions a theoretical vehicle for replacing neoliberal neutrality through efforts of social shape shifting grounded in disabled ways of being and knowing. Put simply, because disabled students, faculty, and staff have experienced the impacts of ableist systems, their insights are vital in rethinking those systems. Further, many disabled individuals have challenged ableist systems by failing to engage with them or doing so in non-normative, disruptive ways. Consequently, by engaging a mētīc differential consciousness, cripistemological coalitions can draw from the embodied

knowledges and experiences of disabled institutional stakeholders to revise university spaces in ways conducive to the needs of a range of bodyminds.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

As these guidelines relay, while individual or departmental efforts to engage with the 4R's, like those used in this dissertation, can provide important and useful insight into tracing and disrupting the circulation of ableist rhetoric, such efforts must be complemented with collective and coalitional action that includes diverse university stakeholders. Specifically, cripistemological coalitions can promote the collective agency of a range of intersectional stakeholders in challenging the circulation of systemic forces like ableism that frequently move through university spaces through discourses, documentation strategies, and design practices deemed neutrally standard. As disability justice scholars articulate, collective action is integral to access efforts (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019; Berne et al., 2018). I thus recommend that university stakeholders further the methods and findings relayed in this dissertation by embracing cripistemological coalitions in reviewing and revising documentation, discourses, and design practices.

It is imperative that university stakeholders across departments engage collectively and in coalition with one another to address how normative understandings of access, care, and inclusion may draw from and strengthen the very systems that systemically exclude individuals like disabled students, faculty, and staff. By coupling discursive analysis and UX practices like those modeled across this dissertation with efforts of cripistemological coalition, university stakeholders may facilitate the construction of more equitable and accessible spaces that support as many bodyminds as possible at the forefront of their design. In this way, we can reject and replace



neoliberalism's violent neutrality with more equitable and socially just frameworks of disability access, inclusion, and care.

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APPENDIX A  
CHAPTER 4 MATERIALS

**Appendix A1**  
**List of Composition Program Mission Statements**

1. Arizona State University-Tempe, Writing Programs
2. Colorado State University-Fort Collins, Composition Program
3. Cornell University, Knight Writing Institute
4. Emory University, First Year Writing Program
5. Iowa State University, Department of English
6. Kansas State University, English Department
7. Michigan State University, First-Year Writing Program
8. New Jersey Institute of Technology, Department of Humanities
9. Northeastern University, Department of English
10. Syracuse University, Writing Program
11. Texas Tech University, Department of English
12. Tulane University of Louisiana, Department of English
13. The University of Alabama, Department of English
14. University of Arizona, Foundations Writing Program
15. University of Arkansas, Rhetoric and Composition
16. University of California-Los Angeles, Writing Programs
17. University of Central Florida, Department of Writing and Rhetoric
18. University of Colorado-Boulder, Program for Writing and Rhetoric
19. University of Florida, University Writing Program
20. University of Hawai'i-Monoa, Department of English
21. University of Louisville, English Department
22. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, English Department
23. University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Center for Writing
24. University of Missouri-Columbia, Campus Writing Program
25. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of English
26. University of New Mexico-Main Campus, Department of English
27. University of North Texas, First-Year Writing
28. University of South Florida-Main Campus, Department of English
29. The University of Texas at Arlington, Department of English
30. The University of Texas at El Paso, Department of English
31. University of Washington-Seattle Campus, Department of English
32. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, English Department



## Appendix A2

### List of 40 of the 370 most frequently occurring words in the corpus

Word	Freq.	%	Texts	%
WRITING	242	2.0994	31	96.875
STUDENTS	168	1.4574	31	96.875
OUR	123	1.0671	23	71.875
WE	107	0.9283	20	62.5
ENGLISH	87	0.7547	20	62.5
THEIR	74	0.642	22	68.75
COURSES	72	0.6246	21	65.625
DEPARTMENT	71	0.6159	19	59.375
RESEARCH	61	0.5292	25	78.125
PROGRAM	56	0.4858	15	46.875
LITERATURE	52	0.4511	17	53.125
CREATIVE	47	0.4077	14	43.75
UNIVERSITY	46	0.3991	20	62.5
MISSION	44	0.3817	24	75
PROFESSIONAL	41	0.3557	21	65.625
COMPOSITION	40	0.347	15	46.875
FACULTY	40	0.347	15	46.875
RHETORIC	40	0.347	16	50
THEY	39	0.3383	14	43.75
TEACHING	38	0.3297	23	71.875
CULTURAL	37	0.321	16	50
FIRST	37	0.321	13	40.625
FROM	35	0.3036	21	65.625
GRADUATE	35	0.3036	14	43.75
ALL	33	0.2863	13	40.625
WORK	33	0.2863	14	43.75
ABOUT	32	0.2776	16	50
CRITICAL	31	0.2689	17	53.125
LEARNING	31	0.2689	12	37.5
ACADEMIC	30	0.2603	18	56.25
COMMUNITY	29	0.2516	13	40.625
COMMUNICATION	28	0.2429	11	34.375
DEVELOP	28	0.2429	12	37.5
KNOWLEDGE	28	0.2429	16	50
UNDERGRADUATE	28	0.2429	15	46.875
SKILLS	27	0.2342	15	46.875
WORLD	27	0.2342	15	46.875
LANGUAGE	26	0.2256	16	50
PROGRAMS	26	0.2256	10	31.25
TEXTS	26	0.2256	11	34.375

**Appendix A3**  
**Collocates of “faculty” (complete list of 49)**

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right
FACULTY	FACULTY	19.031	42	1	1
AND	FACULTY	12.906	27	9	18
THE	FACULTY	11.625	19	8	11
OF	FACULTY	11.149	15	10	5
STUDENTS	FACULTY	11.535	12	5	7
TO	FACULTY	9.9844	11	2	9
IN	FACULTY	9.311	9	3	6
MEMBERS	FACULTY	12.341	6	1	5
PROGRAM	FACULTY	9.3299	5	2	3
TIME	FACULTY	11.815	5	3	2
OUR	FACULTY	8.1947	5	5	0
GRADUATE	FACULTY	9.042	4	1	3
ITS	FACULTY	9.2171	4	4	0
ARE	FACULTY	8.4709	4	0	4
WRITING	FACULTY	6.2524	4	4	0
PWR	FACULTY	10.364	4	3	1
ENGLISH	FACULTY	7.7284	4	2	2
DEPARTMENT	FACULTY	8.0216	4	2	2
ON	FACULTY	7.0434	3	1	2
WE	FACULTY	6.1846	3	2	1
RESEARCH	FACULTY	6.9953	3	0	3
ALSO	FACULTY	6.4162	2	0	2
STAFF	FACULTY	8.8491	2	0	2
STUDENT	FACULTY	6.8491	2	0	2
A	FACULTY	3.8223	2	2	0
THROUGH	FACULTY	5.2642	2	2	0
WITH	FACULTY	4.796	2	2	0
TRACK	FACULTY	10.171	2	2	0
THEIR	FACULTY	4.9616	2	0	2
TENURE	FACULTY	9.5861	2	2	0
SUPPORT	FACULTY	7.0011	2	1	1
ACADEMIC	FACULTY	6.2642	2	0	2
TENURED	FACULTY	10.171	2	2	0
FIVE	FACULTY	9.5861	2	1	1
BY	FACULTY	5.7787	2	2	0
FROM	FACULTY	6.0418	2	1	1
FOR	FACULTY	4.2762	2	1	1
CONTENT	FACULTY	9.1711	2	1	1
COMMITTED	FACULTY	7.2642	2	0	2
DIVERSE	FACULTY	7.2642	2	1	1
DEPARTMENTS	FACULTY	9.1711	2	0	2

OVER	FACULTY	8.8491	2	1	1
AS	FACULTY	4.3897	2	1	1
PUBLISH	FACULTY	10.171	2	0	2
PART	FACULTY	8.0011	2	1	1
BODY	FACULTY	8.8491	2	0	2
HAS	FACULTY	7.5861	2	0	2
IS	FACULTY	4.5861	2	0	2
INITIATIVES	FACULTY	8.5861	2	2	0

**Appendix A4**  
**Concordance of “faculty”**

<b>Concordance</b>
majors and minors, 70 graduate students, and some 30 <b>faculty</b> members, the English Department is one of the largest in the
the creative application of digital media in the classroom. As a <b>faculty</b> we are committed to engaging deeply in the rich interdisciplinary discus
and journals aimed at undergraduates; and career counseling. <b>Faculty</b> members coordinate and host an annual literary festival and an annual
may submit creative work for the dissertation. The English Department <b>faculty</b> over time has included not only many award-winning teachers, but
of the educational experience for every college student. Department <b>faculty</b> teach students how to read a variety of texts literally, aesthetically,
social contexts that inform contemporary society. The department's <b>faculty</b> places special emphasis on teaching and research in the following areas:
civic, and community settings, Department of Writing and Rhetoric (DWR) <b>faculty</b> engage in innovative research and teaching, often collaborating with stu
through a learning community composed of effective initiatives, engaged <b>faculty</b> , and motivated students.
• Small classes create opportunities for stude
on university advisory boards, and through faculty senate. English <b>faculty</b> also represent their profession on a national and international level: a
theories and practices of “writing-to-learn” course content • Helping <b>faculty</b> support students’ “learning-to-write” in their disciplines • Pursuing s
and disseminating such work is central to the department's mission. Its <b>faculty</b> pursue research and publish in a wide variety of areas, including
committed to enhancing the intellectual and cultural lives of its students, its <b>faculty</b> , and the citizens of the region. Through high quality instruction, resea
to high quality instruction through active learning. It values diversity in its <b>faculty</b> , student body, and the content of its classes. Research The English
literature and composition, children's literature, linguistics, and media. <b>Faculty</b> also publish fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction. Service Thro
and analytical abilities. Using a variety of theories and methodologies, <b>faculty</b> members contribute to research and creative activity in the humanities
advanced courses in literature and writing. Most significant, in terms of <b>faculty</b> resources, is the instruction the Department offers to virtually all uni
to address specific disciplinary, professional, and civic audiences. Our <b>Faculty</b> The PWR currently has five tenured or tenure-track faculty
terrain of the digital environments in which our students participate. Our <b>faculty</b> regularly present at campus and national conferences on topics
emphasis upon the diversity of cultures in Hawai'i, Asia, and the Pacific. <b>Faculty</b> members are committed to quality research and scholarship, g
support encourages leadership and collaborations among Writing Program <b>faculty</b> from diverse academic backgrounds. • Research on writing instruction
ia: in print, on film, on the Web, in art, in fact, and in fiction. Over 20 PWR <b>faculty</b> integrate sustainability concerns into their courses. In April 2012, the
Sustainability Award from CU's Environmental Center. Members of the PWR <b>faculty</b> participate in CU's Peak-to-Peak-Project, a campus-wide network of
in teaching and research. 10. Attract and retain a diverse, strong <b>faculty</b> and graduate student body. 11. Serve the local and global communities
• We believe in respectful critical dialogue within the community of students, <b>faculty</b> , and staff. • We believe that all teachers in the Writing Program—from

ks in the world • Listens carefully to the ideas and perspectives of students, <b>faculty</b> , researchers, and academic departments • Engages in collaborative
civic engagement in writing project initiatives place our students, <b>faculty</b> , and program in active partnerships that enhance life and learning
Writing Center also serves as the consulting arm of the PWR: we support <b>faculty</b> in various departments as they integrate writing into courses and curric
Department of English: An Education in Imaginative Reasoning We, the <b>faculty</b> of the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
resistance—and supports the academic freedom and civil rights of the <b>faculty</b> , instructors, staff, and students who practice forms of social activism.
the purpose, meaning, and function of writing. Approved by the <b>Faculty</b> , February 2005
through membership on university advisory boards, and through <b>faculty</b> senate. English faculty also represent their profession on a national an
current and relevant disciplinary knowledge, and by providing, through <b>faculty</b> examples, models for students of higher-level critical processes, includ
teachers in the Writing Program—from full-time faculty to part-time <b>faculty</b> to graduate students—are integral to the success of our mission, and as
nd staff. • We believe that all teachers in the Writing Program—from full-time <b>faculty</b> to part-time faculty to graduate students—are integral to the success
audiences. Our Faculty The PWR currently has five tenured or tenure-track <b>faculty</b> permanently rostered in the program, with their tenure homes in
tenure homes in English and Communication. Our tenured/tenure-track <b>faculty</b> include nationally recognized scholars and writers whose research and wr
as they select from a range of Honors tutorials, work closely with <b>faculty</b> members and one another, and write creative or scholarly theses.
with ongoing opportunities for professional growth; collaborate with <b>faculty</b> outside the FYW program to build writing instruction into their
have won Ford, Soros and other fellowships. On our Creative Writing <b>faculty</b> are several recipients of the National Endowment for the Arts award and
students in literature, media, rhetoric and composition, and creative writing. <b>Faculty</b> and graduate students produce high-impact scholarship and creative

**Appendix A5**  
**Complete list of “student” collocates**

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right
STUDENT	STUDENT	17.595	19	0	0
AND	STUDENT	10.7404	13	8	5
TO	STUDENT	9.60575	8	6	2
THE	STUDENT	8.30142	7	2	5
OF	STUDENT	7.39238	5	3	2
EVERY	STUDENT	11.3411	3	3	0
FOR	STUDENT	7.03125	3	3	0
GRADUATE	STUDENT	8.79678	3	3	0
DEVELOP	STUDENT	9.11871	3	2	1
IN	STUDENT	5.55538	3	1	2
BODY	STUDENT	11.6041	3	0	3
INSTRUCTORS	STUDENT	9.3637	2	0	2
SUCCESS	STUDENT	9.3637	2	0	2
THREE	STUDENT	9.17105	2	1	1
WITH	STUDENT	5.79601	2	1	1
ON	STUDENT	6.28841	2	1	1
PROVIDE	STUDENT	8.08359	2	1	1
DIVERSITY	STUDENT	8.17105	2	2	0
EACH	STUDENT	9.84912	2	2	0
COURSES	STUDENT	6.00113	2	1	1
A	STUDENT	4.82232	2	1	1
AS	STUDENT	5.38969	2	2	0
FROM	STUDENT	7.04177	2	0	2
FYW	STUDENT	8.26416	2	1	1
FACULTY	STUDENT	6.84912	2	2	0
ENGLISH	STUDENT	5.72811	2	1	1
EXPERIENCE	STUDENT	8.47061	2	2	0

**Appendix A6**  
**Condensed list of 40 of 191 collocates of “students”**

<b>Word</b>	<b>With</b>	<b>Relation</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Left</b>	<b>Total Right</b>
STUDENTS	STUDENTS	8.516969681	240	71	1
IN	STUDENTS	4.825585365	38	8	30
OF	STUDENTS	4.524076462	37	19	18
OUR	STUDENTS	6.976401329	30	26	4
WRITING	STUDENTS	5.038484097	23	14	9
THAT	STUDENTS	5.995510101	19	14	5
THEIR	STUDENTS	6.572010994	17	2	15
WE	STUDENTS	6.417434216	14	13	1
DEVELOP	STUDENTS	8.184988022	13	1	12
COURSES	STUDENTS	5.281014919	11	9	2
GRADUATE	STUDENTS	5.528942585	11	9	2
HELP	STUDENTS	9.391438484	10	10	0
UNDERGRADUATE	STUDENTS	5.369071007	8	7	1
READ	STUDENTS	6.876865864	7	0	7
ENGLISH	STUDENTS	3.519313812	7	5	2
DEPARTMENT	STUDENTS	3.789402962	7	7	0
LEARN	STUDENTS	0	7	0	7
YEAR	STUDENTS	6.55493784	7	6	1
WHICH	STUDENTS	6.291903019	7	7	0
WILL	STUDENTS	5.291903019	7	1	6
HOW	STUDENTS	7.069510937	6	0	6
NEED	STUDENTS	0	6	1	5
FROM	STUDENTS	5.33254528	6	2	4
PREPARE	STUDENTS	6.33254528	6	5	1
KNOWLEDGE	STUDENTS	5.847118378	6	1	5
ENCOURAGE	STUDENTS	8.391438484	5	5	0
PROVIDE	STUDENTS	6.391438961	5	5	0
PRACTICE	STUDENTS	6.806476593	5	0	5
CLASSES	STUDENTS	6.069510937	5	3	2
TEACH	STUDENTS	6.806476593	5	5	0
FACULTY	STUDENTS	3.821583271	4	4	0
ALL	STUDENTS	5.747582912	4	3	1
WRITE	STUDENTS	5.747582912	4	0	4
PROGRAMS	STUDENTS	4.899585724	4	3	1
HELPING	STUDENTS	0	4	4	0
TEACHING	STUDENTS	4.162620068	4	3	1
ACADEMIC	STUDENTS	5.069510937	4	1	3
ENGAGE	STUDENTS	8.06951046	4	2	2
OPPORTUNITIES	STUDENTS	5.26215601	4	2	2
BECOME	STUDENTS	8.06951046	4	0	4
OFFERS	STUDENTS	5.484548092	4	4	0

**Appendix A7**  
**Complete concordance of “student”**

Concordance
The English minor consists of 15 upper-division English credits and allows the <b>student</b> three elective courses in addition to two required courses. Pursuing Hon
and in the community and provide numerous opportunities for showcasing <b>student</b> writing on issues related to diversity. We offer a full range of diversi
disciplinary discussions surrounding the use of digital technology as integral to <b>student</b> learning. We aim to match our long-term curricular vision for Digital Co
year and upper-division courses, as do our graduate <b>student</b> teachers, who come from a variety of disciplin
t-Year Writing (FYW) program will develop deliberate, innovative, and versatile <b>student</b> writers; provide FYW instructors with ongoing opportunities for professi
language and literatures in English in all their diversity to the multicultural <b>student</b> body from the state. • Lead students to realize how the expressive and
tructors to create a culture that facilitates high quality teaching and fosters <b>student</b> success.
nits across campus to strengthen or reinforce varied <b>student</b> success efforts. Writing Programs reaches beyo
ove the skills of domestic and international graduate <b>student</b> instructors across campus and thereby improv
d reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary for <b>student</b> success in the academy and beyond. The Progr
act and retain a diverse, strong faculty and graduate <b>student</b> body. 11. Serve the local and global communiti
r in their educational or professional lives. Instead, FYW aims to develop each <b>student’s</b> capacity to understand and adapt to new writing situations.
tudents, and professionals. Our goal is to help each <b>student</b> develop transferable knowledge of rhetoric and
uality instruction through active learning. It values diversity in its faculty, <b>student</b> body, and the content of its classes. Research The English departme
ersity. The majority of classes address three primary <b>student</b> constituencies: English undergraduate majors,
s strengthening the foundations of the educational experience for every college <b>student</b> . Department faculty teach students how to read a variety of texts litera
forts if ISUComm is to have a significant impact on <b>student</b> communication. In brief, effective teachers are
ogram, writing outreach, and prizes recognizing both <b>student</b> and instructor excellence, the Knight Award f
nt at CSU, but is an integral part of the education and experience of every CSU <b>student</b> .
rogram has the opportunity to work with almost every <b>student</b> that passes through the university, many of th



**Appendix A8**  
**Condensed concordance of “students” (37 of 168 instances)**

<b>Concordance</b>
professional and civic discourse. Second, to prepare all <b>students</b> for the diversity of contemporary communication, ISUComm will cultivate
ic activity that serves to develop, focus, and refine thinking as well as allow <b>students</b> to communicate effectively. We want our students to feel that our class
and informed critique of these activities. We believe context is also central. <b>Students</b> need to see that culture in general, and texts in particular, are const
ssues; and • adjust writing to multiple audiences, purposes, and conventions. <b>Students</b> in our courses are expected to engage the ideas encountered in academic
Mission The fundamental mission of the Department of English is to develop <b>students’</b> critical reading, writing, and creative skills through the study of va
nd private life might look if imagined alternatives were realized. By educating <b>students</b> in multiple literacies, we offer them the intellectual skills they need
hink that the education in imaginative reasoning our department offers empowers <b>students</b> to ask questions particularly pertinent to this state of neoliberal aff
in relation to other cultural phenomena. Our mission as educators is to enable <b>students</b> to become the finest readers and writers of literary texts that they ca
t, and for meaningful employment. At the graduate level, the department enables <b>students</b> to engage in independent scholarly inquiry and impart knowledge about t
gs with community-based work to enrich the educational experience and encourage <b>students</b> to understand real world applications of rhetorical situations and theo
University Requirements, the Humanities department is dedicated to enlightening <b>students</b> about the world and inculcating in them the ability to think critically
al. Our classes need to encourage active participation, and they need to expose <b>students</b> to the processes of critical thinking, reading, and writing as well as
enced through writing and learning to write. A primary aim of the course is for <b>students</b> to develop productive understandings of their own goals as learners. FY
o here in Nebraska—are ceaselessly confronted with the impact of global forces. <b>Students</b> need to become more globally aware and better equipped to navigate nimb
will go on to write in academic genres after graduation, academic writing gives <b>students</b> practice in precision and logic, while developing attunement to audienc
Composition primarily develops and manages first-year writing courses that help <b>students</b> master the conventions of academic discourse. The courses under the pur
d preservation of students' critical relations to those discourses; and • help <b>students</b> develop questioning abilities that move them beyond the passive accepta
creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and the digital humanities—we help <b>students</b> develop their capacities in imaginative reasoning so that in their live
ch perspectives are embedded in complex cultural contexts. These processes help <b>students</b> learn how to develop a responsible, considered interpretation that supe
nquiry, discovery, and communication The First-Year Writing curriculum invites <b>students</b> to put their prior knowledge in relation to new understandings of rheto
d writing about texts that illustrate a multiplicity of perspectives on issues, <b>students</b> will begin to use writing to broaden their ability to communicate effec
oric focuses on critical analysis, argument, inquiry, and information literacy. <b>Students</b> develop their rhetorical knowledge by analyzing texts from various genr
ing community composed of effective initiatives, engaged faculty, and motivated <b>students</b> . • Small classes create opportunities for students to develop writing
that only the here and now—the present—matters, we hold that we must equip our <b>students</b> with the tools they need to respond to this pervasive hyper-presentism:

<p>English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we are committed to educating our <b>students</b> in this art of imaginative reasoning so that they can become well-informed</p>
<p>tering such longstanding conversations—all such activities ultimately train our <b>students</b> in what we, as an English Department, see as the most central and valuable</p>
<p>to enrich the writing experience—and ultimately the writing performance—of our students. It's a many-layered mission... Writing Programs serves undergraduate students</p>
<p>we also believe imaginative reasoning is valuable in its own right. Helping our <b>students</b> to develop the ability to engage in imaginative reasoning is thus central</p>
<p>ing courses place strong emphasis on producing multiple drafts of each project. <b>Students</b> analyze and develop their writing processes through various strategies.</p>
<p>ations in which they seek to persuade others to see things their way. To do so, <b>students</b> need to understand the ways they use language to construct their own arguments</p>
<p>c audience or composing a multimodal text for a specific group of stakeholders. <b>Students</b> also develop their information literacy through our partnership with CU</p>
<p>act accomplished through the effective use of writing processes and strategies. <b>Students</b> develop their research, argument, and writing skills, and use them to communicate</p>
<p>earning about writing is necessarily unfinished when FYW is completed, and that <b>students</b> will leave with transferable knowledge that will deliver continued learning</p>
<p>ional writing, criticism, and linguistics. Goals for the English major are that <b>students</b> will 1) develop skills for analyzing individual texts; 2) develop an understanding of</p>
<p>dies, cognitive psychology, educational research). Goals for the Ph.D. are that <b>students</b> will 1) gain specialized and current disciplinary knowledge; 2) write a dissertation</p>
<p>cs, creative writing, and rhetoric and composition. Goals for the M.A. are that <b>students</b> will 1) gain advanced knowledge of the British and American literary traditions</p>
<p>is the largest department in the university, contributing in essential ways to <b>students'</b> personal growth, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities. As part of</p>

## Appendix A9

“We” Collocates 42 of 119 total collocates (occurring 3x or more)

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left
WE	WE	20.4069	111	2
THE	WE	14.2198	48	20
AND	WE	12.6102	35	16
OF	WE	13.2731	34	15
TO	WE	13.0517	31	4
IN	WE	12.4851	26	6
OUR	WE	12.777	20	5
STUDENTS	WE	11.3609	16	2
THAT	WE	11.6536	15	3
BELIEVE	WE	14.2682	14	0
OFFER	WE	12.6772	9	0
WITH	WE	8.79916	7	2
WRITING	WE	7.25534	7	0
HOW	WE	9.92194	6	5
DEPARTMENT	WE	6.60202	4	2
RESEARCH	WE	6.82103	4	2
ALL	WE	7.70737	4	0
WORLD	WE	7.99688	4	3
ENCOURAGE	WE	9.1668	4	0
FACULTY	WE	6.1846	3	1
HELP	WE	7.50653	3	0
IMAGINATIVE	WE	7.3366	3	2
PROGRAM	WE	5.69917	3	1
PROVIDE	WE	7.41906	3	0
PRODUCE	WE	8.50653	3	0
PREPARE	WE	8.3366	3	0
RHETORIC	WE	6.1846	3	3
SEEK	WE	9.50653	3	0
ON	WE	5.62388	3	1
MODEL	WE	9.92156	3	0
EQUIP	WE	10.5065	3	0
CENTRAL	WE	8.69917	3	2
COMMUNITY	WE	6.64854	3	2
WILL	WE	6.92156	3	0
US	WE	7.11421	3	1
COMMITTED	WE	7.59963	3	0
CLEAR	WE	9.92156	3	1
ENGLISH	WE	5.06358	3	1
THINK	WE	7.80609	3	0
COURSES	WE	5.3366	3	0
AIM	WE	9.50653	3	0
ACTIONS	WE	9.1846	3	2

**Appendix A10**  
**“We” Concordance (40 of 107 total lines)**

Concordance
entive repetition. In our classrooms and in our research and creative activity, <b>we</b> re-visit, re-read, re-write, re-think, re-see, re-frame, re-investigate, re-i
ersations about the state of the Humanities in the twenty-first century because <b>we</b> are keenly aware of our specific place within a university on the Great Plain
skeptical of an idea of innovation predicated on planned obsolescence. Because <b>we</b> are concerned about the ecological and human costs of this brand of innovatio
research, classroom pedagogy, and service to the profession and the community. <b>We</b> will prepare students to think critically and creatively about literature, la
hetors, audience, exigencies, intentions, contexts, and other contingencies. • <b>We</b> believe that writing is a powerful intellectual tool and practice and that wr
ity take as their subjects our fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, <b>we</b> aim in effect to equip our students both to read the world, and write the fut
sity The PWR has won university-wide awards for its work related to diversity. <b>We</b> encourage openness and respect on campus and in the community and provide num
ream of; but they also can find it difficult to get their “local” voices heard. <b>We</b> thus seek to guide our students in the process of bringing their “local” voic
he world, of how we produce, but also distribute and receive, texts, and of how <b>we</b> can tell our own stories while learning about those of others all hone the ag
in the seemingly smooth flow of daily information by helping us to re-frame how <b>we</b> look at the world—at ourselves and others, as well as at institutional struct
discovery, and communication • Culture: social/communal forces that affect how <b>we</b> produce and assess the effectiveness of acts of inquiry, discovery, and commu
. The study of the traditions of literature and cinema around the world, of how <b>we</b> produce, but also distribute and receive, texts, and of how we can tell our o
studies, creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and the digital humanities— <b>we</b> help students develop their capacities in imaginative reasoning so that in th
tant and should be valued; however, as teachers and scholars in the humanities, <b>we</b> are skeptical of an idea of innovation predicated on planned obsolescence. Be
gined alternatives were realized. By educating students in multiple literacies, <b>we</b> offer them the intellectual skills they need to intervene actively in politic
riting Program teachers at all levels in discussions toward decision-making. • <b>We</b> believe in the importance of fostering dialogue across communities—academic a
n against our wills and without a clear sense of why we are being made to move, <b>we</b> need to pose with renewed vigor the question of community, to rethink what co
ning environments that will nurture academic success for a diverse population. <b>We</b> seek to prepare our students for challenging careers, advancement to graduate
t its core, predicated on disposability, utility, and commercial profitability, <b>we</b> offer a model of innovation grounded not only in an intensive creative engage
r preparation. The Writing Center also serves as the consulting arm of the PWR: <b>we</b> support faculty in various departments as they integrate writing into courses
lish/mission The Department of English: An Education in Imaginative Reasoning <b>We</b> , the faculty of the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Linco
ultural traditions that have led to and influenced the current cultural scene. <b>We</b> believe that nurturing the capacity for imaginative reasoning is particularly
mmunity groups to support writing and learning in the community and the society <b>we</b> live in. Aims The aims of the Writing Program are to do the following: 1.
romote excellence in writing and rhetoric in the undergraduate program at SU • <b>We</b> produce innovative, high-quality research on composition and cultural rhetori

w use information effectively. • Writing is challenging to learn and to teach. <b>We</b> provide instructors with initial and ongoing training, professional developme
nowing, it is also a way of acting on others in the public sphere. As teachers, <b>we</b> help our students discover the complex nature of the ideas and issues they wr
upon us the sense that only the here and now—the present—matters, <b>we</b> hold that we must equip our students with the tools they need to respond to this pervasive
d for the research and creative activities many of us pursue. At the same time, <b>we</b> recognize that the lives of students today—not just in metropolises but also
ideal environments for testing new concepts and advocating new points of view. <b>We</b> work to help students focus on framing arguments and engaging in conversation
ices in competition and conversation. This active shaping is central to the way <b>we</b> understand writing and its place in the world. We consider writing to be an e
tanding conversations—all such activities ultimately train our students in what <b>we</b> , as an English Department, see as the most central and valuable skill we have
ow our actions might impact others, whether humans, animals, or plants, whether <b>we</b> see them as similar to ourselves or perceive them as “others.” In this sense
airs: What would it be like to live elsewhere and interact with those with whom <b>we</b> seem to have little in common? Or, conversely, what would it be like to share

**Appendix A11**  
**“They” Collocates Complete list**

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right
THEY	THEY	18.783	39	0	0
AND	THEY	12.6087	25	14	11
TO	THEY	11.9058	17	4	13
IN	THEY	10.9396	13	8	5
THE	THEY	9.29468	11	7	4
OF	THEY	9.84216	11	8	3
THEIR	THEY	10.9989	8	6	2
THAT	THEY	10.3881	8	6	2
AS	THEY	10.427	8	8	0
CAN	THEY	12.9604	8	0	8
WRITING	THEY	8.7114	7	4	3
WITH	THEY	8.7987	5	3	2
WRITE	THEY	10.7814	5	2	3
NEED	THEY	11.4733	5	1	4
LEARN	THEY	10.3009	4	0	4
OUR	THEY	7.26531	4	3	1
SO	THEY	10.8859	4	4	0
WHICH	THEY	9.68427	4	4	0
ON	THEY	7.07995	3	2	1
UNDERSTAND	THEY	9.26215	3	2	1
SKILLS	THEY	8.2077	3	3	0
RESEARCH	THEY	7.03185	3	1	2
STUDENTS	THEY	5.57027	3	1	2
ENCOUNTER	THEY	10.9626	3	0	3
TOOLS	THEY	10.2076	2	2	0
DO	THEY	8.40022	2	1	1
IDEAS	THEY	7.74815	2	2	0
THEM	THEY	6.95965	2	2	0
FROM	THEY	6.07829	2	1	1
WELL	THEY	6.74815	2	0	2
WORK	THEY	6.16318	2	0	2
ALSO	THEY	6.45269	2	0	2
A	THEY	3.85885	2	1	1
WHAT	THEY	7.30069	2	2	0
COURSES	THEY	5.03765	2	1	1
COMPLETE	THEY	9.62261	2	0	2
INDEPENDENT	THEY	9.62261	2	1	1
PRACTICE	THEY	7.20758	2	0	2
PROJECTS	THEY	8.62261	2	0	2
ISSUES	THEY	7.40022	2	2	0
MORE	THEY	7.74815	2	0	2

LOOKING	THEY	11.2076	2	1	1
LIVES	THEY	7.50714	2	2	0
INTELLECTUAL	THEY	7.62261	2	2	0
TASKS	THEY	10.2076	2	0	2
TEACH	THEY	7.40022	2	0	2
INDIVIDUAL	THEY	8.88565	2	1	1
INITIATE	THEY	10.2076	2	0	2
SPECIALIZED	THEY	9.20758	2	0	2
INFORMED	THEY	8.03765	2	0	2

**Appendix A12**  
**“They” concordance**

<b>Concordance</b>
meet deadlines. Finally, they practice listening well and looking hard so that <b>they</b> might understand another person’s perspective, whether across a gulf of cen
o plan projects, work in teams, complete research, and meet deadlines. Finally, <b>they</b> practice listening well and looking hard so that they might understand anot
closely and carefully, to write persuasively, intelligently, and with clarity. <b>They</b> learn to plan projects, work in teams, complete research, and meet deadline
ommitted to educating our students in this art of imaginative reasoning so that <b>they</b> can become well-informed and caring actors in an increasingly diverse envir
ifting world than their grandparents, if not their parents, could dream of; but <b>they</b> also can find it difficult to get their “local” voices heard. We thus seek
sentism: what tools do they need to feel more empowered in their daily lives as <b>they</b> face the demands foisted on us all by the dynamics of neoliberal capitalism
he tools they need to respond to this pervasive hyper-presentism: what tools do <b>they</b> need to feel more empowered in their daily lives as they face the demands f
now—the present—matters, we hold that we must equip our students with the tools <b>they</b> need to respond to this pervasive hyper-presentism: what tools do they need
educating students in multiple literacies, we offer them the intellectual skills <b>they</b> need to intervene actively in political, civic, and cultural affairs in the
not a matter of our own choosing—they exist independent of our individual wills— <b>they</b> can seem unchangeable. However, imaginative reasoning as a practice fosters
y because these structures and constraints are not a matter of our own choosing— <b>they</b> exist independent of our individual wills—they can seem unchangeable. Howev
histories, are outcomes of past and ongoing political and social struggles, and <b>they</b> ultimately constitute the conditions of possibility for our own social acti
in their lives as citizens of the world and members of their local communities <b>they</b> can discern connections and synthesize across seemingly incommensurable ide
i to succeed in their continued studies, future careers, and community roles as <b>they</b> pursue writing tasks with greater confidence and understand the power of la
enable students to become the finest readers and writers of literary texts that <b>they</b> can be. Because those texts in their infinite variety take as their subject
pecialized and current disciplinary knowledge; 2) write a dissertation in which <b>they</b> initiate and complete specialized research that addresses an original and s
ish and American literary traditions; 2) write a thesis or culminating in which <b>they</b> initiate and complete specialized research addressing a significant questio
ible; 3) relate texts to the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which <b>they</b> were produced; 4) extend, deepen, and refine critical thinking, research an
ors in English offers students a dynamic and focused intellectual experience as <b>they</b> select from a range of Honors tutorials, work closely with faculty members
as the consulting arm of the PWR: we support faculty in various departments as <b>they</b> integrate writing into courses and curricula. PWR Writing Foci Creative N
recognized scholars and writers whose research and writing enhances the courses <b>they</b> teach and the growth and development of the program. Senior instructors and
the state. • Lead students to realize how the expressive and analytical skills <b>they</b> acquire and exercise in their study of English prepares them for a wide var
develop flexibility and learn to reflect continually throughout their lives as <b>they</b> encounter new writing tasks. • Writing gives writers power. Academic audie
ate level, we offer students the option of concentrating in particular areas as <b>they</b> work toward completing the major. Six concentrations are available: • Amer



riting as a social practice, giving special attention to issues of diversity as <b>they</b> affect rhetorical practice. 5.
Provide a rigorous graduate curriculum that
goals as learners. FYW classes prepare students to reflect on their learning as <b>they</b> move through course projects in order to set informed goals for their ongoing
read a variety of texts literally, aesthetically, critically, and historically. <b>They</b> also teach students to write effectively and persuasively, with an awareness
write persuasively and to understand the demands made on them by the arguments <b>they</b> encounter. Argumentation involves articulating a claim, using definitions and
students learn to evaluate arguments, weigh evidence and scrutinize reasoning. <b>They</b> learn that multiple interpretations are possible, but that not all are "equally
valid. From their writing and research, they should learn to write with and against what <b>they</b> know. In addition, all assignment sequences should encourage the use of scholarly
writing about texts and what students learn from their writing and research, <b>they</b> should learn to write with and against what they know. In addition, all assignments
to understand the historical and cultural antecedents to their opinions so that <b>they</b> can then make more informed, more critically situated arguments about issues
others to see things their way. To do so, students need to understand the ways <b>they</b> use language to construct their own arguments. Helping students gain access to
help students focus on framing arguments and engaging in conversations in which <b>they</b> seek to persuade others to see things their way. To do so, students need to
develop a variety of writing practices are crucial. Our classes need to encourage active participation, and <b>they</b> need to expose students to the processes of critical thinking, reading, and
writing. We want our students to know that the writer will construct new knowledge; to understand that writing is something <b>they</b> can learn to do; and to illustrate the ways in which writing and reading are
connected. In our classes, we help our students discover the complex nature of the ideas and issues <b>they</b> write about and consider how these ideas and issues affect and grow out of
multiple perspectives, and to connect their life experiences with ideas and information <b>they</b> encounter in classes. Our goal is for them to explore what others have written
and to develop their critical reading, thinking and writing skills so that <b>they</b> can successfully participate in that work. Writing is intellectual work, and

### Appendix A13

#### Condensed collocates of “our,” reflecting 50 of the total 143 collocates

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right	L5
OUR	OUR	20.9188	137	8	8	1
AND	OUR	13.4007	44	17	27	3
TO	OUR	13.9549	40	15	25	1
OF	OUR	13.7762	40	27	13	3
IN	OUR	13.6938	36	20	16	4
THE	OUR	12.7722	36	15	21	5
STUDENTS	OUR	13.8823	30	4	26	0
WE	OUR	12.777	20	15	5	4
WRITING	OUR	11.1434	18	5	13	1
IS	OUR	11.9673	16	5	11	1
A	OUR	10.924	15	6	9	2
AS	OUR	11.4914	15	6	9	1
COURSES	OUR	11.8041	14	1	13	0
THAT	OUR	10.1097	11	8	3	3
WITH	OUR	10.5548	11	2	9	0
MISSION	OUR	11.0578	10	1	9	0
FOR	OUR	9.62243	10	4	6	0
RESEARCH	OUR	9.62048	8	1	7	0
CAMPUS	OUR	10.8032	7	2	5	0
ARE	OUR	9.27272	7	4	3	1
GRADUATE	OUR	9.17657	6	0	6	0
FACULTY	OUR	8.1947	5	0	5	0
CURRICULUM	OUR	9.42916	5	1	4	0
PLACE	OUR	10.7093	5	1	4	0
PROGRAM	OUR	7.70927	5	0	5	0
OWN	OUR	9.60973	5	0	5	0
THROUGH	OUR	7.60973	5	4	1	0
ALL	OUR	8.47223	5	4	1	1
CAN	OUR	9.2687	5	3	2	0
WORK	OUR	8.47223	5	1	4	0
LEARNING	OUR	7.59652	4	1	3	0
MUST	OUR	9.74336	4	2	2	1
UNDERGRADUATE	OUR	7.74336	4	0	4	0
CLASSES	OUR	8.74336	4	1	3	0
CORE	OUR	9.96575	4	2	2	0
THEY	OUR	7.26531	4	1	3	0
THEIR	OUR	6.34126	4	3	1	1
HOW	OUR	7.96575	4	3	1	1
FROM	OUR	7.42143	4	2	2	0
SUPPORT	OUR	8.38079	4	1	3	1
COMMUNITY	OUR	7.69273	4	1	3	0

CENTER	OUR	8.85028	4	1	3	0
DEPARTMENT	OUR	6.40097	4	0	4	0
ON	OUR	6.66807	4	3	1	1
OFFERS	OUR	8.85028	4	1	3	0
AIM	OUR	9.30548	3	2	1	1
CLASSROOMS	OUR	10.3055	3	1	2	0
HUMANS	OUR	9.72052	3	2	1	0
REASONING	OUR	7.05755	3	3	0	2
READ	OUR	7.72052	3	0	3	0

## Appendix A14

### Condensed concordance of “Our,” made up of 32 of the 123 lines of the overall concordance

Concordance
place, as well as the specificity of other places—as crucial for inquiry across <b>our</b> curriculum and for the research and creative activities many of us pursue. A
little in common? Or, conversely, what would it be like to share affirmatively <b>our</b> own communal spaces with strangers from diverse parts of the world who come
ommunities. Indeed, at a time when so many of us must be mobile, often against <b>our</b> wills and without a clear sense of why we are being made to move, we need to
having different investments. These stories have real effects on the world and <b>our</b> perceptions of ourselves. Our work is grounded in the belief that writing is
e critical insight, prepare future teachers, and craft the stories that animate <b>our</b> world.
d, in the process, to discover a range of strategies available to them. Because <b>our</b> courses stand as students' initiation into the discourses of the academic co
Our commitment is to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of our campus, <b>our</b> community, and the individuals who compose them. First Year Writing The Un
astery of composition, linguistics, literary history, and theory. We challenge <b>our</b> students to read, write, and think in a sophisticated and critical fashion;
hether across a gulf of centuries or across a border. Such “soft skills” deepen <b>our</b> understanding of what it means to be a human, connected to other humans, fro
who can hold those materials up to genuinely informed scrutiny. To those ends, <b>our</b> courses encourage students to see that writing is a way of thinking and that
ense that only the here and now—the present—matters, we hold that we must equip <b>our</b> students with the tools they need to respond to this pervasive hyper-present
s our fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, we aim in effect to equip <b>our</b> students both to read the world, and write the future, with subtlety, acumen
ial struggles, and they ultimately constitute the conditions of possibility for <b>our</b> own social actions and how we think of others and ourselves. Precisely becau
rs all hone the agility of the imagination. An agile imagination is crucial for <b>our</b> individual and collective abilities to engage the world through reason—we ne
of undergraduates take an English class, presenting a unique responsibility for <b>our</b> department to provide students with writing and reading skills that undergir
hey can seem unchangeable. However, imaginative reasoning as a practice fosters <b>our</b> capacity to think otherwise, to speculate about how things could be, to envi
with those who are close to us and those who, at first sight, seem removed from <b>our</b> daily experiences. We think that the education in imaginative reasoning our
those texts in their infinite variety take as their subjects our fellow humans, <b>our</b> histories, and our cultures, we aim in effect to equip our students both to
the people around us. Writing also can help us develop a sense of belonging in <b>our</b> communities. • Writing encourages critical thinking. When we write, we prac
us to look and work across boundaries, including, importantly, the boundary of <b>our</b> own selves and most immediate communities. Indeed, at a time when so many o
ore than a century old land grant mission. Indeed, we affirm the specificity of <b>our</b> locality—of our place, as well as the specificity of other places—as crucial
and constraints are not a matter of our own choosing—they exist independent of <b>our</b> individual wills—they can seem unchangeable. However, imaginative reasoning
rselves. Precisely because these structures and constraints are not a matter of <b>our</b> own choosing—they exist independent of our individual wills—they can seem un
xpanding terrain of the digital environments in which our students participate. <b>Our</b> faculty regularly present at campus and national conferences on topics invol

s critical writing; and studying texts in relation to other cultural phenomena. <b>Our</b> mission as educators is to enable students to become the finest readers and
ocesses. • Community and civic engagement in writing project initiatives place <b>our</b> students, faculty, and program in active partnerships that enhance life and
translates our research for a broader public, and facilitates engaged practice. <b>Our</b> work is founded in evidentiary reasoning, interpretation, and creativity. We
that will nurture academic success for a diverse population. We seek to prepare <b>our</b> students for challenging careers, advancement to graduate study, and for pro
d goals for their ongoing development as writers, students, and professionals. <b>Our</b> goal is to help each student develop transferable knowledge of rhetoric and
sion a reality. Imaginative reasoning allows us to speculate, to see and re-see <b>our</b> human and non-human environment in its diversity and flux; it allows us to a
ey can be. Because those texts in their infinite variety take as their subjects <b>our</b> fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, we aim in effect to equip ou
how we produce, but also distribute and receive, texts, and of how we can tell <b>our</b> own stories while learning about those of others all hone the agility of the

**Appendix A15**  
**Condensed collocates of “their” (50 of 100 instances)**

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right
THEIR	THEIR	7.431375	82	4	4
AND	THEIR	3.364656	49	26	23
TO	THEIR	4.002625	39	28	11
IN	THEIR	3.613029	26	20	6
OF	THEIR	2.997874	22	11	11
STUDENTS	THEIR	4.212887	20	17	3
THE	THEIR	2.238882	19	11	8
AS	THEIR	3.823844	10	2	8
WRITING	THEIR	2.686341	10	4	6
LIVES	THEIR	6.752761	9	0	9
OWN	THEIR	6.376386	8	0	8
THEY	THEIR	4.997874	8	2	6
DEVELOP	THEIR	5.475921	8	8	0
PROFESSIONAL	THEIR	4.733079	7	0	7
ON	THEIR	4.207988	7	5	2
WITH	THEIR	3.493199	6	4	2
THAT	THEIR	2.785025	5	4	1
ENGLISH	THEIR	3.162261	5	2	3
ACADEMIC	THEIR	4.698314	5	0	5
BY	THEIR	4.212887	5	1	4
THINKING	THEIR	5.605204	5	0	5
KNOWLEDGE	THEIR	4.475921	4	2	2
LEARNING	THEIR	4.32908	4	2	2
GOALS	THEIR	5.195813	4	1	3
LOCAL	THEIR	6.475921	4	1	3
FOR	THEIR	2.388458	4	4	0
COURSES	THEIR	3.113351	4	2	2
COMMUNITIES	THEIR	5.283276	4	0	4
REFLECT	THEIR	7.283276	4	4	0
SKILLS	THEIR	4.528389	4	3	1
OUR	THEIR	2.340762	4	1	3
USE	THEIR	5.582836	4	4	0
SO	THEIR	5.54631	3	1	2
RHETORICAL	THEIR	4.620311	3	1	2
RESEARCH	THEIR	2.937501	3	0	3
OR	THEIR	3.376385	3	2	1
PERSPECTIVES	THEIR	5.868238	3	2	1
READING	THEIR	4.620311	3	1	2
INTO	THEIR	5.167799	3	3	0
THROUGH	THEIR	2.961348	3	0	3
FROM	THEIR	3.738955	3	2	1

CULTURAL	THEIR	3.658785	3	3	0
EXPAND	THEIR	7.868238	3	2	1
CIVIC	THEIR	4.961348	3	1	2
VOICES	THEIR	7.283276	3	1	2
HISTORICAL	THEIR	5.698314	3	2	1
IF	THEIR	7.283276	3	1	2
FUTURE	THEIR	5.283276	3	1	2
ABOUT	THEIR	3.868239	3	2	1
WHAT	THEIR	4.376386	2	1	1

## Appendix A16

### Condensed concordance of “their,” including 34 of the total 74 lines

Concordance
ur students in the process of bringing their “local” voices (the specificity of <b>their</b> social locations) to bear on the global context (the “world”). Contrary t
al” voices heard. We thus seek to guide our students in the process of bringing <b>their</b> “local” voices (the specificity of their social locations) to bear on the
s pervasive hyper-presentism: what tools do they need to feel more empowered in <b>their</b> daily lives as they face the demands foisted on us all by the dynamics of
ls they need to intervene actively in political, civic, and cultural affairs in <b>their</b> communities. This literacy work—fostered through analyzing literature and
native reasoning so that in their lives as citizens of the world and members of <b>their</b> local communities they can discern connections and synthesize across seemi
s—we help students develop their capacities in imaginative reasoning so that in <b>their</b> lives as citizens of the world and members of their local communities they
, composition and rhetoric, and the digital humanities—we help students develop <b>their</b> capacities in imaginative reasoning so that in their lives as citizens of
ves VISION Writing Intensive courses help prepare future alumni to succeed in <b>their</b> continued studies, future careers, and community roles as they pursue writ
y texts that they can be. Because those texts in their infinite variety take as <b>their</b> subjects our fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, we aim in eff
ritical analysis, argument, inquiry, and information literacy. Students develop <b>their</b> rhetorical knowledge by analyzing texts from various genres, and then—thro
writing, offering students multiple avenues to explore, enhance and reflect on <b>their</b> own writing strategies and processes. First–Year Writing and Rhetoric foc
s and engaging courses that help them understand and apply rhetorical skills in <b>their</b> academic, civic, and professional lives as writers and active thinkers. O
laborate with faculty outside the FYW program to build writing instruction into <b>their</b> courses; and contribute to research on the teaching and assessment of comp
o realize how the expressive and analytical skills they acquire and exercise in <b>their</b> study of English prepares them for a wide variety of meaningful profession
uments to persuade, explain complex issues and bring insight to the concerns of <b>their</b> communities. • Writing is inseparable from information literacy. The proc
g students for the increasing demands on their literacy in the workplace and in <b>their</b> communities. Every aspect of our FYW program -- from courses, to assig
, and creativity as a means of preparing students for the increasing demands on <b>their</b> literacy in the workplace and in their communities. Every aspect of ou
understanding of contemporary discourse and literary heritage, and strengthens <b>their</b> creative and analytical abilities. Using a variety of theories and method
tment of English develops the reading and writing skills of students, increases <b>their</b> understanding of contemporary discourse and literary heritage, and strengt
ral, and political perspectives. Our graduate and undergraduate students enrich <b>their</b> lives and academic experiences by studying creative writing, linguistics,
eated respectfully, fairly, and with dignity and must be compensated fairly for <b>their</b> contributions. • We believe in the value of including Writing Program tea
le knowledge of rhetoric and writing practices. Consequently, our courses shift <b>their</b> emphasis from evaluating students’ mastery of producing genre-based writin
earning as they move through course projects in order to set informed goals for <b>their</b> ongoing development as writers, students, and professionals. Our goal is
imary aim of the course is for students to develop productive understandings of <b>their</b> own goals as learners. FYW classes prepare students to reflect on their le



y, and communication The First-Year Writing curriculum invites students to put <b>their</b> prior knowledge in relation to new understandings of rhetoric, literacy, a
zed through a shared curriculum of writing experiences that ask students to set <b>their</b> own learning goals by way of a variety of informed reflective writing acti
ity advisory boards, and through faculty senate. English faculty also represent <b>their</b> profession on a national and international level: as conference participan
vels must receive effective education in WOVE pedagogy and suitable support for <b>their</b> efforts if ISUComm is to have a significant impact on student communicatio
r writing courses and beyond. We strongly encourage students to conference with <b>their</b> teachers during office hours in order to receive personalized instruction,
through the effective use of writing processes and strategies. Students develop <b>their</b> research, argument, and writing skills, and use them to compose texts writ
uld encourage students to understand the historical and cultural antecedents to <b>their</b> opinions so that they can then make more informed, more critically situate
licity of perspectives on issues, students will begin to use writing to broaden <b>their</b> ability to communicate effectively about issues of social relevance. We st
they write about and consider how these ideas and issues affect and grow out of <b>their</b> own cultures. By reading and writing about texts that illustrate a multipl
plore what others have written about issues and to use their readings to expand <b>their</b> notion of what counts as an appropriate position. We encourage students to

## Appendix A17

### Condensed concordance of “Writing” featuring 33 of the total 247 lines

Concordance
ft and credibility while reflectively and critically thinking and talking about <b>writing</b> processes. • Community and civic engagement in writing project initiati
and research • Develops and communicates current knowledge and research about <b>writing</b> and writing pedagogy The Center for Writing is committed to fostering a
or continued growth and production. We believe that the work of learning about <b>writing</b> is necessarily unfinished when FYW is completed, and that students will
y of students will go on to write in academic genres after graduation, academic <b>writing</b> gives students practice in precision and logic, while developing attunem
r kinds of research, to support, extend, and complicate their own thinking. All <b>writing</b> assignments should encourage students to understand the historical and c
ng, sharing, and applying knowledge. Guiding Principles • We believe that all <b>writing</b> is culturally contextual, embedded in complicated networks of meaning, p
ey were produced; 4) extend, deepen, and refine critical thinking, research and <b>writing</b> skills, particularly the ability to write about literary and other texts
riting processes and strategies. Students develop their research, argument, and <b>writing</b> skills, and use them to compose texts written for both academic and publ
s. Writing also can help us develop a sense of belonging in our communities. • <b>Writing</b> encourages critical thinking. When we write, we practice offering clear,
plain complex issues and bring insight to the concerns of their communities. • <b>Writing</b> is inseparable from information literacy. The process of writing is vita
entral to the way we understand writing and its place in the world. We consider <b>writing</b> to be an epistemic activity that serves to develop, focus, and refine th
think about content critically, and decide how use information effectively. • <b>Writing</b> is challenging to learn and to teach. We provide instructors with initia
ticular community, how its members communicate with one another in writing, how <b>writing</b> generates concepts for understanding human experience, and how it someti
in our undergraduate and graduate programs receive a comprehensive education in <b>writing</b> and rhetoric that enables them to communicate effectively, persuasively,
nd institutional discourses. Whether or not it is named as an explicit topic in <b>writing</b> classes, culture is an idea that is surfaced, named, and referenced thro
defines a particular community, how its members communicate with one another in <b>writing</b> , how writing generates concepts for understanding human experience, and
s Mission Statement Our mission is to introduce students to the importance of <b>writing</b> in the work of the university and to develop their critical reading, thi
his mission, the Center • Encourages the development of writers and the use of <b>writing</b> as a tool for critical thinking, learning, and communicating in all fiel
attunement to audience and purpose. • Writing is a complex, lifelong process. <b>Writing</b> is not an isolated skill or a set of rules to learn. The writing process
ents, to classroom activities -- builds on these core values of our program: • <b>Writing</b> is an activity through which we inquire, experiment, and discover ideas.
initiatives, including our Writing Centers, the Writing in the Majors program, <b>writing</b> outreach, and prizes recognizing both student and instructor excellence,
in precision and logic, while developing attunement to audience and purpose. • <b>Writing</b> is a complex, lifelong process. Writing is not an isolated skill or a se
Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines at Cornell University supports <b>writing</b> seminars and writing intensive courses in a broad spectrum of academic d
lect continually throughout their lives as they encounter new writing tasks. • <b>Writing</b> gives writers power. Academic audiences expect well-researched writing t

ment, and research skills. 4. Provide an undergraduate curriculum that teaches <b>writing</b> as a social practice, giving special attention to issues of diversity as
articular audience, the writer will construct new knowledge; to understand that <b>writing</b> is something they can learn to do; and to illustrate the ways in which w
, exigencies, intentions, contexts, and other contingencies. • We believe that <b>writing</b> is a powerful intellectual tool and practice and that writing has the po
y informed scrutiny. To those ends, our courses encourage students to see that <b>writing</b> is a way of thinking and that in the very act of writing about a particu
world and our perceptions of ourselves. Our work is grounded in the belief that <b>writing</b> is not only a way of knowing, it is also a way of acting on others in th
The mission of Writing Programs, most broadly defined, is to enrich the <b>writing</b> experience—and ultimately the writing performance—of our students. It's
putting ideas into words and listening to responses from the people around us. <b>Writing</b> also can help us develop a sense of belonging in our communities. • Wri
illustrate a multiplicity of perspectives on issues, students will begin to use <b>writing</b> to broaden their ability to communicate effectively about issues of soci
king and writing skills so that they can successfully participate in that work. <b>Writing</b> is intellectual work, and the demands of writing within the university c

## Appendix A18

### Condensed collocates of “writing,” featuring 61 of the 234 collocates

Word	With	Relation	Total	Total Left	Total Right
WRITING	WRITING	22.077	280	19	19
AND	WRITING	18.391	174	79	95
THE	WRITING	17.16	124	70	54
OF	WRITING	15.1	68	57	11
IN	WRITING	14.784	58	28	30
TO	WRITING	14.116	52	23	29
FOR	WRITING	14.428	38	19	19
STUDENTS	WRITING	13.048	31	11	20
PROGRAM	WRITING	14.491	30	8	22
CREATIVE	WRITING	14.445	28	23	5
IS	WRITING	13.414	28	5	23
COURSES	WRITING	13.509	26	7	19
A	WRITING	12.16	25	9	16
THAT	WRITING	12.327	23	11	12
RHETORIC	WRITING	13.825	23	8	15
YEAR	WRITING	13.847	21	18	3
AS	WRITING	11.972	21	9	12
FIRST	WRITING	13.544	21	18	3
OUR	WRITING	11.143	18	13	5
READING	WRITING	13.328	16	12	4
AT	WRITING	11.464	15	3	12
RESEARCH	WRITING	11.366	15	9	6
WITH	WRITING	10.623	14	7	7
PROFESSIONAL	WRITING	11.64	14	11	3
ON	WRITING	11.115	14	7	7
CRITICAL	WRITING	11.723	13	9	4
LITERATURE	WRITING	10.976	13	9	4
CENTER	WRITING	12.976	13	4	9
COMPOSITION	WRITING	11.008	12	7	5
SKILLS	WRITING	11.199	11	2	9
PROGRAMS	WRITING	11.253	11	1	10
THROUGH	WRITING	10.047	11	6	5
ACADEMIC	WRITING	11.047	11	8	3
ENGLISH	WRITING	9.5106	11	7	4
ABOUT	WRITING	10.954	11	8	3
THEIR	WRITING	9.3314	10	6	4
THINKING	WRITING	11.541	10	6	4
COMMUNITY	WRITING	10.683	10	6	4
STUDIES	WRITING	10.692	9	5	4
TECHNICAL	WRITING	11.915	9	5	4
BY	WRITING	9.6924	9	6	3

DISCIPLINES	WRITING	11.277	9	2	7
INCLUDING	WRITING	10.405	8	7	1
KNOWLEDGE	WRITING	9.7675	8	6	2
ALL	WRITING	9.5305	8	6	2
UNDERGRADUATE	WRITING	9.7675	8	3	5
MISSION	WRITING	9.1154	8	6	2
CAMPUS	WRITING	10.405	8	4	4
CURRICULUM	WRITING	9.9093	7	3	4
LEARNING	WRITING	9.0426	7	4	3
INSTRUCTION	WRITING	9.9968	7	2	5
WHICH	WRITING	9.4732	7	2	5
THEY	WRITING	8.7114	7	3	4
UNIVERSITY	WRITING	8.4732	7	4	3
AN	WRITING	8.7114	7	2	5
WE	WRITING	7.2553	7	7	0
S	WRITING	9.353	7	6	1
OR	WRITING	7.8377	6	1	5
PRACTICE	WRITING	9.3295	6	3	3
ADVANCED	WRITING	9.4226	6	4	2
WORK	WRITING	8.2851	6	3	3

**Appendix A19**  
**Complete Concordance of “Voices”**

<b>Concordance</b>
rd. We thus seek to guide our students in the process of bringing their “local” <b>voices</b> (the specificity of their social locations) to bear on the global context
rents, could dream of; but they also can find it difficult to get their “local” <b>voices</b> heard. We thus seek to guide our students in the process of bringing thei
l, and texts in particular, are constructed and shaped by people and by various <b>voices</b> in competition and conversation. This active shaping is central to the wa

**Appendix A20**  
**Complete Concordance of “See”**

Concordance
our actions might impact others, whether humans, animals, or plants, whether we <b>see</b> them as similar to ourselves or perceive them as “others.” In this sense, t
t vision a reality. Imaginative reasoning allows us to speculate, to <b>see</b> and re-see our human and non-human environment in its diversity and flux; it allows us
to make that vision a reality. Imaginative reasoning allows us to speculate, to see and re- <b>see</b> our human and non-human environment in its diversity and flux; it
activities ultimately train our students in what we, as an English Department, <b>see</b> as the most central and valuable skill we have to offer. However, we also be
ur research and creative activity, we re-visit, re-read, re-write, re-think, re- <b>see</b> , re-frame, re-investigate, re-interpret, and re-create the past(s) through e
rguments and engaging in conversations in which they seek to persuade others to <b>see</b> things their way. To do so, students need to understand the ways they use la
tique of these activities. We believe context is also central. Students need to <b>see</b> that culture in general, and texts in particular, are constructed and shaped
genuinely informed scrutiny. To those ends, our courses encourage students to <b>see</b> that writing is a way of thinking and that in the very act of writing about

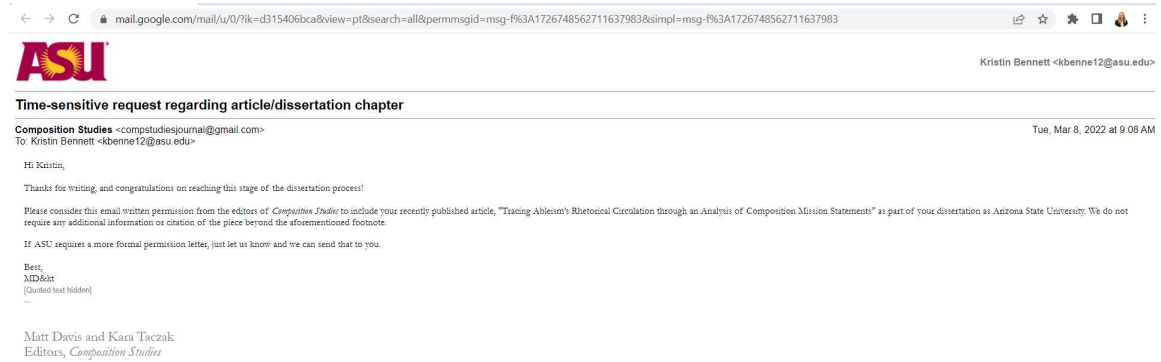
**Appendix A21**  
**Complete Concordance of “Vision”**

<b>Concordance</b>
ents and for advanced students in diverse disciplines across the university. <b>Vision</b> The Department of English at the University of South Florida aspires to
ion, based on a well-developed sense of ethics and social justice, to make that <b>vision</b> a reality. Imaginative reasoning allows us to speculate, to see and re-se
internationally • Supporting inclusive learning and multilingual initiatives <b>VISION</b> Writing Intensive courses help prepare future alumni to succeed in their
ology as integral to student learning. We aim to match our long-term curricular <b>vision</b> for Digital Composition to the dynamic and expanding terrain of the digit
<b>Vision</b> and Mission The Department of English will provide programs of the highe
Mission & <b>Vision</b> Texas Tech University's Department of English is committed to uphold the
<b>Vision</b> The Writing Program envisions a diverse department that promotes the dev
ion in advanced courses, including courses in the major. Means To realize its <b>vision</b> and fulfill its mission, ISUComm will place special emphasis on well-prep
rofessional, and civic lives. Mission The mission of ISUComm is to enact this <b>vision</b> in three ways. First, to address the changing nature of communication pra



## Appendix A22

### Permission to include earlier version of published article from *Composition Studies* in dissertation



APPENDIX B  
CHAPTER 5 MATERIALS

## **Appendix B1**

### **Denison University Documents**

1. **Denison Document 1:** Stress Management-  
<https://denison.edu/campus/health/stress-management>
2. **Denison Document 2:** Mindfulness-  
<https://denison.edu/campus/health/mindfulness>
3. **Denison Document 3:** Healthy Sleep- <https://denison.edu/campus/health/healthy-sleep>
4. **Denison Document 4:** Healthy Living & Habits-  
<https://denison.edu/campus/health/healthy-living-habits>
5. **Denison Document 5:** Financial Health-  
<https://denison.edu/campus/health/financial-health>
6. **Denison Document 6:** Fitness- <https://denison.edu/campus/health/fitness>
7. **Denison Document 7:** Healthy Sexuality-  
<https://denison.edu/campus/health/healthy-sexuality>

## **Appendix B2**

### **Arizona State University Documents**

1. **ASU Document 1 (Part 1):** Faith & Spirituality Introduction-  
<https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/spirit/major-and-career-choices>
2. **ASU Document 1 (Part 2):** Major and Career Choices-  
<https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/spirit/major-and-career-choices>
3. **ASU Document 2:** Healthy Eating- <https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/body/nutrition/healthy-eating>
4. **ASU Document 3:** Physical Activity and Exercise-  
<https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/body/physical-activity/physical-activity-and-exercise>
5. **ASU Document 4:** Healthy Relationships- <https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/community-support/relationships/healthy-relationships>
6. **ASU Document 5:** Healthy Environments- <https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/community-support/environment/healthy-environments>
7. **ASU Document 6:** Emotional Wellbeing Introduction & Conflict Resolution-  
<https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/mind/emotional-well-being>
8. **ASU Document 7:** Stress and Resilience- <https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/mind/stress-and-balance/stress-and-resilience>
9. **ASU Document 8:** Peak Performance- <https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/mind/emotional-well-being/peak-performance>
10. **ASU Document 9:** Emotional Wellness Tips-  
[https://wellness.asu.edu/sites/default/files/emotional\\_wellness\\_tips.pdf](https://wellness.asu.edu/sites/default/files/emotional_wellness_tips.pdf)

## **Appendix B3**

### **University of Texas at Austin Documents**

1. **UT Austin Document 1:** Rejection and failure-  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/rejection.html>
2. **UT Austin Document 2:** LGTQIA+ and mental health-  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/LGBTQIAmentalhealth.html>
3. **UT Austin Document 3:** Perfectionism-  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/perfectionism.html>
4. **UT Austin Document 4:** Self-care Activities-  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/selfcare.html>
5. **UT Austin Document 5:** Depression- <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/depression.html>
6. **UT Austin Document 6:** Loneliness- <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/loneliness.html>
7. **UT Austin Document 7:** Managing Stress- <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/stress.html>
8. **UT Austin Document 8:** Self-esteem- <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/selfesteem.html>
9. **UT Austin Document 9:** Healthy Relationships-  
[https://cmhc.utexas.edu/vav/vav\\_healthyrelationships.html](https://cmhc.utexas.edu/vav/vav_healthyrelationships.html)
10. **UT Austin Document 10:** Sleeping Better-  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/insomnia.html>

**Appendix B4**  
**Level-1 Coding Totals**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Denison</b>	<b>ASU</b>	<b>UT Austin</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able Yellow	39	135	112	286
Well as rational Pink	19	70	194	283
Well as productive Green	14	114	107	235
Well as independent Light blue	46	235	316	597
Well as different Grey	7	12	27	46
Well as environmental Brown	2	64	59	125
Well as collective Purple	45	63	92	200
Well as vulnerable Red	6	17	37	60

**Appendix B5**  
**Level-1 Coding Denison University**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able	2	7	8	4	1	9	8	39
Well as rational	9	4	0	2	0	4	0	19
Well as productive	1	3	2	4	1	3	0	14
Well as independent	11	6	11	11	1	4	2	46
Well as different	1	0	0	0	4	0	2	7
Well as environmental	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Well as collective	1	5	3	6	19	1	10	45
Well as vulnerable	1	0	1	3	1	0	0	6

**Appendix B6**  
**Level-1 Coding Arizona State University**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Doc 8</b>	<b>Doc 9</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able	3	26	44	17	10	4	13	11	7	135
Well as rational	1	5	3	2	0	12	20	15	12	70
Well as productive	2	14	25	0	3	8	23	34	5	114
Well as independent	2	30	18	27	24	40	34	45	15	235
Well as different	3	1	2	0	0	3	2	1	0	12
Well as environmental	8	1	0	3	11	0	28	10	3	64
Well as collective	0	1	7	23	1	13	13	1	4	63
Well as vulnerable	1	0	0	0	0	2	10	3	1	17



**Appendix B7**  
**Level-1 Coding University of Texas at Austin**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Doc 8</b>	<b>Doc 9</b>	<b>Doc 10</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able	0	1	6	20	15	6	30	9	4	21	112
Well as rational	10	1	31	11	39	6	37	40	2	17	194
Well as productive	8	1	28	11	11	0	19	12	3	14	107
Well as independent	27	2	25	49	28	18	67	34	28	38	316
Well as different	0	4	0	2	1	2	6	0	9	3	27
Well as environmental	5	2	0	1	5	4	10	22	3	7	59
Well as collective	0	7	1	2	12	8	17	17	24	4	92
Well as vulnerable	6	1	1	2	5	8	2	10	2	0	37

**Appendix B8**  
**Level-2 Coding Totals**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Denison Totals</b>	<b>ASU Totals</b>	<b>UT Austin Totals</b>	<b>Grand Totals</b>
Well as able- Well as rational	7	14	20	41
Well as able- Well as productive	2	40	18	60
Well as able- Well as independent	13	48	44	105
Well as able-Well as different	3	0	1	4
Well as able- Well as environmental	1	7	10	18
Well as able- Well as collective	9	7	4	20
Well as able- Well as vulnerable	1	1	0	2
Well as rational- Well as productive	3	12	34	49
Well as rational-Well as independent	8	16	39	63
Well as rational-Well as different	0	0	0	0
Well as rational-Well as environmental	0	2	4	6
Well as rational-Well as collective	1	2	7	10
Well as rational-Well as vulnerable	0	1	1	2
Well as productive- Well as independent	8	36	32	76
Well as productive- Well as different	0	1	3	4
Well as productive- Well as environmental	2	3	4	9
Well as productive-Well as collective	1	0	6	7
Well as productive- Well as vulnerable	0	2	4	6
Well as independent-Well as different	1	3	10	14
Well as independent- Well as environmental	0	8	5	13
Well as independent- Well as collective	8	17	50	75
Well as independent-Well as vulnerable	0	2	10	12
Well as different- Well as environmental	0	0	3	3

Well as different-Well as collective	2	3	4	9
Well as different-Well as vulnerable	0	0	2	2
Well as environmental-Well as collective	0	1	0	1
Well as environmental-Well as vulnerable	0	1	2	3
Well as collective- Well as vulnerable	0	0	2	2

**Appendix B9**  
**Level 2 Coding- Denison University**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able- Well as rational	1	2	0	0	0	4	0	7
Well as able- Well as productive	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Well as able- Well as independent	0	2	3	3	0	2	3	13
Well as able- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Well as able- Well as environmental	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Well as able- Well as collective	0	4	1	1	0	1	2	9
Well as able- Well as vulnerable	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Well as rational- Well as productive	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Well as rational-Well as independent	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	8
Well as rational-Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as rational- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as rational- Well as collective	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Well as rational-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as productive- Well as independent	1	2	0	3	1	1	0	8
Well as productive- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Well as productive- Well as environmental	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Well as productive- Well as collective	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Well as productive- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as independent-Well as different	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Well as independent- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as independent- Well as collective	1	1	1	4	0	0	1	8
Well as independent-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as different- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as different-Well as collective	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Well as different-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as environmental-Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as environmental-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as collective- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Appendix B10**  
**Level-2 Coding-Arizona State University**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Doc 8</b>	<b>Doc 9</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able- Well as rational	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	4	7	14
Well as able- Well as productive	0	10	21	0	2	0	0	7	0	40
Well as able- Well as independent	0	18	9	4	7	3	1	3	3	48
Well as able- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as able- Well as environmental	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	7
Well as able- Well as collective	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	7
Well as able- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Well as rational- Well as productive	0	3	4	0	0	0	1	2	2	12
Well as rational-Well as independent	0	1	0	0	0	6	2	5	2	16
Well as rational-Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as rational- Well as environmental	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Well as rational- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Well as rational-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Well as productive- Well as independent	0	2	2	0	2	6	7	16	1	36

Well as productive- Well as different	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Well as productive- Well as environmental	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Well as productive- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as productive- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Well as independent- Well as different	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
Well as independent- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	3	0	8
Well as independent- Well as collective	0	1	4	7	0	2	0	2	1	17
Well as independent- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Well as different- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as different- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Well as different- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as environmental-Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Well as environmental-Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Well as collective- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Appendix B11**  
**Level-2 Coding University of Texas at Austin**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Doc 1</b>	<b>Doc 2</b>	<b>Doc 3</b>	<b>Doc 4</b>	<b>Doc 5</b>	<b>Doc 6</b>	<b>Doc 7</b>	<b>Doc 8</b>	<b>Doc 9</b>	<b>Doc 10</b>	<b>Total</b>
Well as able- Well as rational	0	0	2	3	1	1	5	6	0	2	20
Well as able- Well as productive	0	0	2	5	0	0	5	0	0	6	18
Well as able- Well as independent	0	0	0	11	5	3	12	3	1	9	44
Well as able- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Well as able- Well as environmental	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	5	10
Well as able- Well as collective	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	4
Well as able- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as rational- Well as productive	0	0	9	8	2	0	8	5	0	2	34
Well as rational- Well as independent	2	1	6	3	3	1	10	4	0	9	39
Well as rational- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as rational- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	4



Well as rational- Well as collective	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	7
Well as rational- Well as vulnerable	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Well as productive- Well as independent	0	0	4	3	6	0	9	1	1	8	32
Well as productive- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Well as productive- Well as environmental	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	4
Well as productive- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	6
Well as productive- Well as vulnerable	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Well as independent- Well as different	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	4	0	10
Well as independent- Well as environmental	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	5
Well as independent- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	5	4	5	10	23	3	50
Well as independent- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	4	1	0	10

Well as different- Well as environmental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Well as different- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
Well as different- Well as vulnerable	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Well as environmental- Well as collective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well as environmental- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Well as collective- Well as vulnerable	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2

APPENDIX C  
CHAPTER 6 MATERIALS

## Appendix C1

### Participant Survey

1. Have you taken an online class before ENG556?
  1. Yes
  2. No
2. If yes, how many online classes (approximately) have you taken?
  1. 1-3
  2. 3-5
  3. 5+
3. Do you identify as having a disability?
  1. Yes
  2. No
4. If yes, could you briefly explain the disability?
5. Please take a moment and open the Blackboard shell for your ENG556 course. Identify a particular feature on Blackboard's shell that significantly affected or influenced your experience. How did this feature impact you?
6. Looking back on your online experience with ENG556, what factors influenced your decisions to engage more with particular discussions and less with others? Please explain.
7. Reflecting upon the various readings and videos assigned in your ENG556 course, what influenced your engagement with particular materials over others? Please explain.
8. Reflect on your answer for number 7 and discuss what has impacted your engagement with provided course materials.
9. Based on your experience in ENG556 and other online courses, how do your learning experiences differ in an online environment vs. an in-person class environment? Does each space impact your engagement? How? Please explain.
10. Considering your experience in ENG556, what did you most appreciate about learning in an online environment?
11. Considering your experience in ENG556, what do you find most challenging about learning in an online environment?
12. As you may have experienced, graduate classes are dynamic and often incorporate some degree of uncertainty/discomfort, particularly through the learning of new concepts or points of view. What helped you to navigate these uncertain/uncomfortable situations, particularly in an online environment?
13. What additional resources (if any) would have further assisted in your navigation of the ENG556 online space? Please explain.
14. Do you have any other thoughts or recommendations based on your experience in the online class and/or ASU classes in general?
15. Would you be willing to participate in a series of interviews based on your responses? Interviews will be conducted via Zoom or Google Chat (online). There will be 3 interviews total, with each interview lasting about 20-30 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled based on participants' availability.
  1. Yes

2. No

16. If yes, please include your name and ASU e-mail address:

Name:

ASU E-mail:

## **Appendix C2**

### **Interview Protocol 1 Questions-History**

#### Questions for Students Identifying as Non-Disabled

1. Please tell me about your previous learning experiences (in college or prior to college). What experiences (if any) stand out to you? Please explain.
2. Is there a metaphor you would use to describe your experience with online course interfaces? Can you explain it to me?
3. Do you receive any type of accommodations with ASU? Did you receive any accommodations in high school?
  1. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about your previous experiences with accommodations in online or on-ground learning environments?
  2. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a time where an accommodation significantly improved your learning experience?
  3. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a time where an accommodation negatively impacted your learning experience?
4. Can you discuss your relationships with others at ASU (faculty, peers, etc.)? Are there any external factors that impact your relationships with these individuals?
  1. Possible follow up: How do these factors impact your relationships?
5. Could you tell me about your previous experiences with online education (prior to ENG556)?
6. Could you tell me about a time where you experienced difficulty in an academic or informal learning environment (online or on-ground)? What contributed to this difficulty?
7. Could you tell me about a time where you excelled in an academic or informal learning environment (online or on-ground)? What positively contributed to this experience?
8. Is there anything else that you want to share with me regarding your online or on-ground formal or informal educational experiences prior to ENG556?

#### Questions for Students Identifying as Disabled

1. Please tell me about your previous learning experiences (in college or prior to college). What experiences (if any) stand out to you? Please explain.
2. On the previous survey, you identified as having a disability. Is there a metaphor you would use to describe your experience with your disability? Could you explain it to me? (For example: Writing an essay feels like running a marathon).
3. Have you registered for accommodations with the disability resource center at ASU? Could you please elaborate on why/why not?
  1. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about your previous experiences with accommodations in online or on-ground learning environments?
  2. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a time where an accommodation significantly improved your learning experience?

3. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a time where an accommodation negatively impacted your learning experience?
4. Does your disability impact your relationships with others at ASU (faculty, peers, etc.)? If yes, could you please describe how?
5. Could you tell me about your previous experiences with online education (prior to ENG556)?
6. Could you tell me about a time where you experienced difficulty in an academic or informal learning environment (online or on-ground)? What contributed to this difficulty?
7. Could you tell me about a time where you excelled in an academic or informal learning environment (online or on-ground)? What positively contributed to this experience?
8. Is there anything else that you want to share with me regarding your online or on-ground formal or

## **Appendix C3**

### **Interview Protocol 2 Questions-Experience**

#### Questions for Students Identifying as Non-Disabled

1. Please tell me about what motivated you to pursue an online MA education.
2. Did you enroll in any other online classes this semester? Which ones/why?
3. Did you have accommodations during your ENG556 course? Could you tell me about your experience with or without accommodations in this class?
  1. Possible follow up: What additional accommodations would have been useful for you in navigating this course? How might they have assisted you?
4. Could you tell me about something you discovered about yourself as a learner through your ENG556 experience?
  1. Could you elaborate upon any specific moment(s) that contributed to this learning?
  2. Possible follow up: Did the design/interface of the course contribute to, or interfere with, your self-growth as a learner? How?
5. Could you tell me about your experience engaging in your ENG556 course? Are there any experiences that stand out to you?
  1. Possible follow up: Did any aspects of the Blackboard interface contribute to these experiences? If so, which ones?
  2. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a specific experience in which you had some difficulty with some aspect of the online ENG556 course? What contributed to this difficulty?
  3. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a positive experience you had in ENG556 that may not have been available to you in an on-ground classroom environment? What contributed to this positive experience?
6. Please describe a time when you experienced discomfort or uncertainty in relation to new learning in 556?
  1. Possible follow up: Please elaborate upon what, if anything, contributed to this discomfort.
  2. Please elaborate upon what, if anything, eased this discomfort.
7. Could you tell me about a particular experience (or set of experiences) that stand(s) out to you in relation to discussion in your 556 online course?
  1. Possible follow up: Please elaborate upon what contributed to your desire/lack of desire to engage in these discussions.
  2. Possible follow up: Please explain what might have further supported your engagement in these discussions.
8. Is there anything else that you want to share with me about your experience in ENG556?

#### Questions for Students Identifying as Disabled

1. Please tell me about what motivated you to pursue an online MA education.
2. Did you enroll in any other online classes this semester? Which ones/why?



3. Did you have accommodations during your ENG556 course? Could you tell me about your experience with or without accommodations in this class?
  1. Possible follow up: What additional accommodations would have been useful for you in navigating this course? How might they have assisted you?
4. Could you tell me about something you discovered about yourself as a learner through your ENG556 experience?
  1. Could you elaborate upon any specific moment(s) that contributed to this learning?
  2. Possible follow up: Did the design/interface of the course contribute to, or interfere with, your self-growth as a learner? How?
5. Could you tell me about your experience engaging in your ENG556 course? Are there any experiences that stand out to you?
  1. Possible follow up: Did any aspects of the Blackboard interface contribute to these experiences? If so, which ones?
  2. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a specific experience in which you had some difficulty with some aspect of the online ENG556 course? What contributed to this difficulty?
  3. Possible follow up: Could you tell me about a positive experience you had in ENG556 that may not have been available to you in an on-ground classroom environment? What contributed to this positive experience?
6. Please describe a time when you experienced discomfort or uncertainty in relation to new learning in ENG 556.
  1. Possible follow up: Please elaborate upon what, if anything, contributed to this discomfort.
  2. Please elaborate upon what, if anything, eased this discomfort.
7. Could you tell me about a particular experience (or set of experiences) that stand(s) out to you in relation to discussion in your 556 online course?
  1. Possible follow up: Please elaborate upon what contributed to your desire/lack of desire to engage in these discussions.
  2. Possible follow up: Please explain what might have further supported your engagement in these discussions.
8. Is there anything else that you want to share with me about your experience in ENG556?

## **Appendix C4**

### **Interview Protocol 3 Questions- Building Knowledge**

#### Student 1:

1. You mentioned in your first interview that you very much excel at being a student. You have also mentioned that early on in life you were diagnosed with ADD and struggled in class when multiple people were talking simultaneously. Do you think your experiences with ADD at all influenced the habits you developed as a student? Can you provide some examples? What else contributed to your development of these habits?
2. You mentioned in your second interview that ASU Online was like “one big accommodation” for you, particularly because of the distractions you have experienced in the past with people speaking simultaneously in the classroom. Can you discuss the different ways that ASU online has served you as an accommodation? For example, you might discuss one instance in which the online environment directly accommodated an activity that would have been difficult to accomplish online.
3. Did ASU Online ever fail you as an accommodation? How? Can you describe one instance when it did so?
4. In your first interview, you called your online experience with digital interfaces “surprisingly immersive” because it has an “always there” feeling to it. Can you tell me a little bit more about this feeling and why it has been beneficial to you? Can you provide an example of when this immersive feeling positively benefited you? Are there any negative sides to this feeling? Can you provide me with an example?
5. You mentioned in your first interview that one instructor did a good job of curating discussion boards, particularly through her end of the week video summations. How did your other instructors handle discussion boards? Did you have a particular class in which this was not done as well? What could have made this environment better? Was there a particular class in which this was done well? What did the instructor do in terms of their design of the course?
6. You mentioned in your first interview that you did not like the way a Canvas course was designed because it was hard to navigate the discussion board due to a lack of headings. In that course, or in subsequent courses, did any instructors manage this platform (Canvas) better than others?
7. Can you describe for me a particular example of when the design of a course failed you as a student? How did you manage this experience? What advice might you give instructors who are designing courses to help them avoid these moments of design failure?
8. You mentioned in your interviews that you felt a sense of community with your classmates, particularly due to discussion boards. Would you say that you were able to develop relationships with any of your peers? If so, how? How did the design of the interface contribute to this?
9. In your second interview, you mentioned that you wished you had access to your peers’ responses/work in your ENG556 course. Do you have advice for instructors on how they might design their courses to provide more opportunities for peer support?

10. You mentioned in your second interview that the discussion board posts/responses in ENG 556 were helpful because they gave you an opportunity to see if you'd interpreted the readings correctly and allowed you to learn from your peers. Were there any other opportunities built into the design of that course (or others at ASU online) that allowed you and your peers to facilitate each other's learning experiences?
11. You mentioned in your first interview that you were surprised at the universality of experiences in your courses. Can you talk to me about an example or two regarding this universality? Was there ever a moment when you were surprised by an experience of difference in a class?
12. You mentioned the issue of time in your first two interviews, particularly in relation to your busy lifestyle with work and a family. Can you discuss one or two instances during your time at ASU online where time constraints/expectations impacted you? How did you deal with these constraints? What might your instructor have done differently (if anything) to help you manage these constraints?
13. In your second interview, you mentioned that certain assignments were worded in a way that made it hard for you to grasp the full scope of the project. What would have helped you in that situation? What advice do you have for instructors designing complex assignments like this in an online environment?
14. What other advice do you have for future instructors at ASU online in designing their courses? What do you think they should make sure to consider?

#### Student 2

1. In your first and second interviews, you mentioned that you received accommodations (double time on tests, flexible time with assignment deadlines, alternative testing locations) in the past. How effective did you feel these accommodations were? Did they help alleviate the feeling of "running of time" that you discussed, specifically in a 6-week online class? What could have made them more helpful for this environment?
2. You briefly discussed the concept of balance in your first interview. What do you think it means to be balanced as a graduate student? During which classes in your MA at ASU did feel like you successfully achieved this balance/why? During which did you feel unsuccessful/ why?
3. In your first interview, you said that you struggled to connect with your peers because you would often post late and you would not get the same level of feedback as those who posted sooner. In your second interview, you mentioned how a professor mediated communication in the class. How could your professor have created an environment where you felt more connected to your peers? How would you have preferred communications with your peers to be?
4. You mentioned in your second interview that a professor would pull comments from discussion board posts and discuss them in videos in class and that you appreciated this practice. Would you consider this to be a form of listening? What other kinds of listening practices did you experience as a student in your ENG 556 course or other courses through ASU online? Which practices do you think were most effective/why?

What kinds of habits might instructors in online courses encourage their students to engage in to demonstrate successful listening skills?

5. You said in your first interview that you prefer to communicate and be taught in stories, rather than in PowerPoints and infographics. What makes a verbal story different for you than stories told in the form of PowerPoint, infographics, etc.? What kinds or forms of stories would be/have been most helpful to you as a student?
6. You mentioned in your second interview that your ENG 556 course was appealing to you because the instructor made herself very reachable to the class. What kinds of things did she do to indicate this reachability? What have other professors done to indicate similar accessibility? What differentiates behaviors between successfully reachable/accessible professors and those who are not reachable/accessible?
7. You mentioned in your first interview that you provided one professor with feedback on your experience during a composition studies course. Did this influence at the way the instructor taught the class while you were in it? Do you have any advice to professors for communicating productively with their students before, during, and after the semester?
8. You mentioned in your first interview that one instructor would open quizzes on Saturday mornings and close them on Sundays and that this was difficult for you because of your work schedule. In this case, what change to the course construction would have been more helpful to you?
9. You mentioned in your second interview that it felt like some of the material had been written by geniuses. What specifically made the reading material seem inaccessible to you as a reader? What would have made it more accessible?
10. In your second interview, you mentioned that you were intimidated by the advertisement of a particular class. Thinking about the advertisement of that course and other courses at ASU online, what makes certain course advertisements appear accessible to you and what makes them appear inaccessible/intimidating? What might you recommend to professors and staff of ASU online in designing such course advertisements in the future?
11. Do you have any other general recommendations to offer professors of online courses in relation to their design of their courses, based upon your experiences at ASU online?

### Student 3

1. In your second interview, you mentioned that you wished courses were more designed for people “on the go” or from various walks of life. What would this design look like to you as a student? As an instructor?
2. In your first interview, you discussed how your job involves nontraditional working hours. In what ways have your MYASU courses taken into consideration the fact that many students like yourself have non-traditional schedules? In what ways did certain courses not take this into consideration? What are some recommendations you have to online instructors for creating a learning environment for a range of student schedules?
3. In your second interview, you mentioned that the TESOL philosophy states that “anything goes” and that you related to this philosophy, but that it was very different

from what you experienced in your English classes. What does this “everything goes” mentality look like? How might instructors design their courses to reflect this philosophy?

4. In your second interview, you discussed how the university claims to support its students but that it is in fact not designed for that. Can you give me some specific examples of experiences you had where you felt that the university could have been more supportive and how?
5. In your first interview, you mentioned that because of the length of the online classes, it is hard to get help from resources like the writing center. Do you think that courses through ASU online are set up in a way that allows graduate students to utilize available resources? How else might these classes be set up to allow graduate students to utilize those resources more effectively?
6. In your first interview, you mentioned feeling a lack of support in a statistics class, and that you wanted real-time interaction with your instructor. What would this interaction have looked like? What other ways could the course (or any course at ASU online) have been redesigned to be more supportive for the students? In what courses have you felt a sense of support and why?
7. In your first interview, you discussed feeling a lack of connection to your peers due to the online environment, but you were able to briefly connect with one student who lost his mother, particularly by giving feedback. What specifically allowed you to connect with this student or others in relation to feedback or other communications? How might instructors redesign online courses to allow students to make better connections in their classrooms?
8. In your first interview, you mentioned that one of your professors and the students in his class monitored your responses and made you feel that your voice was not fully welcome in the classroom environment. What practices/habits were put in place by the professor that contributed to this happening? How did this impact you as a student? How might the professor have encouraged more encouraging habits of listening by the students in the class?
9. During our first interview, you mentioned that communication can be challenging in online courses due to the misinterpretation of texts. How might professors design their courses to anticipate and limit these challenges, based upon your experience with online courses? Did you have professors who did so effectively? How?
10. You mentioned in your first interview that the material in at least one of your literature courses was hard to fully grasp/cover in the allotted time. How did the material/assignments match up with the 7- week timeframe and online environment? What might the instructor have done differently when designing the course?
11. In your first interview, we discussed issues of “unwritten prerequisites” in certain classes, where professors had expectations/standards that required previous experiences that you did not have. How were these “unwritten prerequisites” communicated to you and how did these impact your learning in the classroom? How might professors design their online courses differently based upon what you experienced?
12. You mentioned in your second interview that “it all comes back to the student” in terms of responsibility, and that students don’t recognize the “political game” that

- they are a part of. As a student, can you describe what this feels like? Can you talk to me more about what you mean by the “political game” that students are part of?
13. In your first and second interview, you mentioned that a major reason for choosing online education was due to the passing of your boyfriend and its impact on your mental health at the time. Based upon your comfort level, can you talk to me about how this impacted you in your daily life? You mentioned that you “could not function in society”--can you speak further about this? What about online education was different and allowed you to function better than in a face-to-face environment? Were there any accommodations that were helpful to you currently? What other accommodations might have helped you further?
  14. Is there anything further that you would like future professors to consider in their design of online courses? Do you have any other recommendations for design features that they might utilize?

**Appendix C5**  
**Frequency of Primary Codes**

<b>Level 1 Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Architecture	92	110	146	348
Communication	38	52	93	183
Agency	35	33	112	180
Embodiment	47	22	43	112
Productivity	42	12	48	102
Sense	30	17	52	99
Time	16	49	18	82
Disability	23	31	22	76
Movement	26	5	40	71

**Appendix C6**  
**Architecture Sub-Codes**

<b>Architecture Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Class design	76	101	100	277
Program design	3	7	31	41
LMS Design	13	2	5	20
Institution design	0	0	10	10

**Appendix C7**  
**Communication Sub-Codes**

<b>Communication Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Connection	19	24	35	78
Disconnection	13	17	30	60
Supportive	1	10	14	25
Monitored	5	1	14	20



**Appendix C8**  
**Agency Sub-Codes**

<b>Agency Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Independence	9	12	41	62
No agency	8	12	32	52
Interdependence	9	1	25	35
Autonomy	9	7	14	30

**Appendix C9**  
**Embodiment Sub-Codes**

<b>Embodiment Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Experiential Difference	17	9	12	38
Class Considerations	14	5	14	33
Embodied Difference	9	6	8	23
Universal	4	0	6	10
Geographic Difference	3	2	2	7

**Appendix C10**  
**Productivity Sub-Codes**

<b>Productivity Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Capital Value	40	11	38	89
Progress	2	1	10	13

**Appendix C11**  
**Sense Sub-Codes**

<b>Sense Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Satisfaction	11	9	19	39
Stress	13	7	16	36
Dissatisfaction	6	1	9	16
Isolation	0	0	4	4
Belonging	0	0	4	4

**Appendix C12**  
**Time Sub-Codes**

<b>Time Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Without time	9	17	5	31
Flexibility	2	17	5	24
Deadlines	3	14	4	21
Standard	2	1	4	7

**Appendix C13**  
**Disability Sub-Codes**

<b>Disability Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Accommodation	7	27	4	38
Problem	6	1	13	20
Diagnosis	9	0	0	9
Diversity	1	3	5	9

**Appendix C14**  
**Movement Sub-Codes**

<b>Movement Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Sally</b>	<b>Harry</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	<b>Total</b>
Sideways movement	20	4	22	46
Access	1	0	12	13
Linear Movement	5	1	3	9
No access	0	0	3	3

**Appendix C15**  
**Flexible Reflection Assignment Example**

In lieu of a final exam, I ask that you complete a final class reflection. Please review your rough and final drafts of all completed projects on Canvas and complete a final reflection on your learning. Your reflection may take any of the following formats: a 1–2-page personal narrative of your experience, a 1–2-page letter to a future student in the class, an infographic, a video, or a podcast recording. Below, I have included a list of questions that you may use as prompts for your response.

1. How would you describe the course to another student?
2. What have you learned about business writing this semester? What have you learned about yourself as a business writer?
3. How has your writing changed?
4. How might you apply your learning from this course within other academic or professional contexts?
5. In what ways did you use your previous knowledge or experiences in completing class assignments?
6. How did your peers contribute to your learning this semester?
7. What were your proudest moments in the course?

## **Appendix C16**

### **Student Feedback-Initial Inquiry**

Timeframe: 1 month before class begins

Hello! I hope you are having a great summer. I am excited to begin our fall semester. To help me in designing our course, I hope you might take a few moments to answer the following questions. Please include as much (or as little) information as you feel comfortable.

1. How do you incorporate technology into your current life (in and out of class)?
2. Have you taken online courses in the past? If so, what did you most enjoy about those courses and what did you find most challenging? If not, what are you most excited and/or nervous about in relation to your first online course?
3. What unique knowledge or experiences do you bring to this course? (Consider: cultural background, personal or professional interests, your academic or professional knowledge or experiences, etc.)
4. What are your goals in taking this course?
5. Do you have any specific learning needs or life circumstances that you would like me to know about?
6. What can I do as an instructor to help you succeed in this course?
7. What resources have you used in the past to support your academic goals?
8. What do you value in a class community?
9. Is there anything else you would like me to know at this time?

## **Appendix C17**

### **Student Feedback-Student Intake Form**

Timeframe: First Week of Class

Hello and welcome to our class! To help me to get to know you more as a person, learner, and student, please take a few moments to complete this brief questionnaire.

1. What are your gender pronouns? For example, mine are she/her/hers
2. Is there a name you prefer to be called besides the one listed on the roster?
3. Do you anticipate any difficulties with technology during our online class this semester? Please explain.
4. After reviewing our Canvas shell, syllabus, and course content, what questions do you have? What are you excited about? What concerns do you have?
5. Tell me about yourself as a student and writer. What are your goals for this class?
6. Do you have any specific learning needs or life circumstances that you would like me to know about?
7. What class or university resources have been helpful to your learning in the past?
8. What do you value in a class community?
9. What can I do as your instructor to help support you in this class?
10. What can your peers do to help support you in this class?
11. Is there anything else you would like me to know as your instructor?

## **Appendix C18**

### **Student Feedback-Biweekly Check-in Example 1**

Hi everyone! Please answer the following questions about your experience in the course thus far:

1. Thinking of the various tools we are using in our class (Discussion Boards, Quizzes, Slack, Yellowdig, etc.) which tools have been most useful to your learning? Which tools have been most challenging to use? Have you faced any issues related to accessibility in relation to these tools? Please explain.
2. What tools or activities have allowed you to connect with your peers? What difficulties have you faced in making peer connections?
3. Based on your experience so far, would any changes to the class organization, schedule, assignments, or materials be helpful to your learning? Please explain.
4. Has anything changed in relation to your needs or life circumstances that I should know about?
5. Which resources have been most helpful to you this semester? Are there particular resources that might assist you further?
6. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experience at this time?

**Appendix C19**  
**Student Feedback- Biweekly Check-in Example 2**

Please discuss your experiences and/or feelings related to the class so far. Feel free to use a GIF or meme, but please provide some insight into its connection to your experience.

**Appendix C20**  
**Student Feedback- Personal Email Example**

Hi Sally,

I hope you are doing well. I am reaching out to each student in the class to check in and ask how you are doing at this point in the semester. I invite you to share any thoughts or questions you have about our course at this time. Also, if there is anything in relation to your learning needs or life circumstances that may have changed that you would like to share with me at this time, please feel free to do so.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns related to our class going forward, please know that you can always contact me via email.

Thank you for your efforts in the course so far!

Best wishes,

Kristin Bennett

## **Appendix C21: Student Feedback-Mid-Semester Survey**

Hi everyone! I hope you are doing well. Please take a few moments to complete this mid-semester survey to help me gain insight into your experience in our class so far.

- Please open our Canvas class shell. Which tools (i.e., Discussion Boards, Yellowdig, Slack, Quizzes, etc.) have been most helpful to your learning at this point in our semester? Which tools have been least helpful? Please explain why.
- Please discuss your sense of connection and community in the class. What has helped you most to connect with your peers? What has proven most challenging in making these connections?
- What difficulties have you faced in completing homework or major project assignments? What has been most enjoyable for you?
- Have you experienced any issues with accessibility or use in relation to course materials or tools? What might help to improve class accessibility? Please explain.
- What resources (in or out of class) have been most helpful in supporting you this semester? Are there additional resources that might assist you further?
- If you could change anything about the design of the class, what would it be and why?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know about your class experience so far?

## **Appendix C22: Instructor Guidance on Diverse Class Engagement**

Please note that while tools like Yellowdig and Canvas may seem to promote standard class engagement, I encourage you to contribute to class from your unique positionality and perspective. What this means is that responses and activities do not seek a single, “right,” response, but instead encourage you to examine and interpret readings and assignments from your unique position and background. Because of that, I support and anticipate a wide range of responses to class assignments and discussions.



**Appendix C23 Institutional Review Board Approval for Study on Digital Interfaces**



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Elenore Long

English  
480/965-3197  
Elenore.Long@asu.edu

Dear Elenore Long:

On 10/19/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Accessing Digital Interfaces: An Analysis of Student Engagement with ENG556 Online
Investigator:	Elenore Long
IRB ID:	STUDY00008976
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• E-mail for interview recruitment, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Student Resources List, Category: Resource list;</li> <li>• Survey Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• Interview consent, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Survey Consent, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• E-mail for Survey Recruitment , Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• IRB Form Updated 10/17/18, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> </ul>

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/19/2018.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Kristin Bennett  
Kristin Bennett