race theory on work in composition will be slight. What if we instead drew on such theory to ask why so many composition programs still routinely sort students into categories—"basic," "mainstream," "honors," "exempt"—that correspond insidiously with divisions of race, ethnicity, and social class? What if we worked less at changing what teachers and students talk about and more on changing who is in the room? How might we create programs that speak to the needs and interests of minority and working-class students or that recruit faculty of color to join our work? I don’t have any ready answers to such questions—although, ironically, I am confident enough in my ability to lead an informed classroom discussion about race in America. But that’s my point. The most pressing task facing us now is not retheorizing the writing classroom but reforming the institutions in which we work.

So, while I agree with Lu that we need to help students learn how to analyze corporate discourse and to resist pressures to turn the academy into a mere training ground for corporate berths,” I also wonder about the power of a form of critique that rarely circulates outside the classroom. In Work Time, Evan Watkins points to the disconnect between the subversive value that English professors like to assign to the work they do in their courses and the ways in which a good grade earned in English often functions outside those courses simply as proof for future employers that a student is verbally adept. The ability to analyze corporate discourse, for instance, will surely be a prized asset for any student planning to enter the corporate world. And while critiquing Microsoft ads may awaken some students to the workings of power in language, such a task is also likely to function as simply one more assignment to be completed for others. I don’t think this is a problem that can be solved at the level of the individual classroom. However, I do think that writing programs might throw some static into the hegemonic flow of grades, meanings, and values by making certain kinds of subaltern intellectual work more visible—by sponsoring student journals, Web sites, and essay contests, for instance; or by listing writing courses by instructor, title, and description (rather than simply by section) in college catalogs; or by creating forums for college faculty to discuss their work as teachers with one another; or by publishing goals and standards for composition courses that do more than simply echo tired calls for clarity and correctness.

I have long been committed to working with beginning undergraduates, and my hunch is that Olson, Lu, and I teach similar sorts of writing courses. Certainly, I admire the kinds of work with students that they describe in their essays. However, to achieve the political goals that Olson and Lu argue for, I think we need to speak and act not just as teachers (and not just to one another) but as public advocates of reform in our programs, departments, colleges, and universities. This

What worried me about the conference of writing program administrators at Miami University was how little talk there was about administering writing programs. I heard much that interested me about teaching after September 11, about ways of defining composition as a field of study, about how taking on an administrative position can redirect the trajectory of a career, and especially about how we might rethink the work we do with students in writing courses—but I heard little about how the efforts of individual teachers might be imagined and supported as part of the collective work of a program. Summing up the history and prospects of composition for the special millennium issue of *PMLA*, David Bartholomae writes that “the problem of staffing will dominate the next decade” ("Composition” 1954), suggesting that the structures of programs—who teaches, with what training, and for what pay—will continue to decisively shape what goes on in the writing classrooms within them. These are precisely the sorts of institutional issues that many WPAs are well positioned to influence, but we cannot do so simply by advocating particular approaches to teaching. We need instead to learn how to think about programs as well as classrooms, about the workplace as well as the curriculum of composition.

In responding to the essays here by Gary A. Olson and Min-Zhan Lu, then, I find myself trying to imagine what consequences their views might hold for me not only as an individual teacher or intellectual but also as someone charged with directing and representing the work of a program faculty. So, for instance, when Olson argues that critical race theory can help us “understand that our institutions are not simply reflective of racial inequity but are constitutive of that inequity and, thus, that we must structure our pedagogies and writing programs with great care,” I would like to know more about what such care might involve. If it merely means urging mostly white, middle-class teachers to change how they discuss race with mostly white, middle-class students, then the impact of critical
This Field in the Future: Shaped Composition Studies in the Past and Will Shape What Political and Social Issues Have Taken up in Books Like This.

The intellectual and institutional work of composition I hope they will soon be doing we teach. These are original questions for those of us charged with directing programs whose faculty more truly reflect the social and class diversity of the south.

With continued this line of thought by asking how we can try to build within race theory more than just a subject of classroom talk and writing done by white men.

Joseph Harris