

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE IN THE NEOLIBERAL  
ACADEMY: THREE CASES OF NEW PROGRAMS IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES AT  
PUBLIC REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education–Doctor of Philosophy

2019

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## ABSTRACT

### INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE IN THE NEOLIBERAL ACADEMY: THREE CASES OF NEW PROGRAMS IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES AT PUBLIC REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

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Robert Loren Hill

Given the contemporary context in which scholars debate the “crisis in the humanities,” this study addressed how and why arts and humanities fields in higher education are changing. An overarching theme to much of these debates, crisis or no crisis, is neoliberalism, a political and economic philosophy that is pervasive to higher education in the United States. Changes in arts and humanities that manifest neoliberal effects may serve as a bellwether for broader changes in higher education and threaten the positive qualities of arts and humanities education. Thus, this study takes up the following questions: 1) how and why do arts and humanities curricular changes proceed in a neoliberal higher education context, and 2) how do individuals understand and enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum change processes? To address these questions, this study considered three cases of significant curriculum change (e.g., development of a new major) in arts and humanities at public regional universities that occurred in the last five years. Neo-institutional theory (i.e., organizational theory suggesting that institutions within a field become more alike over time) undergirded the conceptual approach to the study, which specifically brought to bear the concepts of sensemaking and institutional logics to emphasize agency in organizational change.

The three cases presented in this study considered each the development of the Artistic Media Technologies (a pseudonym) major at Snowy Valley University, the development of the digital humanities minor at University of Northern Waters, and the development of the writing

major at Little Falls State University (all university names are pseudonyms). For each case, data included semi-structured interviews, documents, and additional information collected during the time the researcher spent on site. Manifestations of academic, democratic, family, and neoliberal (i.e., managerial and market) logics emerged as salient in arts and humanities curriculum changes. These logics were evident in three categories: collaboration and hierarchy; doing what's "cool and good for students;" and advancing academic fields, scholarship, and arts and humanities. Within these three categories, evidence of coexisting and combined (i.e., hybrid) logics emerged, suggesting that faculty and academic staff strategically combine aspects of multiple, competing institutions to manage disparate pressures on arts and humanities curriculum. These findings suggest arts and humanities programs take various paths through curriculum change, including aggressively asserting the value of arts and humanities, passively accepting changes, adapting to neoliberal pressures, developing grassroots resistance to neoliberal norms, and collaborating with other fields outside the scope of arts and humanities.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes a village to raise a dissertation. My village has been invaluable for me these last few years while I wrote this manuscript and kept doing all the other #gradlife things.

Importantly, I want to acknowledge that many people carved paths before me that allowed me to do this work and live my life more fully as I proceeded through my doctoral journey. I stand on the shoulders of queer and trans ancestors and hope to live up to the promise of serving our communities and our people in ways that support the thriving and growth of future communities. Additionally, my contemporary queer and trans family – Sam, Barrack, Sami, Alex, and so many more – have been my primary source of resilience, support, and joy. I cannot thank you enough my dear ones.

My faculty guides on this journey have not only supported my academic growth, they have enabled me to thrive. First, I am thankful for my advisor and dissertation chair, Kris Renn, who has shown me grace and humor the last five years as my mentor. Thank you to my committee: Leslie Gonzales, Riyad Shahjahan, and Joanna Bosse, who have challenged me and guided the way for me to grow in multiple areas of theory and practice. Thank you too to Roger Baldwin, who guided the early stages of this project and in so doing helped me build a firm foundation for the last two years' research and writing, and Juliet Hess, whose mentoring regarding arts in society directed my thinking and understanding of many of the issues and concepts I address here. Finally, Julie Funk, my mentor and sounding board who helped me grow as a scholar-practitioner in ways I could not have imagined a few years ago.

My community of scholars – including those within and beyond Michigan State University and the field of higher education – consists of many incredible people I am proud to

call my friends and colleagues. My cohort has been an unwavering source of support and I feel lucky to have had that group of friends and colleagues throughout these last five years. Thank you especially to Emiko Blalock, my co-conspirator and thought partner since our first semester of the program, Michelle Allmendinger, whose work through the dissertation a year earlier helped me find my way, and Aliya Beavers, my writing buddy. So many others in the HALE program have been invaluable influences in various ways – including, but not limited to, Erich Pitcher, Qiana Green, Claire Gonyo, Sapna Naik, Nate Credit, Kayon Hall, and Chelsea Noble. Beyond HALE, my writing partner April Greenwood has helped me organize and make time for this work and has been a constant companion in this last run-up to the final draft. Beyond MSU, I am grateful for my community of scholars who have checked in with each other and watched out for each other, including but not limited to Amanda Mollet, Laila McCloud, Estee Hernández, Brittany Williams, and Gordon Palmer.

I thank my family for being my evergreen cheerleaders and sources of support. I am so privileged to have the family that I do. I don't know where I'd be without my immediate family: Mom and Dad; Jim and Sarah; “my” kids, David and Ella; and my orange monster, Caps Lock. I feel honored to be part of a lineage of educators in my own family: Gram, Mom, Auntie Amy, Aunt Kate, Uncle Dave, Aunt Mary Ann, and many more. More educators still have been part of my extended and chosen family, whose influence and support saw me through to this point: Alma Becker, Carolyn Anderson, Marie Glotzbach, Lisa Grady-Willis, and Barbara and James Pelowski.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for the 20 educators – faculty, administrators, and instructional staff – I met with over the course of 2018. I am privileged to call these people my

participants. Their insights, eloquence, and kindness made this dissertation a delight, rather than a chore. I can't thank you all enough. I hope this work does justice to your stories and wisdom.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past several years, cuts to arts and humanities programs (e.g., Kelderman, 2018; Smith, 2019) and the shift of many broad-access institutions away from liberal arts and toward vocational fields (e.g., Bates, 2014; Flaherty, 2017a; Smith, 2019) have raised concerns about the future of arts and humanities in higher education. These concerns are part of the so-called “crisis in the humanities,” a crisis spurred on in part by flat or declining enrollments (American Academy of Arts and Sciences [AAAS], 2015; Brint, 2011; Brint, Riddle, Turk-Bicakci, & Levy, 2005; Di Leo, 2013; Flaherty, 2017a) and program closure or cessation (AAAS, 2015; Brint, Proctor, Mulligan, Rotondi, & Hanneman, 2012) in these fields, as well as public figures denigrating arts and humanities education (Editors, 2016; Kleinman, 2016), and the Trump Administration’s interest in cutting funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities (McGlone, 2019). Even if there is no crisis, as Hutner and Mohamed (2016) argued, there remains a great deal to unpack and understand in order to make sense of the state of arts and humanities in higher education today.

An overarching theme to much of these debates, crisis or no crisis, is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism describes a set of beliefs and practices grounded in free-market capitalism, free trade, and the reduction of the role of the state to ensuring economic and entrepreneurial freedoms (Harvey, 2005). Although the form neoliberalism takes can vary based on context (Ong, 2006), as an economic principle it is pervasive to the point of ubiquity in the Western world (Giroux, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ward, 2012; Williams, 2016). Neoliberalism as an ideal rejects concepts like public goods, except to the extent that such goods serve the market, and promotes rugged individualism. Higher education has seen dramatic changes over the last few decades as a result of neoliberal policies and practices. These changes

include the shifting of costs from the state to individual students, resulting in significant student loan debt; rising managerialism and declining faculty power, independence, and freedom; and moving the activities of the academy closer to market, for example by encouraging research that can lead to money-earning patents (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

This study takes up curriculum changes within arts and humanities fields as a bellwether for broader changes in the context of neoliberalism. The curriculum is perhaps the most important aspect of an institution of higher education; curriculum is both a practical blueprint of what an institution does, and an ideological statement of what is vital for that institution's graduates to know. Thus, I argue, changes in curriculum signal not only changes in the practice of teaching or content delivery, but changes in an institution's (and, at the program level, a department's) values.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A cadre of scholars and critics have raised concerns connected to the so-called crisis in the humanities (e.g., Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Hutner & Mohamed, 2016; Miller, 2012; Nussbaum, 2010). Changes in arts and humanities fields, some scholars (e.g., Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; López-Calvo, 2019; Nussbaum, 2010) have argued, threatens the positive qualities such fields can provide. For example, arts and humanities education is connected to improved student learning and development with regard to citizenship and higher-order thinking skills (Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Kindelan, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010). Arts and humanities curricula may also offer unique opportunities for humanizing antidotes to the dehumanizing effects of neoliberalism (López-Calvo, 2019; Nussbaum, 1997; Williams, 2016).

Furthermore, changes of arts and humanities fields in the neoliberal context may signal the furthering of neoliberal ideals throughout the academy, such as the de-professionalization of



faculty (e.g., adjunctification, erosion or elimination of tenure, heightened oversight of practices such that academic freedom is threatened; see Olssen & Peters, 2005) and the movement of curricula in other fields closer to market demands, regardless of the student and social needs of those fields. In these ways, changes in arts and humanities curricula may serve as a bellwether for broader, neoliberalizing changes in higher education at large. I specifically draw attention to arts and humanities at public regional universities (McClure, 2018) because of these institutions' broader access missions and relative sensitivity to the market (Henderson, 2007; Orphan, 2018; Schneider & Deane, 2015). These qualities of public regional universities further emphasize the nature of my study as a bellwether for potential neoliberalizing changes in the future.

All in all, changes in arts and humanities programs in the neoliberal context may threaten the learning and development of students and signal problematic changes to other aspects of the academy that could be harmed by neoliberal policy and practice. Given this problem, in this study I sought to attend to changing arts and humanities programs in higher education.

Specifically, I asked these research questions:

1. How and why do arts and humanities curricular changes proceed in a neoliberal higher education context?
2. How do individuals understand and enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum change processes?

These questions orient this study toward changes in arts and humanities higher education programs using neo-institutional theory at the micro (i.e., individual change agent) level. I use the term “curriculum change agents” to mean any individual involved in a particular curriculum change; in this study, faculty and staff alike emerged as curriculum change agents. Using multiple case study (Stake, 2006), I identified three sites where arts and humanities program

underwent a significant change (e.g., development of a major) in the last five years. Within each case, I applied an institutional logics framework to identify plural logics at play in curriculum changes. By identifying logics guiding individuals' thoughts and actions, I illuminated details of how and why arts and humanities programs change in their particular contexts.

## **Background**

Arts and humanities, neoliberalism, and the college curriculum are broad concepts that are central to this study. Because I draw on a wide range of literature across disciplines, some of the concepts and ideas I refer to in this study may differ from scholar to scholar, and/or from field to field. Thus, I provide some definitions and contexts for how I use these terms here.

**Arts and humanities.** I discuss arts and humanities as a singular category throughout this study. Although much of the literature I refer to addressed humanities singularly, I highlight here why I describe arts and humanities together. First, the bounds of disciplines included in the humanities are unclear. Rather than a focus on disciplines, descriptions of the humanities instead tend to focus on aspects of “the human experience” (e.g., Burdick, Drucker, Lunenfeld, Presner, and Schnapp, 2012; Stanford Humanities Center, n.d.). Second, and connected to my first point, several definitions of humanities include arts fields (e.g., Burdick et al., 2012; López-Calvo, 2019; Nussbaum, 2010; Stanford Humanities Center, n.d.). The argument to include arts within the category of humanities is that artistic disciplines, including dance, music, studio art, and theatre, attend to notions of humanity and the experience of being human in ways comparable to the approaches of humanities disciplines that would not be categorized as arts (e.g., English literature, foreign languages, history, philosophy). I embrace this broad definition of humanities, but nevertheless use the term “arts and humanities” to make clear my inclusion of explicitly artistic fields in this study. My usage also echoes Nussbaum’s (2010) landmark work whose

contributions are vital for the foundations of the present study; in her work, she made recurring references to “humanities and arts.”

*The good, the bad, and the ugly of arts and humanities.* I also elaborate on relevant qualities of arts and humanities. Arts and humanities fields are connected with positive student learning outcomes (Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Kindelan, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010). Nussbaum (2010) argued the humanities are “a particularly dangerous enemy of obtuseness” (p. 23), which points to the value of these fields in this anti-intellectual contemporary period (López-Calvo, 2019). The authors who contributed to López-Calvo and Lux’s (2019) volume would concur, having argued that humanities fields provide a humanistic embrace of knowledge that rejects right-wing rejection of facts prevalent in the so-called “post-truth” era (López-Calvo, 2019, p. 7).

At the same time, the tendency in the humanities to embrace Western civilization may serve to further a white supremacist agenda (Miller, 2012). This tendency suggests arts and humanities fields’ complicity in oppression. Clashes over the canon and what should be included in the study of fields like history and English over the last several decades (see Newman, 2019; Thelin, 2011) also point to hegemonic norms within arts and humanities fields that reveal how these fields can further oppressive ends. Nevertheless, I concur with scholars who suggest that arts and humanities hold the potential to address oppressive norms. I do not mean to suggest that arts and humanities are fundamentally anti-oppressive, but rather that these fields can serve pluralistic, democratic, and anti-oppressive ends (see, for example, López-Calvo, 2019; Newman, 2019; Nussbaum, 2010). Further, I argue, as others have (e.g., Allington, Brouillette, & Golumbia, 2016; Giroux, 2014; López-Calvo, 2019) that the neoliberal paradigm contributes to arts and humanities’ potential to further oppression. Thus, embracing the anti-oppressive

potential of arts and humanities also involves addressing how neoliberalism may negatively affect the nature of these fields in higher education.

**Neoliberalism.** Neoliberalism is a political economic philosophy that suggests that all activities the state or other entities might control are best handled by a free market, unfettered or very minimally hampered by state regulations (Harvey, 2005). As Harvey (2005) explained, Neoliberalism... proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 2)

Similarly, Olssen and Peters (2005) put forth that the core tenets of neoliberalism are the prioritization of the self-interested individual as an economic actor, free market economics, laissez-faire perspectives and distrust of government regulation, and commitment to free trade. Together, Harvey and Olssen and Peters paint a picture of neoliberalism as a theory that emphasizes freedom through unfettered markets with a strong emphasis on individualism. Ong (2005) added to this emphasis on individual freedom by suggesting that neoliberalism was not just an economic ideal, but also an ethical one that holds self-responsibility in the highest regard. Neoliberal thought thus holds individual liberties above all else; indeed, early neoliberal leader Margaret Thatcher declared that there was “no such thing as society, only individual men and women” (Harvey, 2005, p. 23). Such a focus on individualism leads to the prioritization of individual freedoms over any social goods.

Some consequences of neoliberalism include “the financialization of everything” (Harvey, 2005, p. 33), which is to say that all things can (and should) be monetized in neoliberal

society, and significant upward redistribution of wealth (Harvey, 2005). Today, neoliberalism pervades political and economic thought. As examples, Harvey (2005) found that right- and left-wing economic thinkers alike take neoliberal principles for granted, and Giroux (2014) pointed to the free market-emphasis rhetoric of former U.S. presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama (see also Harvey, 2005; Hutner & Mohamed, 2016). And although Harvey wrote on neoliberalism over a decade ago, his finding that reorganization of tax laws to benefit the wealthy echoes today, with the U.S. having passed a tax law in 2017 that made drastic cuts for wealthy citizens and corporations (Zarrolì, 2019). Neoliberalism “constitutes the hegemonic discourse of western [sic] nation states” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 314). In being “hegemonic,” no aspect of life in the Western world is untouched by neoliberal thought; it is pervasive to the point of ubiquity (Giroux, 2014; Ward, 2012). Even beyond the Western world, Ong (2005) argued, neoliberalism is used as a government technology in various ways to capitalize on human power and to reconfigure the valuing of lives to correspond to market values. Although Ong thus complicated neoliberalism as a strictly Western phenomenon, her case studies confirm the global presence of neoliberal thought.

***Neoliberalism and higher education.*** The pervasiveness of neoliberalism as an economic and political organization of state and market is revealed in higher education in the shifting economic burden from state to individual and the entrepreneurial and fundraising activities of public and private universities alike (Giroux, 2014). Canaan and Shumar (2008) argued that neoliberalism has two major implications for higher education:

First, that [higher education] institutions should compete to sell their services to student “customers” in an educational marketplace, and second, that these institutions should

produce specialized, highly trained workers with high-tech knowledge that will enable the nation and its elite workers to compete “freely” on a global economic stage. (pp. 4-5)

This focus on students as customers and turning students into workers has brought with it an emphasis on the private good mission of the university over higher education as a public good (Giroux, 2014; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Newfield, 2016; Smith, 2011; Vander Kloet & Aspenlieder, 2013).

Drawing on Olssen and Peters (2005), I put forth a third major implication of neoliberalism on higher education: the (attempted or enacted) transformation of the academic workforce into a managerialistic, accountability-oriented set of workers designed to be replaceable in order to meet the student ends identified by Canaan and Shumar. In laying out the problem this study addresses, I described this attempted or enacted transformation of the academic workforce as the “de-professionalization of faculty” and mentioned dimensions such as erosion or elimination of tenure and threats against academic freedom. These changes are neoliberal in emphasizing workers as replaceable widgets and threaten the ability for higher education to meet its many missions (Torres, 2011). Further, the neoliberal focus on accountability and the presumed (i.e., market-oriented) needs of students that threatens to change the academic workforce may also threaten to undo any curriculum that does not clearly relate to the market and job-related goals.

Shifting toward the private good has manifested in a variety of ways including decreased state funding for higher education and the emphasis on higher education as a site for job training (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Kleinman, 2016; Newfield, 2016). Rhetoric and policy have pointed sharply toward the conception of the academy as a place that prepares young people for the workforce, rather than as a place that prepares them to think critically and participate in society

beyond the job market (Camera, 2017; Kleinman, 2016). In a climate that so strongly favors career preparation over other missions of higher education (Brint, 2011), citizenship and critical thinking skills are only as valuable as they are perceived to be valuable for employment.

Giroux (2014) has suggested that “the humanities in particular” (p. 16) are under attack in the present neoliberal environment. Indeed, other scholars have also noted biases against the arts and humanities in recent years (e.g., Di Leo, 2013; Editors, 2016; Hutner & Mohamed, 2016; Kleinman, 2016; López-Calvo, 2019; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010; Williams, 2016). Some policymakers have gone as far as to criticize the very existence of some arts and humanities fields in the academy (Editors, 2016; Kleinman, 2016). Former Florida and North Carolina governors Rick Scott and Pat McCrory scoffed at majors in humanities and social sciences, and proposed budgets that would punish studies in such fields (Kleinman, 2016). As Kleinman (2016) explained, other governors (namely Rick Perry in Texas and Scott Walker in Wisconsin) proposed similar budgets, but without remarks explicitly attacking arts and humanities. Instead, the popular phrasing has shifted to emphasize vocationalism; in today’s climate, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos continues to put forth such rhetoric (Hackman, 2019), which avoids verbal attack on the humanities while still aiming to undo arts and humanities monetarily.

**Curriculum.** In my review of literature, I have found no single, agreed-upon definition or framework of college curriculum. Indeed, one may argue that given the myriad perspectives and epistemologies within higher education, it is anathema to so singularly define a concept such as curriculum. That said, I will explain some important notions of curriculum that guide this study here.

The curriculum encompasses a variety of purposes, content, activities, and vehicles for transmission. Ratcliff (1997) described,

Curricular purposes are directed, influenced, and shaped by the academic disciplines and applied fields of study, by student expectations, prior learning and abilities, and by social, political, and economic pressures from the society at large. These forces, internal and external, interact dynamically to define what the curriculum is as well as to create the expectations as to what it should be. (p. 18)

Thinking of curriculum as a dynamic interaction is useful, both to understanding why it is hard to pin down a definition, and to express the many aspects that curriculum affects and is affected by, as Ratcliff expresses. In their notable academic plan model, Lattuca and Stark (2009) expressed the dynamic nature of curriculum as an important attribute of academic planning. The dynamic interplays in their model include those between purposes and content, and between educational outcomes and the environment the academic plan is in.

Despite the dynamic nature of the curriculum, many scholars and educators still imagine curriculum predominantly as what is called “planned or intended” (Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012, p. 7), “*overt... or explicit curriculum*” (Schubert, 2013, p. 92; emphasis in original). This is the curriculum listed on institutional websites and described on syllabi, and is planned, intended, overt, and explicit. Kandiko and Blackmore (2012) found that many scholars define curriculum this way, as well as what they call “created or delivered curriculum” (p. 7), which is what is actually taught. Delivered curriculum may be thought of from two perspectives: those of the instructor and the student. Thus, in addition to what is taught (what the instructor delivers), one might consider what is learned (what the student receives).

Other types of curriculum are worth brief mention beyond the three types I have thus far described (i.e., planned, taught, and learned). Hidden curriculum describes those lessons which are not overt per se, but that students do learn nevertheless (Schubert, 2013). Navigating



university politics and learning how authority operates in a classroom are examples of hidden curriculum. Schubert (2013) also described the null curriculum, which refers to what is chosen not to be taught. As curriculum change agents foreclose on certain content in favor of other material, the importance of this null curriculum may arise. Although curriculum as planned dominates the literature and faculty conceptualizations (see Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006) alike, these multiple types of curriculum are worth keeping in mind in regard to this study's implications.

**Curriculum change.** Scholars of teaching, learning, and curriculum have noted a shift in the last few decades toward a new emphasis on ensuring student learning (Hubball & Gold, 2007). Indeed, scholars during this time have paid increasing attention to the scholarship of teaching and learning (Hubball & Gold, 2007), discipline-based educational research (Singer, Nielsen, & Schweingruber, 2012) and other aspects of educational development, initiatives focused on promoting excellent teaching and student learning outcomes throughout the academy. Most importantly for this study, these bodies of literature include some descriptions of curricular change and academic program development. Central to literature on curricular change and academic program development are the roles of strategic planning (Seymour, 1988) and continuous improvement (Briggs, 2007).

However, as I argue, the literature as it currently stands inadequately addresses a question of improvement *toward what*, which gets to the heart of concerns about changes in postsecondary arts and humanities education. Extant literature focuses primarily on the process of curriculum change. Indeed, much of this literature primarily functions as a guide to successfully proposing and implementing program-level curriculum change (see, for example, Bland et al., 2000; Briggs, 2007; Cosner, Tozer, & Smylie, 2012; Freeman, Chambers, &

Newton, 2016). Despite Lattuca and Stark's (2009) positioning of curriculum in its sociocultural context, few scholars of curriculum address such context. On the flip side, scholars that have discussed the "crisis in the humanities" (e.g., Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010; Williams, 2016), which does concern sociocultural context, do not explicitly attend to dimensions of curriculum change.

*Levels of curriculum change.* Curriculum development and change can happen at the course, program, institution, or multi-institution (e.g., state) level. At the most basic level, an instructor who makes an adjustment to their course or to how they deliver content is making a curriculum change (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). At higher levels, an institution can choose to embark on a large-scale curricular change process (Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012). Eckel, Hill, and Green (1998) proposed a taxonomy of curricular changes that involves depth and pervasiveness:

*Depth* describes the extent to which a change affects behavior or alters institutional structures. For example, a course that has been redesigned by incorporating technology profoundly changes the learning experience for students and requires both the instructor and students to think and act differently... In contrast, a change is *pervasive* if it affects many units within a college or university. (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 304)

These different types of curricular change are important to the extent that they involve different stakeholders and levels of commitment. Further, these different kinds of curricular changes respond to different kinds of needs.

Drawing on organizational and socio-political theories, Roy, Borin, and Kustra (2007) put forth recommendations for successful curricular change, suggesting that department-level initiatives are more effective than institution-level changes because the number of stakeholders involved is more manageable (see also Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012). Roy et al. (2007) also

suggested that department-level curricular change is more lasting than course-level change because of turnover in who teaches courses. Each time a different faculty member teaches a course, changes from a previous instructor's iteration of that course may not remain. By contrast, changes at the department level transcend individual faculty members' delivery of courses.

In this study, I focus on curricular change that happens at the department or program level. In particular, I address what I refer to as *significant* curriculum change at the department or program level such as new program development, program closure, or change or changes in a program that involve more than course adjustments, but not many multiple programs at the institution. Additionally, as I have described, I will work with *curriculum change agents*, a term which I define as any individual involved in the program change of interest. Although most curriculum change agents in this study were faculty, some administrators and instructional staff also participated in curriculum change processes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As I have described, my research questions draw on the concepts of sensemaking and institutional logics in order to flesh out aspects of curriculum change in arts and humanities programs. In this section, I briefly describe neo-institutional theory, the overarching theory guiding sensemaking and institutional logics. Within the concept of institutional logics, I emphasize the structure-agency dialectic (Archer, 2000) and multiple logics (Martin, 2018). This section concludes with a description of how sensemaking and institutional logics work together to shape the study's design.

**Neo-institutionalism.** Neo-institutional theory suggests a pattern of organizational change in which organizational entities within a given field become gradually more alike (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991b). This change toward increasing likeness, which DiMaggio and

Powell (1991b) dubbed *isomorphism*, works through one or more of three mechanisms: “(1) *coercive* isomorphism that stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; (2) *memetic* isomorphism resulting from standard responses to uncertainty; and (3) *normative* isomorphism, associated with professionalization” (p. 67; emphasis in original). To elaborate on these mechanisms, I will explain hypothetical examples of each in the case of higher education curriculum.

Coercive isomorphism may manifest in curricular changes made as a response to policy statements about higher education, such as higher education institutions changing programs to align with lawmakers’ emphasis on vocational areas of study. In this example, the shifting policy environment toward vocationalism leads to institutions building programs that prepare students for work, regardless of the place of vocationalism in their missions. An example of mimetic isomorphism relevant to this study might begin with ambiguity surrounding the job market for dance majors. Dance faculty, sensing their graduates need to be more entrepreneurial, might see the possibility of an arts management degree as a “standard response” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991b, p. 67) to such ambiguity; from there, mimetic isomorphism would suggest, arts management programs would pop up at a variety of institutions. Individuals within a profession, such as educational development, drive normative isomorphism. Thus, one example of normative isomorphism in higher education is educational developers who are trained and share good practices together within an organization of their own bringing those same practices to their various institutions of higher education for implementation.

Following up on their landmark 1983 article introducing neo-institutionalism, DiMaggio and Powell put forth a volume building on concepts of how and why organizations change, including the role of the individual actor (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1991a). Most neo-

institutional writing has focused on macro-level concepts, thus minimizing the role of microfoundations (i.e., individuals within organizations; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991a; Powell & Colyvas, 2008). By contrast, in this study I focus on the actions of individuals. I thus turn to microfoundations of neo-institutionalism. In the spirit of a microfoundational focus, I draw on the concept of sensemaking, which I describe here.

**Sensemaking.** When an occasion interrupts an individual's day-to-day life, that individual must stop and consider what happened, how it happened, and ways the individual is part of that occasion. This dynamic is a form of sensemaking. Weick (1995) suggested that "to talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations" (p. 15). Sensemaking, then, is a process of reflection and construction which an individual engages in so that they can better understand its meaning and root causes.

Bollman and Gallos (2011) argued for sensemaking as a theory to better understand academic leaders' decision-making. They emphasized that sensemaking was personal and interpretive in nature, that is, the academic leader's reflection and construction of meaning is individual to that leader and entwined with that leader's self in their social context. Importantly, too, Bollman and Gallos argued, sensemaking is action-oriented and results in a decision made. Sensemaking, in this light, is comprised of both the thought process of meaning construction, and the result of that thought process.

**Institutional logics.** Logics are taken-for-granted frames of thinking that guide individual action in an organization (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). In their landmark work on institutional logics, Friedland and Alford (1991) argued that in U.S. society, the logics of five overarching institutions guide much thought: capitalism, the (Christian) Church, democracy, the

nuclear family, and the state. Put differently, as an individual in an organization makes a decision, one of these five institutions lies at the root of their justification of that decision. For example, Gonzales and Ayers (2018) found that the logic of the family guided community college faculty members' decisions to do emotional labor for their students. The logics of an institution comprise both "material practices and symbolic constructions" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248). Friedland and Alford (1991) explained the five primary institutions this way:

The institutional logic of the capitalism is accumulation and commodification of human activity. That of the state is rationalization and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies. That of democracy is participation and the extension of popular control over human activity. That of the family is community and the motivation of human activity by unconditional loyalty to its members and their reproductive needs. That of religion, or science for that matter, is truth, whether mundane or transcendental, and the symbolic construction of reality within which all human activity takes place. (p. 248)

Other institutions' logics also guide thought and action in organizations. Relevant to this study, Canhilal, Lepori, and Seeber (2015) contrasted aspects of *academic* and *managerial* logics (see also Martin, 2018), which express conflicting ways of thinking and doing in higher education. The academic logic is rooted in academe as a profession, including the importance of academic fields as sources of knowledge and significant freedom for faculty to pursue scholarship and teaching as they see fit. The managerial logic, by contrast, suggests a market orientation and emphasizes the power of hierarchical, top-down decision-making.

Institutional logics are usually not explicit in individuals' words or actions, but nonetheless underlie meaning construction and action. As with sensemaking, the concept of

institutional logics involves unconscious interpretive work on the part of the individual (Friedland & Alford, 1991). For example, a person channeling the managerial logic may not explicitly describe their approach as managerial but might instead emphasize the importance of hierarchy and accountability.

Institutional logics coexist and may contradict one another as an individual draws on them. Scholars have specifically recognized higher education as a home to multiple logics (Gumport, 2000; Lepori, 2016). When different logics guide institutional actors and lead to conflict, those actors can choose one of several paths to manage the conflict. One resolution to conflicts between logics is to combine logics. In this strategy, actors retain compatible elements and proceed to satisfy the demands of multiple institutions (Martin, 2018; Pache & Santos, 2010, 2013). Lepori (2016) described such combination of logics as “hybrid practices” (p. 258) and argued it is “possible that hybridity allows organizations to ‘take the best of both worlds,’ particularly in sectors like healthcare and higher education which are structurally subject to conflicting requirements” (p. 259). This study recognizes the possibility of multiple, coexisting logics and the strategic combination of them to respond to conflicting requirements Lepori acknowledged.

***Logics and agency.*** Embedded within the concept of logics, and microfoundations of neo-institutional theory broadly, is an emphasis on individual institutional actors as change agents. The concept of institutional logics connects actors to the macro-level forces (i.e., institutions) in a way consistent with Archer’s (2000) structure-agency dialectic. Archer argued that structures, such as cultural and economic macro-processes, guide human decision-making at the same time as individual human decisions change those structures over time. Individual decisions that contribute to or resist structures make up what we describe as agency. One

especially relevant structure to the present study is neoliberalism. Collyer (2015) demonstrated some ways faculty can employ buffering mechanisms to resist neoliberal impulses in higher education. Such actions, miniscule though they may be, express agency.

**Application of conceptual framework.** Connecting institutional logics to sensemaking, logics are the mechanisms individuals employ to engage in a process of sensemaking. When an individual engages in the process of sensemaking, they draw on institutional logics, usually unconsciously, in order to facilitate the sensemaking process. In this study, I aimed to understand the thought process and meaning construction curriculum change agents conduct (sensemaking) and the larger frames of thinking that guide such thinking and meaning construction (institutional logics).

As I will describe in chapter three, I developed interview protocols in line with Weick's (1995) properties of sensemaking:

- Social: Individuals connect with one another and interdependence amplifies understanding.
- Identity: An individual's "sensemaking unfolds from some standpoint, some frame of reference, some identity" (Weick, 1995, p. 57).
- Retrospect: Sensemaking involves time during which an individual retrospectively considers what happened.
- Cues: Aspects in an experience draw individuals' attention in ways that demand sensemaking.
- Ongoing: The process an individual is making sense of is a whole and connected to other times, rather than fixed as a singular concept.



- Plausibility: The plausibility of something happening spurs action. Because sensemaking induces action, plausibility is necessary to begin the process one is making sense of.
- Enactment: In trying to address the situation, an individual creates new challenges and opportunities as a matter of an ongoing process.

I analyzed findings using the institutional logics framework to reveal meanings connected to various institutions. In short, I engaged participants in the sense they made of curriculum changes and interpreted their explanations to identify how participants exercised agency in line with various institutions.

## **Conclusion**

Arts and humanities play an important role in higher education, and yet various measures point to concerns about the state of these fields. Furthermore, the neoliberal context in which higher education is situated raises concerns for many fields in the academy. This study arose in response to this dynamic and, in the following chapters, will address how and why arts and humanities programs are changing.

In this chapter, I detailed the present dynamic of the positive qualities and possible threats to arts and humanities, and presented two research questions: 1) how and why do arts and humanities curricular changes proceed in a neoliberal higher education context, and 2) how do individuals understand and enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum change processes? I set the contextual foundation for the study in regard to central concepts: arts and humanities, neoliberalism, and curriculum. Finally, I presented the conceptual framework that addresses how neo-institutional theory, and in particular sensemaking, institutional logics, and agency, guide this study. In the following chapter, I situate the changing nature of arts and humanities in higher education in relevant bodies of literature.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Questions and debates about college curriculum are as old as higher education itself.

Conversations about curriculum in higher education have been in part marked by the mission of higher education more broadly, for example regarding the balance of a liberal or vocational education. Just as scholars today (e.g., Geiger, 2016; Miller, 2012; Nussbaum, 2010; Williams, 2016) debate the balance of vocational and liberal education, especially in relation to neoliberalism (see also Giroux, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005), and the effects on arts and humanities programs, so too have university leaders grappled with this balance throughout the history of Western higher education (Perkin, 2007).

As I argued in chapter one, many scholars argue that today's primary challenge stems from neoliberalism (Di Leo, 2013; Giroux, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Williams, 2016). Neoliberal thought lies at the heart of the problem this study addressed. Neoliberal changes in arts and humanities may signal an acceptability of neoliberalization that leads to advancement of neoliberal ideals throughout the academy, such as the de-professionalization of faculty (see Olssen & Peters, 2005) and curricular changes across the university that respond to market demands regardless of student and (non-market) societal needs. Thus, as I have argued, changes in arts and humanities curricula may be canaries in the coal mine for higher education at large; their changes may signal toxic effects of neoliberalization yet to come.

Further, arts and humanities education is connected to improved student learning and development with regard to citizenship and higher-order thinking skills (Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Kindelan, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010). Thus, changes in arts and humanities higher education programs that shift toward vocationalization and away from other

missions of higher education threaten not only other aspects of the academy that could be harmed by neoliberal policy and practice, but also the learning and development of students.

The problem I describe gets at part of what has been described as the “crisis in the humanities” (Born, 2010; Di Leo, 2013; Hutner & Mohamed, 2016). Such a “crisis” is not so simple a matter, and indeed, may not even be a crisis, as Born (2010) and Hutner and Mohamed (2016) argued. Instead it resembles past curricular debates but with the new challenge of the ubiquity of neoliberal thought.

In this chapter, I trace the history of U.S. higher education curriculum and its European roots, particularly as that history pertains to the balance of technical/vocational and liberal education. In tracing this history, I argue that our current “crisis in the humanities” is in many ways a perennial, rather than new, concern in higher education. I then expand on the current “crisis” by describing the current curriculum landscape, with a focus on arts and humanities programs, and how neoliberalism affects current affairs. In doing so, I explain why the crisis in the humanities might be different this time and outline potential paths forward. I conclude by showing how application of microfoundational perspectives to arts and humanities higher education program changes will contribute to understanding the “crisis,” neoliberalization of the academy, and the future of arts and humanities in higher education.

### **History of College Curriculum**

Understanding arts and humanities in contemporary higher education relies on an understanding of higher education curriculum historically. In particular, I emphasize the perennial debates of “liberal” and “practical,” “technical,” or “vocational” education. Given media reports over the last five years that have raised alarms about the viability of arts and humanities (e.g., Brooks, 2013; Flaherty, 2017a; Lewin, 2013), one might imagine that the arts

and humanities' present moment is uniquely disastrous. However, these concerns have cycled over time (Brint et al., 2005) and, further, reflect centuries of disagreement over the purpose of higher education. Additionally, in the spirit of the academic plan model (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), I also emphasize the relationship between curriculum and its sociocultural context. Thus, demonstrating how this dynamic unfolded historically informs how such a dynamic may be relevant today.

**Early history of higher education, 12th to 18th centuries.** In the Western world, the model of the university that resembles today's institutions arose in 12th century Europe, a model Perkin (2007) described as "a school of higher learning combining teaching and scholarship and characterized by its corporate autonomy and academic freedom" (p. 159). Medieval higher education institutions prepared higher classes for literate professions. Many institutions offered just a basic course in what was called the *trivium*: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (i.e., logic and philosophy). Institutions that offered the basics of the trivium, Perkin (2007) argued, were not universities per se, but these fields served as foundation for institutions of higher learning. The more advanced institutions, the *studia*, offered as well the *quadrivium* (i.e., arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music), fields that qualified a student to become a master and teach the learned professions such as medicine and law. The *studia* of the time, institutions marked by their capacity to advance higher learning, became attached to the concept of universities. These universities had "formal faculties" (Perkin, 2007, p. 168), were recognized by religious or secular government powers, and leveraged knowledge creation to challenge commonly-held beliefs. One can find all of these qualities in universities globally today.

The curriculum of the medieval universities is also relevant to understandings of higher education today. The trivium and quadrivium, which the medieval *studia* offered to train learned

men, constituted the seven liberal arts. The confluence of the trivium and quadrivium with professional training show how a blend of “liberal” and “practical,” as one might call such fields today, existed from the very beginning of Western higher education several hundred years ago.

As I have suggested, higher education became capable of challenging orthodoxy at the end of, and following, the medieval era in Europe. In the 16th century, Perkin (2007) argued, higher education was a force onto itself which stood as a challenge to the powers that were (i.e., the Church and religiously-controlled states.) The Church responded with calls of heresy and attempts to control universities. Indeed, as Perkin described, universities experienced “loss or change of function” which came at “the price of [institutional] survival” (p. 171). Here, Perkin used the cases of English universities to demonstrate that as the state took interest in universities, their curricular focus shifted to preparation of the ruling classes and away from “intellectual improvement” (p. 171). Throughout Europe, the Catholic Church also established universities or took over extant institutions to serve the pious aims, such as development of missionaries.

Perkin (2007) traced this history of control forward into the 1700s, when institutions still taught medieval curricula and the Scientific Revolution “took place outside the universities” (p. 173). Over time, progressive changes in knowledge and science pushed universities globally to adapt to the changing world and shed aspects of the medieval curriculum; though universities were slow to adapt. Today, too, many would argue that universities have been too slow to adapt to a quickly-changing world.

**Higher education in colonial America and early United States.** In the first centuries of higher education in the United States, the nature of postsecondary curriculum in the American colonies and early United States is somewhat unclear. Colonial Americans drew on European models of higher education to create colleges in the colonies (and, later, the states). It follows,

then, that early American college founders drew on the European curriculum. Indeed, as Geiger (1999) explained, the colonial colleges taught content comparable to the medieval European curriculum. That said, there existed no consistent primary and secondary schooling in the colonies' early years, so students would have entered college with uneven preparation (Thelin, 2011).

Instructors used recitations and disputations, in Latin and English, to deliver content. Interest existed across many disciplines, although one important difference between today's institutions and institutions of the early United States was that departments, the primary organizational form of universities in the 20th and 21st centuries, did not exist then. This difference is one of particular note for my study because today, arts and humanities programs are largely (if not completely) situated in discipline-specific departments.

Professional education did not exist either. The concept of training for a career was not yet part of the U.S. university. Professions like law and medicine were taught in other types of institutions, divorced from the higher education sector. Instead of career preparation, colleges in early North America can be thought of as preparing wealthy (White) sons for public service, though such service would include some amount of preparation for learned professional fields.

***The Yale Report.*** After the American Revolution, curriculum in U.S. colleges “was an incoherent amalgam of works predicated on both the old, theocentric universe and the new, enlightened views” (Geiger, 1999, p. 42). Facing the same kinds of pressures of balancing the classical curriculum and adapting to contemporary ideas, universities had to defend their missions and curricula. Arguably the most notable defense came in 1828 with the Yale Report, which sought to designate what a college was and what it ought to be (Geiger, 1999).

The authors of the Yale Report argued that Yale’s “object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all” (“Reports on the course of instruction,” 1828, p. 14). They elaborated that such a “foundation” was best built by classical fields such as Latin, Greek, and mathematics. They emphasized that education did not end with the completion of college, and that the role of higher education was to prepare students for what lay beyond. This thinking is aligned with the concept of higher education as preparatory for public service and rejects the idea that “practical” education (which, at the time, would have included areas of study such as agriculture, engineering, and mining) belongs in the university. Indeed, in arguing what was appropriate in higher education, the Yale Report sought to establish the relative worthiness of forms of knowledge. Although institutions offering such “practical” fields would arise in the years to come, the Yale Report ensured the dominance of the classics for decades to come (Church & Sedlak, 1997).

Also of note is, as Geiger (1999) explained, the fact that student demands helped spur on the continued teaching of Latin and Greek in the early 19th century. This context complicates the history of the Yale Report as a decree from academics on high, but perhaps a response to actual demands from students. Lattuca and Stark’s (2009) academic plan model is relevant in understanding this relationship between curriculum and context, since the model suggests that external and internal actors (such as learners) influence the academic plan (and its planners), which in this case includes the teaching of classical or contemporary fields.

**Increasing institutional diversity in the 19th century.** The aforementioned institutions that began offering “practical” education, such as engineering institutions Johns Hopkins and Rensselaer, were not alone in diversifying the educational landscape of the United States in the 19th century. As the 19th century progressed, curriculum and institutional types increasingly

diversified, hand-in-hand. Some colleges emerged out of a need for educated people in certain professions, like teaching. By contrast to the colonial period of U.S. higher education, professional colleges and colleges that specialized in natural and physical sciences were created throughout the 19th century. Other institutions emerged from specific sets of values; for example, Thelin (2011) described South Carolina College as an institution established with pro-slavery, anti-federalist values. Another example of differentiation of college mission and values intersecting to create new institutions is that of women's colleges. The earliest women's colleges prepared women as missionaries (as at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary [Porterfield, 1997]), educators, or "republican mothers" (Palmieri, 1997), which entailed refinement in "feminine" roles like wife and mother.

These institutional type innovations, like women's colleges and technology institutes, brought with them particular curricular emphases. Particularly of note to this study is the increasing popularity of institutions offering "practical arts" like "agriculture, mechanics, mining, and military instruction" (Thelin, 2011, p. 76) and the establishment of normal schools, which prepared teachers (Ogren, 2005). Curricular innovations challenged the supremacy of the classics the Yale Report had once established as the essential college curriculum. During the same time period, Black leaders debated whether "liberal" or "practical" education should be the leading philosophy of Black higher education (Thelin, 2011). Debating the merits of these two philosophies predominated many facets of higher education. The establishment of normal schools, which offered teacher education to build capacity for educating a state's populace, further highlights the utilitarian turn of U.S. higher education and also points to how this turn is coupled with beginning to expand access to higher education for previously-unserved populations (Ogren, 2005).



These debates, and the innovations that spurred them, of this period set groundwork for important aspects of this study. The trend of increasing curricular diversity and institutional differentiation would become more common in the U.S. Many have argued that institutional diversity is one of the greatest strengths of U.S. higher education (Morphew, 2009; Thelin, 2011). If curricular changes today mark a shift away from such institutional and curricular diversity, for example, by decreasing arts and humanities opportunities in favor of pre-professional fields, then U.S. higher education as a whole could suffer.

Another reason 19th century innovations, in particular the advent of vocational and pre-professional curricula in colleges, are important is because they foreshadow today's trend toward what Brint et al. (2005) now call the "practical arts" and the emphasis on college as career preparation. Today, Kleinman (2016) argued, policymakers use rhetoric about professional and vocational preparation as a way to undermine liberal arts fields. Also important to my study is to consider the relationship between institutional aims and survival. In the first centuries of U.S. higher education, individual colleges were resource poor and highly dependent on tuition and philanthropy. Today, some may argue that institutional survival is linked to the "usefulness" of the institution in the sense of career preparation (Baker, Baldwin, & Makker, 2012; Brint et al., 2012). Baker et al. (2012) and Ferrall (2011) raised concerns over liberal arts colleges, for example, and how they may be shifting curricula toward the vocational in attempt to be "useful" (see also Baker & Baldwin, 2015). However, despite the perceived need for changes, and increasing student interest in the "practical arts" (Brint, 2011; Brint et al., 2005), I argue that such changes do not make institutional survival any likelier. Looking back to the 18th and 19th centuries, "there was no guaranteed formula for a college to attract either donors or paying students" (Thelin, 2011, p. 68). Institutional survival was not simple or straightforward at that

time. Likewise, if critics today argue that certain institutions are likelier to survive than others (whether due to those institutions' ability to prepare workers or another reason), it may be important to take such criticism with a grain of salt.

Although survival may not have been a simple matter, Geiger (2016) argued that institutional quality was a clearer matter. Specifically, Geiger found, in the time following the passage of the first Morrill Act, some Land Grant institutions (the group he referred to as the A&Ms) that interpreted their mission as vocational without regard for the liberal arts trailed their better-rounded peers in prestige and resources, and soon adjusted to adapt. Thus, he warned, institutions today who shed their liberal mission in favor of vocational focus may too fall behind those who retain humanities education.

**20th century.** In the 1890s and early 20th century, the beginnings of a university structure resembling today's universities emerged (Thelin, 2011). Aspects of administration, curriculum, and philanthropy morphed into a form recognizable to the 21st-century scholar. For example, William Rainey Harper, then-president of University of Chicago, organized his faculty into academic departments, which are now a standard structural feature in higher education institutions. Faculty also moved toward the now-ubiquitous concept of majors and graduate specialization and began shifting from recitations to lectures and seminars. Further, philanthropic organizations supported a broad array of institutional types, cementing the institutional (and thus, curricular) diversity of U.S. higher education.

***Electives and majors.*** During this period, Charles Eliot of Harvard introduced elective courses and the seeds of what would become academic majors (Thelin, 2011). This innovation would later become the norm and is an important historical moment for this study for two reasons. First, Thelin argued that this turn toward majors and electives began faculty

identification with academic fields, which would later spawn departments and other structural elements within institutions. This study's focus at the program level presumes the existence of departments and the salience of academic fields. Second, this innovation was one of many in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries regarding college curriculum. Such innovations, Thelin (2011) argued, were usually adjustments at the margins because it would be too financially risky to undergo large changes. Nevertheless, college leaders were interested in experimenting with new ideas to advance learning. Such experimentation with new ideas may be taking place in arts and humanities programs. By entering the conversation on the "crisis in the humanities" at the microfoundational level, I learned about how curriculum change agents construct meaning about and justify to others (both parts of sensemaking as a process) how and why to conduct similar such experimentation.

Although the elective system shifted from marginal innovation to mainstream feature, Thelin (2011) suggested that students navigated electives and requirements as obstacles to an end goal. This suggestion complicates the idea that elective system allows for broad exploration of studies (i.e., liberal learning.) The contrast between electives as ends to a goal versus exploration points to an important aspect of the curriculum, specifically the difference between planned and learned curricula. That the curriculum leaders plan may differ from the curriculum students learn and experience complicates thinking that relies on planned curriculum as *the* curriculum. It will be important to this study to keep such a tension in mind and hold on to the multiple conceptualizations of curriculum (see Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012; Schubert, 2013).

***The California Idea.*** Regarding the balance of liberal and practical education, the "California Idea" also emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The California Idea for higher education put forth that "utility was to be fused with educating for character and public

service” (Thelin, 2011, pp. 139-140). The California idea harks back to the purpose of higher education and suggests three prongs: “utility,” which might also be called practicality or employability; “character,” which has a distinct individual growth sense; and “public service,” which points to notions of citizenship and service to society.

Curricular coherence and marginal innovations, such as “great books” curricula and the house system at Harvard, continued to be norms in college curriculum as the 20th century progressed (Thelin, 2011). In addition, higher education institutions became wealthier in the 20th century, particularly driven by philanthropy (especially from the Carnegie Foundation and other foundations) and government funds (especially via the G.I. Bill of Rights, which funded military veterans’ college educations, and the National Science Foundation, which greatly expanded science research at universities). Thelin (2011) argued that higher education institutions structured themselves in such a way that they were able to respond to funding sources effectively. Such responses also point toward a question of liberal versus practical curriculum. For example, colleges structured their administration in ways ideal to funders such as Carnegie and offered an increasing number of “practical” disciplines, such as business administration, to appeal to the deluge of veterans coming into colleges in the mid-20th century. The concept of *coercive isomorphism* is important to consider here. This concept suggests that institutions become more alike over time in responding to policy and funding attached to certain norms.

***Small programs and massification.*** Curricular innovations were a major factor in private universities justifying their existence (and comparatively high sticker price) and contrasting themselves to public institutions. That said, public institutions innovated as well. For example, although it was private institutions that first pushed the appeal of small, residential programs, public institutions caught up as the 20th century progressed. Strikingly, the shift toward smaller

environments occurred alongside (and following) massification of U.S. higher education. Institutions, especially public universities, grew considerably through the middle of the 20th century. States saw expansion of higher education as an important economic driver and, following the Civil Rights era in the 1960s, considered higher education as a source of opportunity for student groups previously excluded or otherwise marginalized from higher education (such as Black students and women of all races and ethnicities.)

I also highlight the changing face of former normal schools, which describes all three sites in this study, during this time. Recognizing the expansion of enrollments and programs, many of these institutions, which had evolved from normal schools to *teacher colleges*, shifted to become state colleges that served a dual, liberal and vocational purpose (Henderson, 2007; Ogren, 2005). The former normal schools and their other state college peers continued to serve marginalized student populations and, today, make up what is known as public regional universities (Henderson, 2007; McClure, 2018).

As the era of massification continued, and institutions grew, students responded by demanding that their needs be met (Thelin, 2011). In the final decades of the 20th century, Thelin (2011) noted trends toward “homogenization and loss of institutional distinction” (p. 319), and the creation of new services to support student retention. With regard to curricula, Thelin pointed to what he called “the curricular wars” (p. 352), or debates and changes regarding what was valuable to teach, the “canon” of certain fields, and balances between the liberal and practical. Thelin suggested that curriculum “disputes were settled by... students who exercised their rights as consumers” (p. 352). This is to say that students tended toward “employable” fields like business, computer science, and engineering, and away from “pure” fields (see also Brint et al., 2005; Di Leo, 2013).

**Summary.** The purposes of higher education, the inclusion and exclusion of various curricula, and institutional differentiation define changes in higher education throughout its history. In particular, by tracing the history of “practical” versus “liberal” education, I have demonstrated how current questions around the purpose of, and curricula within, higher education repeat the debates of the past. Today’s “crisis” in the humanities is not new, but rather draws on this long tradition of conflict over higher education’s role.

### **College Curriculum Today**

Differentiation of institutional types and purposes over generations of higher education persist today, though with some concerns over increasing homogenization (Baker et al., 2012; Gonzales, 2013; Morphew, 2009). That said, the balance of “practical” and “liberal” as I have described them ebbs and flows in cycles over the years (Brint et al., 2005), so arguments that the “practical” will overwhelm or overtake the “liberal” are ahistorical and could be premature. In this section, I will describe how higher education curriculum today is marked by a diversity of missions (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), focus on pedagogy (Stolk, 2013), and neoliberal ideologies (Di Leo, 2013; Giroux, 2014; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). First, I will expand on types of curricula, and then address these contemporary aspects of college curricula.

**Types of curricula.** There is no single, agreed-upon definition of curriculum (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006). For this study, I draw from a variety of scholars’ taxonomies of curriculum in order to make sense of how curriculum is developed and/or changed in higher education. Schubert (2013) put forth ten types of curriculum: “intended, taught, hidden, null, experienced, learned, embodied, outside, tested, BIG, and grassroots” (p. 92). The intended, taught, hidden, experienced, and learned curricula are consistent with other taxonomies of curricula (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012). I explain these various curricula here.

As I described in chapter one, the intended curriculum refers to that which is planned to be taught, and taught curriculum is what is actually taught. The learned curriculum is what students learn from the taught curriculum. Schubert (2013) also suggests that students *experience* curriculum in a way that is distinct from how they *learn* curriculum; however, other scholars' descriptions of learned curriculum encompass elements of both (see Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012).

Hidden curriculum refers to what students learn from the academy that is not overtly or intentionally structured into curricula. For example, students learn how to follow certain rules. Schubert's (2013) concepts of embodied and tested curricula have some distinguishing elements but overlap with other categories. Similarly, his ideas of outside and BIG curriculum are related. Outside curriculum refers to what students learn from outside the educational system, from sources like family and friends. BIG<sup>1</sup> curriculum refers to the global corporate shift toward the bottom line; in this way, BIG curriculum is a kind of outside curriculum, and also informs all other types of curricula. Further, the reasoning underlying naming BIG curriculum, that corporatization and a focus on the bottom line pervades higher education, echoes other criticisms of neoliberalism and its pervasiveness in higher education (Giroux, 2014; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Finally, *grassroots* or *grassroots resistance curriculum* refers to curricula, intended or otherwise, that address and oppose the (neoliberal) values of the BIG curriculum (Schubert, 2013). Schubert (2013) suggested that indigenous communities' development of curricula which centers indigeneity in colonial settings exemplify the kinds of resistance that he is talking about. Di Leo (2013) echoed the need for grassroots resistance, suggesting that a humanities curriculum

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<sup>1</sup> Schubert (2013) used BIG not as an acronym, but in all caps to signify its power in influencing other curricula.

that addresses neoliberal forces, which undergird the BIG curriculum, and equips students to question a focus on the bottom line is essential for the survival of arts and humanities.

**Mixed missions.** Lattuca and Stark (2009) suggested that the three primary missions of higher education, namely liberal arts, research, and utilitarian, largely coexist as mixed missions. Lattuca and Stark suggested that as time has gone on, institutions have taken on more than one mission in order to further advance their own standing and/or serve learners (Gonzales, 2013; Morphew, 2009). That higher education today features a landscape of diverse institutional types (including institutions that are four-year and two-year; public and private; not-for-profit and for-profit; large and small; online, in-person, and hybrid) reflects the diverse needs of society. At the same time, mission creep – that is to say, the tendency for universities to adjust missions in order to become more prestigious – may threaten the diversity of institutions (Dugas, Summers, Harris, & Stich, 2018; Gonzales, 2013).

**Pedagogy.** Over the last few decades, college curriculum has been marked by a push to ensure learning for students (Hubball & Gold, 2007). I briefly address pedagogy here for two reasons. First, participants in my study addressed pedagogy in ways connected to curricular content, which is consistent with the amplification of pedagogy and the process of teaching in recent years. Second, neoliberal policy and practice may affect pedagogy just as it affects other aspects of higher education.

To my first point, much curriculum change is grounded not in changing content per se but in continuing to adapt to emerging needs (Briggs, 2007). Stolk (2013) went further by arguing that “gone are the days of content-based college curricula” (p. 52). Here, Stolk argued that, in this age of easy access to knowledge via technological means, institutions of higher education must focus instead on ensuring learning above simply transmitting content. Because this study



examines if, how, and why arts and humanities programs are changing, the nature of the curriculum as either content-driven or pedagogy-driven is relevant.

In this spirit of student learning, many institutions and their leaders have embraced scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and discipline-based educational research (Hubball & Gold, 2007; Singer et al., 2012). Hubball and Gold (2007) described that these “learner-centered reforms” (p. 8) effectively

communicate curriculum and program goals in a meaningful way to a broader community, help determine the extent to which learning has been accomplished, and guide faculty and administrators (within resource constraints) in part to determine program(s) of study, course objectives, appropriate learning experiences, assessment, and program evaluation strategies. (p. 9)

In these ways, one can see how higher education is moving to better serve its students.

Simultaneously, however, neoliberal ideologies have shifted many practices in a mixture of ways, some perhaps beneficial, and others detrimental, to students (Giroux, 2014; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Williams, 2016). I will address these changes next.

**Neoliberalism and college curriculum.** I conclude this section on college curriculum today with a discussion of its relationship with neoliberalism in order to highlight both how the present moment is one situated in history but may also be uniquely different in ways that threaten arts and humanities. As I discussed in chapter one, neoliberalism refers to an economic and ethical ideal grounded in rugged individualism and free-market capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Ong, 2005). Its four central tenets include prioritization of the self-interested individual as an economic actor, free market economics, laissez-faire perspectives and distrust of government regulation, and commitment to free trade (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Scholars have argued neoliberal thinking has increasingly guided higher education in the last few decades (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Giroux, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005), and this view overemphasizes a version of the utilitarian mission of college (see, for example, Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Williams, 2016). In the neoliberal view, the argument goes, the purpose of college is to serve the individual and prepare that individual for a career (Canaan & Shumar, 2014; Smith, 2011; Torres, 2011). The neoliberal view focuses on the economic effect of college, rather than the social; and the individual student, rather than society more broadly. These ideals complicate the multiple missions of U.S. higher education. Because neoliberal thought prioritizes the freedoms of the individual over the good of society, any missions of higher education which focus on public good are at risk for erosion.

That said, it is worth noting that few empirical studies have been conducted to confirm the increasing vocationalization of the curriculum. Further, as I have argued, curricula in the U.S. has for many decades oscillated between “liberal” and “vocational” (see also Brint, 2011; Brint et al., 2002). Thus, on one hand, the neoliberal shift toward vocationalism may be just another part of that oscillating pattern. On the other hand, the pervasiveness of neoliberalism may signal its permanence and, with it, the permanence of vocationalist emphasis of curriculum. Indeed, as Apple (2017) argued, changes in curriculum are contested sites vis-à-vis neoliberal values but deserve greater scholarly attention (see also Välimaa, 2014).

Another aspect of college curriculum to consider in light of neoliberalization is accountability. Accountability measures are but one of the current neoliberal technologies of governments. By ensuring certain standards are met, curriculum designers must respond to those (global, market-oriented) standards and have less flexibility to meet local and context-specific needs and wants (see, for example, Arvast, 2006; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Torres, 2011). I

invoke the concept of neo-institutionalism, and specifically coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991b), here to show how accountability measures may increase homogeneity among higher education curricula. This is to say, as the neoliberal emphasis on accountability spreads across institutions, curriculum change agents are likely to feel pressure to change curricula in ways that meet such accountability standards.

Finally, Giroux (2014) argued that the neoliberal focus on the economy and rugged individualism leaves no place for the intellectual, especially the intellectual in arts and humanities fields (see also Di Leo, 2013; Williams, 2016). Giroux's argument builds on both the suggestion that workers in a neoliberal institution should be efficient and well-managed (Olssen & Peters, 2005), and also emphasizes the nature of neoliberalism as valuing humans primarily, if not solely, for their vocational output (Harvey, 2005). It is challenging for intellectual endeavors to come across as efficient labor, but both intellectual work and being efficient laborers are present expectations for faculty (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2011). Neoliberalism thus unduly pressures faculty (see also Collyer, 2015; Gonzales & Ayers, 2018). This pressure may be especially salient in the arts and humanities (Flaherty, 2017b; Giroux, 2014). In the next section, I will elaborate on the effects of neoliberalism on the arts and humanities.

### **Arts and Humanities in Higher Education**

Many scholars have argued that the arts and humanities in higher education serve as a bedrock for critical thinking, global citizenship, and imagination (Di Leo, 2013; Kindelan, 2014; Nussbaum, 2010). Despite this vital role, the arts and humanities have faced significant challenges and attacks the last several years (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2015; Born, 2010; Di Leo, 2013; Editors, 2016; Nussbaum, 2010). In their State of the Humanities report, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS, 2015) pointed to some reasons to

be optimistic about the state of the arts and humanities, but the signs pointing toward challenges are too commonplace to ignore. In this section, I address some of the challenges arts and humanities fields face, including the murky picture of enrollments in arts and humanities and changes to these fields. I then outline four possible paths forward for arts and humanities fields. First, I describe three subtopics within arts and humanities fields to establish context for the three sites in this study. These subtopics are: digital humanities, music technology, and the split of writing (rhetoric/composition) and literature studies.

**Digital humanities.** With the emergence of computing technologies during the 20th century came the application of those technologies to various academic disciplines. Digital humanities refers to “an array of convergent practices that explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated” (Burdick et al., 2012, p. 122). These practices aim to address questions relevant to the scope of human life (the “humanities” part of digital humanities) and usually unfold as collaborative, project-based initiatives (Burdick et al., 2012).

Seeing digital humanities skills as an important part of ongoing changes in humanities in the academy, Nowvickie (2016) made the case that institutions of higher education must prepare future faculty for digital and public humanities to preserve and advance the public good. Not all scholars have concurred with this assertion. Drawing on the history, funding, demographics, and other aspects of digital humanities, Allington et al. (2016) argued, “the Digital Humanities [sic] as social and institutional movement is a reactionary force in literary studies, pushing the discipline toward post-interpretative, non-suspicious, technocratic, conservative, managerial, lab-based practice” (para. 31). Allington and colleagues further contended that digital humanities facilitates the neoliberal paradigm in higher education because it demands increased skills and

centers large, digital humanities-related grants. This argument harks back to the concept of academic capitalism that suggests that neoliberal forces push higher education actors toward grant-winning activities no matter the cost (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Burdick and colleagues (2012) would disagree with the assertion that digital humanities fundamentally rejects certain scholarly and interpretive approaches, having argued, “digital humanities is an extension of traditional knowledge skills and methods, not a replacement for them” (p. 16). Although I tend to agree with Burdick and colleagues in this case, Allington and colleagues’ concerns about digital humanities as a neoliberal specter resonate with me. Nowvskie (2016) echoed their concern, having argued that if higher education administrators implement digital humanities merely for inexpensive labor and/or revenue, they risk undoing the potential related to the public good of digital humanities.

**Music technology.** Just as computing technologies transformed humanities over the last several decades, so too have they transformed arts fields. In the field of music specifically, music technology has presented one of the single most significant changes to the field in the last few decades (Born & Devine, 2015). Although contemporary technologies have affected the teaching of music in higher education for multiple generations, the 21st century has witnessed a particular expansion of the field (Boehm, 2007).

Compared to “traditional” (e.g., instrumental) music programs, music technology programs attract more working-class students and male students (Born & Devine, 2015). The relatively more socioeconomically diverse music technology population emphasizes the sense of elitism that pervades some corners of music education (Jones, 2012). It is possible that music technology programs challenge the pervasive attitude that instrumental music is the most prestigious or important dimension within the study of music (Jones, 2012).

**Writing.** Over thirty years ago, Winifred Bryan Horner (1983) drew together scholars of composition in response to her recognition of the field’s subordinate status compared to literature scholars of English departments. Despite the subordination of composition within the study of English, Horner noted that the wave of practical-minded college-goers in the 1970s strayed from literature but that enrollments in writing classes grew. In the years that followed, various additional forces would lead to the growth of writing (rhetoric and composition) programs separated from English (literature) programs.

Reflecting on a writing program’s split from an English (literature) department, Doherty (2006) harked back to the subordinate status of composition. He used a marriage metaphor to describe that “composition and literature had an amicable union but slept in separate rooms” (p. 41). Poor communication between English department colleagues, continued subordination of composition, and adherence to the split between composition and literature facilitated the “eventual divorce” (Doherty, 2006, p. 42). Institutional forces also contributed to the split because it seemed most attractive to administrative powers to house a writing program separate from the English faculty. Ultimately, Doherty (2006) explained, the split was “local *and* global, personal *and* institutional” (p. 42, emphasis in original), revealing how writing programs split from literature studies in personnel-, department-, and institution-specific ways as well as ways that reflect the broader relationship of composition and literature.

**Number of students in arts and humanities.** Di Leo (2013) suggested that enrollments in arts and humanities majors have shrunk. However, it is worth noting that to support this point, Di Leo cited only Daniel Born’s 2010 article, “What is the crisis in the humanities?” Di Leo’s concerns about humanities enrollments contradict Born’s central thesis, which is that there is no real crisis in the humanities, and that scholars are overstating problems.

Indeed, in terms of numbers, the picture of arts and humanities enrollments is less clear than either Di Leo (2013) or Born (2010) would suggest (see also Hutner & Mohamed, 2016). In the State of the Humanities report, AAAS (2015) found that as a percentage of all degrees completed, the number of arts and humanities degrees conferred in each 1987 and 2013 was approximately the same at each the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level. That said, AAAS noted declines in the short term, finding that arts and humanities degrees, as a percentage of all degrees, was generally higher in the 1990s and 2000s, and that about 6% of all arts and humanities departments "ceased to grant a degree at one or more levels" (p. 5) between 2007 and 2012.

Field of study	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11	2014-15
English language and literature/letters	63,914 7.61%	31,922 3.41%	51,064 4.67%	50,569 4.06%	52,754 3.07%	45,847 2.42%
Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics	20,988 2.50%	11,638 1.24%	13,937 1.27%	16,128 1.30%	21,705 1.26%	19,493 1.03%
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	7,481 0.89%	21,643 2.31%	30,526 2.79%	37,962 3.05%	46,717 2.72%	43,647 2.30%
Philosophy and religious studies	8,149 0.97%	6,776 0.72%	7,423 0.68%	8,717 0.70%	12,830 0.75%	11,072 0.58%
Visual and performing arts	30,394 3.62%	40,479 4.33%	42,186 3.85%	61,148 4.91%	93,939 5.47%	95,832 5.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>130,926</b> <b>15.59%</b>	<b>112,458</b> <b>12.03%</b>	<b>145,136</b> <b>13.26%</b>	<b>174,524</b> <b>14.03%</b>	<b>227,945</b> <b>13.28%</b>	<b>215,891</b> <b>11.39%</b>

**Table 1:** Bachelor's degrees conferred by U.S. postsecondary institutions, and percent of total, in arts and humanities fields by select academic year (NCES, 2016).

In order to more clearly see changes in enrollment trends, I looked at the number of degrees conferred in arts and humanities fields, as well as those fields' percentages of the total number of degrees conferred (see table 1). I found that, since the 1970-71 academic year, although more degrees are conferred in the arts and humanities, arts and humanities fields' share of degrees conferred has decreased, and is currently at one of its lowest points in several decades.

Looking more closely at data, the 1980s included comparable low points for degree completions in the arts and humanities (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Thus, looking beyond the scope of the State of the Humanities report (which focused on the last 30 years) helps flesh out a clearer, if not also more concerning, picture for arts and humanities degree achievement.

It is also worth noting here that there are important differences between fields regarding changes in number of degree completions. For example, fewer people received degrees in either English or foreign languages in 2014-15 than in 1970-71, despite there being more than twice as many postsecondary graduates in 2014-15 than in 1970-71. By contrast, visual and performing arts and liberal arts and sciences both saw increases in both number of degrees conferred and number of degrees as a share of the total during this time period. Philosophy and religious studies saw modest increases in number of degrees conferred, but its share of the total decreased.

None of these trends are steady or linear. To some extent, these changes may reflect broader changes in U.S. culture and economy, and changes in postsecondary education broadly as well (Brint et al., 2004). Further, depending on how one frames what belongs in the arts and humanities, one sees different patterns. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016) showed dramatic increases since 1970 in the number of degrees conferred, both in raw numbers and share of all degrees conferred, in communication, journalism, and related programs. Miller (2012) described many communication programs as “humanities two,” which is to say applied iterations of humanities that are more common at less-prestigious institutions. If one pairs these increases in communication with the decreases in English, a question emerges about how arts and humanities are not disappearing, but rather changing. This question is key for my study.



**Changes in arts and humanities.** AAAS and NCES data do not paint a consistent picture of decreasing popularity of arts and humanities. Further, changes in enrollment and completion may be cyclical (Brint et al., 2005). However, these findings do not preclude the possibility of a “crisis” in the humanities due to changes in these fields.

First, as Di Leo (2013) pointed out, liberal arts colleges have seen dramatic shifts in the last several decades (Ferrall, 2011; see also Baker et al., 2012; Breneman, 1994; Flaherty, 2017a). Liberal arts colleges, once renowned for their embrace of the promise of the arts and humanities to inspire critical thinking and good citizenship, have drifted toward offering more vocational programs (Baker et al., 2012). Brint et al. (2005) noted this as a general trend as well, positioning the late 1990s and early 2000s as a moment preferring what they dub “practical arts” in a repeating historical cycle of preference for each liberal arts and practical arts.

Second, one might consider the ways higher education has facilitated a bifurcation of the arts and humanities. Miller (2012) argued that there are two humanities: the prestigious humanities, and the technical/vocational humanities. He pointed to this bifurcation both in institutional type (prestigious institutions versus broad-access institutions, including public regional universities) and in discipline (“traditional” humanities such as philosophy, classics, and literature versus “vocational” humanities such as media studies and communication). Such bifurcation contributes to inequality via the humanities by offering the promise of citizenship and critical thinking, the positive attributes Nussbaum (2010) and Di Leo (2013) suggest, only to the “humanities one” (prestigious humanities) students. At the same time, Miller argues, “humanities two” is used only as a complement to technical training and is predominantly offered to underserved student populations.

What must be done for the arts and humanities? Di Leo (2013) argued that it is too late to avoid what he calls “corporatization” of humanities, but that individual subjects in higher education can resist in a variety of ways (see also Collyer, 2015). Nussbaum (2010) and Di Leo agreed that critical dialogue that does not avoid taboo subjects can be both a process and product of humanities. This is to say that if humanities faculty are willing to take up difficult topics in the classroom (process of humanities), students will be better equipped to handle unforeseeable (yet, one might imagine, still difficult) challenges and debates on topics in the years to come (product). In this way, Di Leo and Nussbaum imagined the humanities serving a critical role in preparing students for critical engagement and discourse necessary for myriad contemporary issues (such as wars and inequalities) by performing such discourse within humanities courses. For example, as Nussbaum (1997) discussed elsewhere, humanities curricula that infuse race, gender, and class studies into coursework develop learners into more empathetic and globally-aware citizens.

Nussbaum (2010) took the argument for the arts and humanities in higher education a step further to suggest that the arts add a dimension of imagination that harbors the potential to grow students’ emotional capabilities. These emotional capabilities inspire the kind of sympathy she argued is necessary for more critically engaging in diverse worldviews, and therefore necessary for good global citizenship. Further, by positioning the arts and humanities as fertile ground to develop emotional capacity, Nussbaum positioned argued that these fields are “a particularly dangerous enemy of obtuseness,” and in particular the “moral obtuseness... necessary to carry out programs of economic development that ignore inequality” (p. 23).

The “economic development” Nussbaum (2010) referenced is at the heart of neoliberal ideology (see Harvey, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Economic development, as she, Di Leo

(2013), and others pitched it, is the obsession within the academy with job growth and financial gains. Such a focus on economic development, Nussbaum and scholars of neoliberalism (Di Leo, 2013; Giroux, 2014) argued, comes at the detriment of a focus on citizenship. Nussbaum pointed to cases in the U.K., where humanities departments have shuttered in response to being unable to state their contributions to economic growth. Considering the Trump Administration's recommendation to cut the National Endowment of the Arts and National Endowment of the Humanities (McGlone, 2019), and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos trumpeting the paramount importance of postsecondary vocational education (Camera, 2017; Hackman, 2019; see also Kleinman, 2016), it is not hard to imagine similar circumstances stateside as well.

In response to both Nussbaum (2010) and Miller (2012), Di Leo (2013) recommended that arts and humanities faculty navigate their circumstances and resist and respond to corporatization. Di Leo effectively combined Nussbaum's promise of the humanities education for global citizenship and critical thinking with Miller's concern of humanities bifurcation by suggesting that arts and humanities faculty can reignite the power of these disciplines by naming the (neoliberal) forces at work on and in the academy, and how they have shaped myriad circumstances higher education faces. This recommendation also harks back to Schubert's (2013) description of "grassroots curriculum," which aims to respond to the corporatization of higher education Nussbaum, Miller, and Di Leo warned against.

**Paths forward for the arts and humanities.** In sum, Di Leo (2013), Miller (2012), and Nussbaum (2010) collectively suggested a few overlapping strategies the arts and humanities in higher education can take in the coming years. One strategy is to more aggressively assert the value of the arts and humanities, like Nussbaum and Geiger (2016) argued. Another strategy is a laissez-faire one; allow the market and other forces to simply move arts and humanities in

whatever direction the wind blows. Similarly, a third strategy involves adapting to neoliberalism and encouraging a slant on arts and humanities that emphasizes elements that are most marketable. Such a seemingly marketable slant on an arts and humanities program might look like an arts administration program, or a program blending professional writing with a more classically-styled writing program. In effect, a program that adapts to neoliberalism would be one that embraces the neoliberal ideal of the student as a burgeoning entrepreneur. A fourth strategy draws on Di Leo's (2013) take on the others' arguments and Schubert's (2013) description of the "grassroots curriculum." This fourth strategy involves recognition of and, where possible, resistance to neoliberal forces and academic capitalist moves.

I take these four strategies for planning arts and humanities college curriculum as four of possibly many possible paths curriculum change agents may take. Because my study considers the neoliberalization of arts and humanities higher education program, I aim to understand how curriculum change agents make sense of a neoliberal environment with regard to program changes. I would predict one or more of these paths, or perhaps elements of these paths, as directions that help me describe how and why arts and humanities are changing in higher education.

### **Microfoundational Perspectives: Faculty and Administrative Work and Curriculum**

As I described in chapter one, I enter the conversation on changes in arts and humanities higher education programs at the microfoundational, which is to say, individual, level. The micro-level of organizational theories refers to individuals within change processes. In the context of program-level curriculum change, the subjects of interest are curriculum change agents, such as faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders involved in developing or otherwise changing the academic program. The microfoundational concepts I draw on

specifically here are sensemaking and logics. Sensemaking refers to an individual's process of reflection and meaning construction in order to better understand a particular phenomenon (Weick, 1995). Institutional logics refer to taken-for-granted guidelines of individual action within an organization (Powell & Colyvas, 2008; see also Friedland & Alford, 1991). As a change agent reflects and constructs meaning of a change process (sensemaking), that change agent draws, whether consciously or unconsciously, on institutional logics, to facilitate their thinking and actions.

Using these concepts can reveal the extent to which various paths for the arts and humanities are followed and why. The paths I have described involve organizational actors (e.g., faculty, staff, students) moving their arts and humanities programs in certain directions. As I described in chapter one, I use the institutional logics framework to show how individuals in the university draw on macro-level structures to guide decision-making (see Archer, 2000). The decisions they make in turn inform the directions of arts and humanities curriculum changes.

In this section, I highlight key studies that use microfoundational concepts that inform the present study. I first discuss the application of logics and agency to faculty and administrative (e.g., dean) work. Thereafter, I examine individual-level scholarship relevant to curriculum change. I discuss the dearth of literature in that regard as a specific gap this study seeks to fill.

**Microfoundations: Faculty and administrative work.** In recent years, scholars have used frameworks to reveal how faculty and administrators enact agency to navigate neoliberal environments. For example, Gonzales and Ayers (2018) showed how community college faculty channel the family logic to support and mentor students. Within the neoliberal paradigm, however, that support demanded emotional labor of faculty. Dugas et al. (2018) echoed Gonzales and Ayers' concerns regarding strain on faculty work. Dugas and colleagues specifically focused

on public regional universities, emphasizing that these institutions are under particular strains related to finances and academic identity. Those strains hark back to elements of striving that channel a neoliberal ideal (Gonzales, 2013; Morpew, 2009). Even where financial pressures racked up, many faculty strove to use their positions to serve students and enact decisions that centered human and academic, rather than financial, dimensions (see, for example, Collyer, 2015; Gonzales, 2013). Rejecting financial impetuses demonstrated a possible way to resist neoliberal pressures (Hachem, 2018).

Although resistance to neoliberalism is one way individuals enact agency, others use agency to further neoliberal goals. Martin (2018) showed how administrators channel neoliberal logics in their sense of their positions in higher education. At the same time, those administrators also valued certain academic ideals. As a result, administrators enacted agency in ways that combined neoliberal and academic logics. Canhilal et al. (2015) echoed the finding that academic and neoliberal logics coexist in the academy, although they instead emphasized that actors chose logics based on the situation: “When subject to conflicting institutional pressures, universities will try to find ways to simultaneously comply with managerial pressures and with the academic logic by developing highly differentiated responses according to the type of tasks” (p. 191).

These studies brought to bear institutional logics perspectives to reveal enactments of agency in the neoliberal academy. The various strategies faculty, administrators, and academic staff employed inform analysis in this study. By showing their responses to neoliberalism, curriculum change agents signal the path(s) for the arts and humanities they take.

**Microfoundations of curriculum change.** Few studies I have identified address microfoundational dimensions of organizational change regarding program development or other

curriculum changes. Stark et al. (1997) did focus on faculty roles in and perspectives on curriculum development but did not apply microfoundational organizational theory.

Nevertheless, their findings are relevant to the extent that they focus on individual perspectives about change as a dynamic interaction with the program change itself. Stark et al. (1997) found that faculty infrequently engaged with curriculum development and perceived that curricular changes usually happened in response to some impetus, such as external pressures. Stark et al. (1997) laid out recommendations that amounted to faculty development practices geared toward curriculum, and recommended future scholarship seek to better understand the faculty role and perspectives in various parts of curriculum development and program planning.

Despite 20 years having elapsed since Stark et al. (1997) called for more deep exploration into faculty perspectives on curriculum change, and over 50 publications citing their work, little scholarship has taken up this call. No study since has focused in particular on the arts and humanities, despite persistent concerns about larger changes in these fields (Brint et al., 2005; Di Leo, 2013; Editors, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Miller, 2012). This study revives Stark and colleagues' charge and applies microfoundational and logics perspectives as I have described.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I began by arguing the “crisis in the humanities” is not new, but given the neoliberal context, may be newly urgent. I mapped the history of higher education curriculum, in particular as the curriculum relates to arguments on and shifts in balancing what has been described as liberal versus practical. This history illuminates how shifts in the balance in one direction or the other are not inevitable per se and are influenced by external forces and in turn influence the external environment, in line with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) central thesis about the curriculum as a dynamic process.

I then attended to changes in arts and humanities fields and demonstrated that these changes are not as clear as some scholars and critics have painted them and must be understood more complexly. In the context of changes that do exist and may threaten qualities of arts and humanities fields, I suggested four paths for arts and humanities programs: 1) aggressively assert their value, 2) take no action and let changes come as they may, 3) adapt to neoliberal pressures, and 4) resist neoliberal norms. These four paths characterize options for arts and humanities programs and set the context for the possibilities of changes that I explore in this study's cases. I concluded by drawing on literature on microfoundational perspectives of faculty and administrative work to argue that these perspectives can illuminate the nature of changes in arts and humanities fields and enactment of agency in ways consistent with the present study's aims. Having established these connections to extant literature, I hereafter detail my methodological approach to establish changes in arts and humanities programs, and enactments of agency therein, in the neoliberal context.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In order to learn how curriculum change proceeds in arts and humanities and how curriculum change agents enact agency in those changes, I conducted a qualitative, multiple case study. In this chapter, I describe how multiple case study method guided this study and why it fits the research problem. Thereafter, I detail how I proceeded with my study including site selection, data collection, and data analysis. I conclude by addressing how I ensure the study's reliability and trustworthiness.

### **Multiple Case Study**

Because I asked how arts and humanities curriculum changes proceed in a neoliberal context and how individuals understand and enact agency in those processes, I chose multiple case study as my methodological approach to locate the answers to these research questions in real-world context (see Dyson & Gineshi, 2005; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). Case studies are vehicles for qualitative and quantitative data alike, and researchers may approach the use of cases in research through various epistemological and ontological frames (Stake, 2005). In this section, I explain my approach to multiple case study methods, justify the use of multiple case study methodology, and highlight key features of my case study approach.

The phenomenon of interest in this study is the nature of changing arts and humanities fields in higher education. I locate this phenomenon in the context of neoliberalism and the resultant changes to higher education because of the neoliberal paradigm. This position I take regarding the location of arts and humanities fields in a neoliberal paradigm suggests elements of what Guba and Lincoln (2005) described as a critical perspective. At the same time, I blur aspects of the critical tradition as Guba and Lincoln outlined it with postpositivist traditions of

conducting research to approximate the “reality” of the phenomenon (what Guba and Lincoln [2005] explained as “critical realism” [p. 193]).

I thus took up case studies for this pursuit to approximate answers to how and why arts and humanities curriculum changes proceed in a neoliberal context and how individuals understand and enact agency in those changes. I studied these phenomena in their real-world contexts where the line between phenomenon and context may blur (Yin, 2014), with a particular eye to the implications of neoliberalism as a force that has shaped higher education. By asking about curriculum changes in the neoliberal context and how individuals enacted agency in these processes, I worked through a problem that is embedded in its real-world context with its “*local particulars*” (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005, p. 3, emphasis in original). Further, case studies were appropriate for these questions because this method aligns well with “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2014), like the research questions I use.

**Multiple cases.** Inclusion of multiple cases allowed me to tease out differences between local particulars and broader themes, revealing how contexts for each case might affect findings (Stake, 2006). I aimed to use the cases in this study *instrumentally* (see Stake, 2005, 2006) so that the cases as described could serve as sorts of microcosms for the phenomena of interest I have described. Although findings for qualitative case studies are not generalizable per se (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005), by studying three cases I am able to identify findings that cut across multiple cases, beyond particulars of any individual case, to indicate the possibility that such findings are broadly applicable.

**Bounds of the cases.** In case study, the case is the unit of analysis, so its bounds are an important aspect for a researcher to consider (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005). A case study researcher demarcates clear bounds around the case of interest, be it an individual, organization, or process,

and studies everything within those bounds and nothing outside of them (Yin, 2014). In this study, the cases I analyze are arts and humanities curriculum change processes. Challenges arose in the demarcation of boundaries because, as participants described, the curriculum change processes overlapped with other ongoing changes. Therefore, I drew the bounds for each case in ways that included relevant changes, such as course changes and establishment of campus groups, without shifting focus away from the respective curriculum change processes. This flexibility in the bounds of the case showed how I was able, during data collection, to “hang loose but not too loose” (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005, pp. 45-46). In doing so, I could appropriately respond to the nebulous nature of curriculum changes in their local context.

### **Site Selection**

Before beginning data collection, I laid out criteria for including sites in this study. Criteria included institutional and curriculum change characteristics as well as capacity to access data. I collected data at Snowy Valley University (SVU), a large research institution; University of Northern Waters (UNW), a medium-sized comprehensive institution; and Little Falls State University (LFSU), a small baccalaureate institution (all institution names are pseudonyms). In this section, I lay out the criteria I used to identify sites and then describe how I proceeded in identifying sites.

**Institutional characteristics.** The institutions in this study shared the following characteristics: 1) four-year or higher institution; 2) located in the United States; 3) public control; and 4) having one of the following Carnegie classifications: Doctoral University (R2 or R3), Master’s College or University (M1, M2, or M3), or Baccalaureate College (Arts & Sciences Focus or Diverse Fields). In effect, all institutions were public, four-year, non-R1 (very

high research activity) institutions. Additionally, the institutions were all predominantly white institutions although racial makeup and history was not a criterion for sites.

By focusing on four-year programs in the United States, I responded to the concerns of others who have addressed the so-called crisis in the humanities (e.g., Di Leo, 2013; Miller, 2012; Nussbaum, 2010) in comparable contexts. Although the roles of arts and humanities in community colleges, private colleges and universities, Tribal institutions, and institutions outside of the United States are worth consideration, they are beyond the scope of this study. Regarding institutional control, by focusing on public higher education institutions, I respond to the likes of Giroux (2014), Hutner and Mohamed (2016), Newfield (2016), and others whose arguments about the changing nature of higher education focus specifically on public, rather than private, higher education. Indeed, Hutner and Mohamed pointed out that, when talking about arts and humanities, disproportionate attention is paid to private institutions. By focusing on public institutions, I can attend to an understudied group of institutions.

Finally, by excluding R1 (very high research activity) doctoral universities, I focused on public regional universities (Fryar, 2015; Henderson, 2007). One may argue my decision to include R2 (high research activity) institutions risks inclusion of some institutions that are better categorized as research universities, rather than public regional universities (Fryar, 2015). I would counter that the lines between public regional university and research university are unclear (see Fryar, 2015). I ultimately chose to leave R2 institutions in as possibilities for the study and approached universities on a case-by-case basis to ensure they met other standards for inclusion.

Focusing on non-R1 institutions allowed me to consider the effect of *striving* institutions (Gonzales, 2013; Morphew, 2009), which are proceeding through isomorphic processes that

make them more alike (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). This is to say that because of “mission creep” and the prestige associated with being an R1 institution institutions that are not classified that way often strive to become R1-classified. The changes inherent in institutional striving lead to institutions becoming more similar. Striving is a neoliberal process in its focus on universities as competitive entities in a marketplace. Because this study presumes neo-institutional theory and a neoliberal context, I therefore contend that non-R1, public regional universities present the ideal sites for my study.

Regarding other institutional characteristics, such as student body and geography, I chose institutions that differed in student body size (one small, one medium, one large) and U.S. state. To the latter, the three institutions in this study are in different states in the United States. Such variation helps illuminate how various institutional characteristics relate to arts and humanities changes and helps ensure that commonalities across cases are not particular to institutional characteristics that I do not deem as important as those I first described.

**Program curriculum change.** In addition to institutional characteristics, I chose institutions that had recent (i.e., since 2014), significant curriculum changes in arts and humanities. I indicate that I seek out those going through *significant* change because many curricular change processes amount to small adjustments (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). By focusing on significant changes, I sought to ascertain understandings about broader changes in arts and humanities, rather than simply adjustments which may be more idiosyncratic. At the outset of the study, I defined “significant curriculum change” as one of the following: new program development, program closure, and/or other program change that transcends one or two individual courses but is not at the scope of many multiple university units. Additionally, regarding the *recentness* of the change, I sought out curricular changes that occurred in the last

five years (since 2014). This way, the change is fresh in memory and data can focus on the change process itself, and the reasons for initiation.

At all the sites I identified, the curriculum changes of interest involved new programs: new majors at each SVU and LFSU and a new minor at UNW. All changes included multiple institutional agents and involved ongoing revisions and other efforts related to the curriculum change. Although some aspects of each case predated 2014, in all cases the central curriculum change of interest manifested in a program that started in or after 2014.

**Access.** The final aspect of sites I considered for selection is access to the institution and curriculum change agents connected to the program(s) in which significant curriculum change occurred. I chose programs to which I could feasibly access curriculum change agents for interviews and documents. For example, I disqualified one program as a possible site because my first contact person at the site explained that the founder of the curriculum change of interest had since died.

**Site identification.** To identify sites that fit the aforementioned criteria, I used online searches and communications with personal and professional networks. The latter, which included posting requests for sites to social media and emails to organizational email lists, yielded some possible sites. Ultimately I included none of the sites I identified through this method because they did not meet one or more criteria, and/or the primary contact did not respond to requests.

Regarding online searching, I searched higher education news sites such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education*, aggregated news on websites such as Google and Twitter, and websites specific to institutions that fit my institutional criteria for recent curriculum changes in arts and humanities programs. I used keywords such as “curriculum

revision,” “program change,” “new major,” “new minor,” and “new degree program.” I sometimes paired these keywords with “arts” and/or “humanities,” or specific fields such as “history,” “English,” “languages,” “music,” and “theatre” to delimit search results to those that fit program field criteria. These searching attempts yielded several possible sites, including curriculum changes such as revisions in English and liberal studies; new programs in Africana Studies, French, Jewish Studies, and Latino [sic] Studies; and new concentrations in digital history and military history. I confirmed the first two sites that fit my criteria and wherein my primary contact person agreed to help with the study. These two sites were Snowy Valley University (new major in Artistic Media Technologies, a pseudonym) and University of Northern Waters (new minor in digital humanities). Although I identified several other sites this way, many did not respond to email requests. Some contact people for these sites did follow up initially but did not respond to further inquiries; others responded but indicated information that disqualified their site from inclusion. For example, one contact person indicated that although there was a new program, it was not curricular in nature. Another indicated that because the programs were since put under moratorium that he did not believe they would be appropriate to study. In that case, the programs being under moratorium did not disqualify the site from my study, but the inability to access individuals involved did disqualify the site.

I identified the third site, Little Falls State University (new major in writing) through an unusual and unexpected method. While on a social media site, I came across a promoted post advertising an online writing major at what I identified as a public regional university that fit my criteria. I sought out more information on the university’s website and identified and contacted the person who became my primary contact. The site fit my criteria and curriculum change agents were willing to talk to me, unusual though the identification method was.

## Data Collection

Across the three sites, I conducted interviews, obtained documents and news articles, and identified aspects of campus relevant to the curriculum change in its context. I physically visited the three sites and collected all data in 2018. In this section, I describe my process of data collection, which for each site began with identifying a person who served as my primary contact person and ensuring compliance with local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). I then describe the nature of interviews, documents, and additional data in the study.

**Preparation for data collection.** As I described in the previous section, during site identification I reached out to a person listed as contact for the curriculum change described. For all three cases I ultimately included in this study, the primary contact person was named in a news article and I found their email address on the institutional website. I held preliminary conversations with the primary contacts from each site to ensure the case fit outlined criteria, assess the primary contact and their colleagues' willingness to be involved in the study, and begin to identify individuals to interview and documents relevant to the curriculum change process.

Following conversations with my primary contact at each site, I submitted Michigan State University IRB documentation, which identified this study as exempt from review, to the respective sites' institutional IRBs. At all sites, the IRBs accepted the Michigan State University IRB exemption from review and approved this study to be conducted.

**Interviews.** At two of my sites, LFSU and SVU, I contacted potential interview participants directly. At UNW, my primary contact person contacted and set up 11 (out of 12) interviews and I contacted a 12th participant directly. I conducted 20 interviews total: three at Snowy Valley University, 12 at University of Northern Waters, and five at Little Falls State



University. I interviewed 19 (out of 20) participants face-to-face, including all LFSU and SVU participants, and one using an online video conferencing platform. Most face-to-face interviews took place in participants' offices. Four interviews (all at UNW) took place in different, agreed-upon locations, such as campus conference rooms. Interviews lasted from 40 to 132 minutes. On average (i.e., mean), interviews at each UNW and LFSU were 60 minutes long. At SVU, interviews averaged 95 minutes. Table 2 provides more detail.

Site	Interviews		Documents	Additional information (e.g., observations)
	Number	Mean length		
Snowy Valley University	3	95 minutes	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of capstone performances</li> </ul>
University of Northern Waters	12	60 minutes	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional, off the record, conversations with participant Bob</li> </ul>
Little Falls State University	5	60 minutes	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal campus tour</li> <li>• Observation of activism artifacts</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Description of data collected from each site.

In interviews, I asked participants questions in six parts: introduction, case details, making retrospective sense of the case, plausible actions and changes, relational dimensions, and wrapping up. I asked questions such as, “what was your role in [curriculum change]?” “Why was it important for [institution] to undergo [curriculum change]?” “What were your contributions and why did you contribute in those ways?” Questions flowed from this study’s research questions and theoretical framework (see Kvale, 1992) and thus focused on understanding how participants made sense of arts and humanities curriculum changes, the institutional logics that guide their thinking, and how they enacted agency in curriculum change processes. In a separate study of a major curriculum change in a veterinary medicine program (Hill & Frenedo, 2019), I asked questions that get at some of the topics described above. Additionally, I piloted the interview protocol with two individuals who were part of an arts and humanities curriculum

change other than those included in this study. These interviewing activities helped me refine the interview protocol before entering the field. See Appendix for the complete interview protocol.

Interviews were semi-structured. I frequently followed up with points participants made and interacted with participants as I would in a conversational setting. To this end, I was conscious of emphasizing the participant as a human rather than mere source of data (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Following up in these interviews usually involved requesting clarification or examples. Further, if compelling topics or questions arose in multiple, early interviews at a site, I would ask about those topics in later interviews. For example, at UNW, many participants in my first several interviews indicated the institution was a positive environment for interdisciplinarity. Because so many repeated this point, I asked participants in later interviews about it. I ended all interviews with a by asking participants to suggest others who were involved in the curriculum change process that I could interview. This use of snowball sampling (Creswell, 2004) enabled me to connect with as many curriculum change agents within the bounds of each case as possible.

I asked all participants if they agreed to be recorded using an audio recording device. 18 (out of 20) participants agreed to be recorded, including all LFSU and SVU participants. Two participants at UNW did not agree to be recorded. Participants occasionally asked that certain topics they brought up not be included in the final manuscript, which I took note of and ensured I did not include quotes or descriptions of what was said on those topics.

For all participants, I took notes during the interview to remind myself of particular emphases, pauses, gestures, and other elements not captured by audio recording. I also took notes to help guide my questioning. For example, if I had a follow-up question about a particular topic, I would write down something the participant said on the topic, circle it, and come back to it

later. For participants who agreed to be recorded, five of the interviews I transcribed first using Trint, an online artificial intelligence transcription service, then reviewed the files and corrected them myself to ensure accuracy. The other 13 audio files I sent to a professional transcriptionist and reviewed afterward. For the two participants who did not agree to be recorded, I took notes on the conversation immediately following, and expanded on and organized those notes later in the day of each respective interview, using both notes taken during the interview and memory of the conversation. I directly quote those participants sparingly because I did not take many notes on what they said verbatim but instead focused on themes. To protect all participants' identities, I do not share who agreed to be recorded beyond institutional affiliation.

I assigned pseudonyms to all participants. In my process of member checking, I ensured participants agreed to their assigned pseudonyms; if they did not, I changed their pseudonym at their request. I address the process of member checking in greater detail later in this chapter.

**Documents.** Documents such as program proposals and press releases express values and other aspects of the curricular change initiative that individuals wish to highlight. Documents allowed me to verify what I heard in interviews and saw on campus sites. Further, documents helped me expand on certain aspects of each case in my analysis.

I collected documents before, during, and after my visits at the three sites. Participants sent me directly or shared with me via Google Drive most of the documents I use in the study. Some documents I found through the universities' respective websites. Other institutional agents (e.g., admissions officers, IRB officers) provided me with a few other documents. All in all, I obtained 17 documents from SVU, one document from UNW, and four documents from LFSU (see Table 2).

**Additional data sources.** While on site, I noted aspects of campus and attended events relevant to the cases. At SVU, I observed AMT capstone performances that took place while I was on site. At UNW, participant Bob and I talked throughout my visit outside the confines of my recorded interview with him. At LFSU, I took pictures of signs and media that resulted from faculty activism. At all three sites, I noted physical aspects of campus where relevant to more fully understand and describe the cases of curriculum change. Including multiple sources of data – in this study, interviews, documents, and additional aspects as relevant – supported the study’s reliability (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). I discuss more on reliability and trustworthiness later in this chapter, after I address data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

I began analysis alongside data collection and continued beyond the period during which I collected data. I kept analytical memos during data collection. These memos helped me understand what I learned from my time on sites and to develop preliminary codes. As Dyson and Gineshi (2005) argued, “Threads begin to come together when *many* examples... are analyzed and common threads are found; that is, some of the categories and sub-categories... will frequently recur” (pp. 100-101). The recurring threads I identified helped me prepare for developing codes and, later, themes. Further, I kept analytical memos for within each case, as well as cross-case analytical memos, in line with the importance of both within-case and cross-case analysis of multiple case study (Stake, 2006).

Upon completion of data collection and transcription, I uploaded these interview transcripts and notes, documents, and additional data to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program. Using neo-institutional theory as a guide, I conducted structural, attribute, concept, and provisional coding and remained open to additional codes (Saldaña, 2016). This first round of

coding allowed me to brainstorm as I reflected on analytic memos and worked my way through data (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005). Specific codes included institutional logics (e.g., academic logic, democratic logic, family logic, managerial logic, market logic; Canhilal et al., 2015; Friedland & Alford, 1991); descriptive aspects (e.g., participant's background); and case chronology. I coded excerpts of various lengths, ranging from a few words to minutes-long exchanges, and coded excerpts with all relevant codes. This flexibility and multiplicity of codes further highlights the nature of first round coding in this study as a process of brainstorming and re-familiarizing myself with data to enhance and challenge previous assumptions and recurring threads (Dyson & Gineshi, 2005).

Following my first round of coding, I employed a process of themeing [sic] the data (Saldaña, 2016). This process enabled me to flesh out a priori codes (i.e., those related to institutional logics), condense other codes, and clarify relationships between codes. Proceeding with additional coding beyond the first round helped ensure more careful data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). This themeing phase of analysis allowed me “to draw out a code’s truncated essence by elaborating on its meanings” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 231). Put differently, the process of themeing to transform the implementation of first-round codes into detailed descriptions of what the coded data meant in the context of my study. For example, I themed excerpts of interviews and documents coded “academic logic” to elaborate on how the excerpt expressed the academic logic. Some themes under the code “academic logic” included, “collegial decision-making,” “freedom to research and teach as faculty see fit,” “advance field,” and “student learning.”

During the themeing phase, I used NVivo’s coding query function to identify and theme excerpts coded for both academic logic and managerial logic and academic logic and market logic. This activity highlighted the coexistence of manifestations of these logics. After running

and saving the query results, I themed the excerpts using the aforementioned process to detail the relationship of those codes (i.e., academic logic, managerial logic, market logic). Because this activity highlighted coexistence of various logics, I was able to address the possibility of hybrid institutional logics (see Lepori, 2016).

### **Reliability and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers engage in a variety of procedures to ensure reliability of their findings and analysis. For this study, I employed rich description, triangulation (in the form of sources of data and theory), and member checking to guide the reliability of the study. I also considered how my positionality may affect the study. I discuss these aspects in this section.

**Rich description.** This dimension of reliability involves details of data collection and analysis such that my procedures are clear and transparent, and that my findings and analysis flow logically from what I studied (Creswell, 2014). In this chapter, I detailed my collection and analysis of data accordingly. In the following chapters, I present thorough descriptions of each case so that the unique qualities of individual cases are not lost in commonalities that emerge from cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006).

**Triangulation.** Triangulation refers to ensuring the reliability of findings by checking across elements of the study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, triangulation involved multiple sources of data (i.e., interviews, documents, and additional observations and notes on campus contexts) and connections to theories (e.g., neoliberal critique and neo-institutionalism, in the forms of sensemaking and institutional logics.) As I described with regard to documents, I used documents such as news articles to check facts and ideas against other sources of data (Stake, 2006). I also connected findings to concepts from my theoretical framework throughout analysis.

In this way, triangulation supports reliability by illuminating how data confirms, complements, and/or complicates aspects of theory.

**Member checking.** I discussed findings and analysis with participants, a process known as member checking (Creswell, 2014), which gave me the opportunity to ensure descriptions of cases and findings were consistent with participants' experiences. I shared brief summaries of each how the curriculum change proceeded and my findings with participants at each site to gather their feedback. Where they had suggestions, I returned to my descriptions of cases and findings in order to understand why they made certain suggestions and adjusted as needed. During this time, I also verified participants' pseudonyms and confirmed use of quotations.

**Positionality.** A researcher can name their biases and unpack how social identities and life experiences might affect their approach to a study (Creswell, 2014; Kvale, 1992). This description of one's positionality supports reliability by addressing how one shows up in the research. Here I describe my own positionality as it relates to this study, specifically emphasizing my educational experiences and socio-economic background.

A graduate of a liberal arts college, I blossomed thanks to my liberal education, including exploration of fields like dance, African-American Studies, English literature, and social work. I was a theater major and committed myself to not only growing as an artist (i.e., through developing technique) but also growing as a thinker in theater. I studied abroad in England, where I learned about dramatic criticism and immersed myself in the study of Shakespeare. In my final semester of college, my coursework and senior project focused on LGBTQ+ theater, including queer theatrical history, the making of queer theater, and dimensions of rhetoric and linguistics as they intersected with my LGBTQ+ activism and artistic interests. I look back and see that education as foundational for myself as an artist, activist, and scholar.

At the same time as I explored LGBTQ+ theater, the theater department was creating an arts management program. That new program expanded on some experiences of students who studied both business and theater, or were involved in aspects of arts organization management, such as fundraising. I recall a management-oriented student boasting that the arts management program would finally make our theater program *useful*, drawing on what I know now to be the neoliberal logic of the vocational as useful (and, by the same token, liberal as *useless*.)

My educational path after undergrad saw me begin working for a predominantly STEM-oriented university as an admissions officer, as well as pursuing my master's in educational administration where I became interested in reflecting on neoliberalism, vocationalism, and education. I would spend my days telling prospective students and their parents how our university would help them land a job with lucrative salary, and my evenings lambasting the erosion of higher education's focus on the public good. Needless to say, I hope, I did not last long as an admissions officer.

At the same time as I advocate for the arts and humanities, for education not just as a vehicle for job and salary attainment, I recognize how my own background from a wealthy family permits me to think this way. I did not take out student loans nor did I go to college thinking about a job. My parents encouraged me not to, but instead to explore and grow.

What I hope to convey here is how personally important the arts and humanities, especially the explicitly non-vocational dimensions of these fields, are for me in higher education. I grew as a thinker, a learner, and a human in my arts and humanities-oriented education, and I have never needed to know how to manage an arts organization in my professional life. Indeed, when I worked in admissions, I noticed my supervisor actively sought



liberally-educated employees because she believed they were more capable of relating to people and appreciating the human dimensions of our often-dehumanizing work.

Thus, when I hear of theater programs embracing arts management content, English programs drifting toward professional communication, and the like, I wonder where the learners like me will grow as thinkers and learners, and not just professionals. To be sure, many learners grow in many different ways and professional preparation programs can infuse the development of learners in ways the arts and humanities do well. I am not staking a claim against the vocational and the professional. Rather, I fear that uncritical adoption of the “useful” threatens the benefits of the “useless.”

Finally, my social identities may affect how I engage in this study. In particular, I call attention to my socio-economic background, which I tie specifically to how I experienced college as a theater and English literature student. As a person from an upper-middle class background with no experience with economic insecurity, I was not overly preoccupied during college with how I would make a living after graduating. This positionality is relevant to this study because a chief complaint of arts and humanities in higher education is that these fields inadequately prepare students for their personal financial future (a neoliberally-oriented complaint.) When I criticize the limitedness of this complaint about arts and humanities, I must consider that, as an undergraduate student, I did not need to think about my personal future as much as most other college students who had student loans (where I had none as an undergraduate) and whose parents may not have been able to support them financially beyond graduation (where mine could, and did.)

## **Conclusion**

This study employed multiple case study methodology to investigate how arts and humanities curriculum changes proceed in neoliberal contexts and how arts and humanities curriculum change agents enacted agency in those processes. With a focus on significant curriculum changes at regional public universities, I identified three cases of arts and humanities curriculum changes: development of each the Artistic Media Technologies major at Snowy Valley University, digital humanities minor at University of Northern Waters, and writing major at Little Falls State University. For these cases I interviewed faculty and staff involved those changes, obtained relevant documents, and noted other aspects of the curriculum change processes and the respective campuses. Analysis coincided with and followed the data collection period, and I employed rich description, triangulation, member checking, and consideration of positionality to establish trustworthiness.

In the following chapters, I lay out the chronology of each case to explain how and why curriculum change proceeded at each site and highlight curriculum change agents' understandings of and enactments of agency within change. These chapters detail institutional characteristics, origins of program changes, salient aspects of curriculum changes as described in data, some future steps for the programs, and the importance of the changes as described by participants. Thereafter, in chapter seven, I analyze these cases through an institutional logics framework and, in chapter eight, discuss this analysis in light of arts and humanities at public regional universities and put forth implications.

## CHAPTER 4: ARTISTIC MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES MAJOR AT SNOWY VALLEY UNIVERSITY

The Artistic Media Technologies (AMT, a pseudonym) major at Snowy Valley University (SVU) came from at least two efforts connected to music technology and responded to contemporary institutional goals at SVU. In this chapter, I lay out chronologically the development of the AMT major, including its origins and ongoing changes. I conclude with curriculum change agents' perceptions of the program's future and the importance of this major. I begin with institutional context about SVU.

### **Snowy Valley University**

Founded as a normal school in the early 20th century, SVU is a large, doctoral (higher research activity) institution that participants described in ways that made it consistent with a *striving* university (Gonzales, 2013; Morpew, 2009). Located in a small city, SVU is one of the less expensive public universities in its state in terms of sticker price for in-state students. The tuition cost is about 10% more in 2017-18 than the least expensive public institution and about 20% less than the most expensive. Additionally, students enrolled in the fine arts college pay an additional tuition fee.

SVU's student body is mostly in-state but includes students from most U.S. states and several countries. The student body is 70% white, and although students of color make up about a quarter of the student body, as participants pointed out, students of color are disproportionately underrepresented in the music school, compared to the university. The university enrolls approximately 23,000 students and, through its seven degree-granting colleges, offers over 250 degree programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and certificate levels. The university is also affiliated with both a law school and medical school. Regarding enrollments, associate

professor Jason described concerns at the upper administration levels because enrollments in years prior (as recently as 2010) exceeded 25,000. A recent news article confirmed that SVU’s undergraduate enrollment decreased by more than 10% from 2011 to 2018.

The fine arts college houses the music school as well as programs in theatre, dance, and studio art. Despite some collaborations between units, participants talked about the feeling of being siloed in the music school, and the music school has its own building and facilities separate from other arts programs. The separation between units in the fine arts college seemed to play an important role in how AMT came to be, and some tensions in the program’s future.

### **Development of Artistic Media Technologies**

The AMT major arose largely from at least two connected threads: a sequence of audio engineering courses that SVU staff member and instructor Philip offered, and artistic technology collaborations across SVU performing arts programs that date back to the 1990s. Participant Roland was involved in those collaborations and participant Jason joined the SVU school of music later. Table 3 summarizes SVU participants and their institutional roles.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Department role</b>
Jason	Associate professor, composition
Philip	Instructor (academic staff), recording
Roland	Professor and associate director, school of music

**Table 3:** SVU curriculum change agents who participated in the study.

Jason’s hiring in 2011 was integral to the development of AMT as a fully-realized major. Since the program’s initial development, AMT has undergone one major curricular revision and faculty indicated another may be in the works, along with future integration with campus-wide initiatives related to technology and e-sports in particular. In this section, I map the development of AMT chronologically with attention to moments of note. I begin by identifying and describing the roles of various curriculum change agents.

**Curriculum change agent roles.** Jason, who was named in press releases about the program's development and whom Philip and Roland described as a central figure in the major's development, explained curriculum change agents' roles this way:

[Roland], um, is the one who knew everything. That he had done the curriculum change before, he knew how it worked. And then in terms of the actual hierarchy, [the director of the school of music] was in charge because he was the director of the school. ... When we did the next round of things it was mostly me and the person who's on the term position leading most of those changes. And then in terms of, um get- making sure we were accredited and everything that was me and [Roland].

Finally, Jason described Philip as essential because, although he was a staff member, Philip has for several years taught a series of audio engineering courses and ran a recording studio housed at SVU. Those roles made Philip indispensable to imagining a full major beyond the audio engineering coursework and internships he led.

**Program origins.** I identified two important predecessors to the AMT program that laid the necessary foundations for the AMT program. First, Philip had been offering curricular and co-curricular opportunities in live sound recording for several years. Second, Roland and faculty in other arts disciplines participated in interdisciplinary collaborations that centered technology. I discuss these origins in the following sections.

***Philip's role: Sound recording studio and courses.*** Philip, a staff member in sound recording at SVU, had been with the institution for 30 years. Philip described that his role at the institution was primarily to run a sound studio, a profit-generating unit within the school of music. To support the sound studio, Philip explained,

I immediately created two upper level courses because my job entails running the studio as a business. We're not funded at all. And it was impossible to do all the work without good, really competent student employees. And ... after two classes that wasn't nearly enough background. So, I had to create two other classes—which I've never been compensated for—in order to have the student employees that were good enough ... So, I manage all of that and I have to have students trained, as I say, who are competent enough to be able to handle recordings and be reliable. There's a lot to know. So anyway, that took four classes. So that started only in my second year when I realized it was impossible to do it on my own. And uh, then- those four classes I've taught for whatever that's been- twenty-nine years or whatever.

Philip went on to explain that those courses, which focus on audio engineering, are now part of the AMT major as one of its major core areas.

In talking about Philip's role, Jason highlighted that audio engineering courses were very popular: "Just call it audio engineering and people show up," he joked. Those courses attracted students in and outside of music alike and classes were often full. This popularity is important because it set AMT faculty up for the possibility of making AMT just about audio engineering, a possibility they ultimately decided against. I detail that decision, but first explain other foundations of the AMT major.

***Roland's role: Interdisciplinary collaboration.*** Roland, who has been at SVU for 26 years, explained that "The initial movement towards [AMT] was actually to try to develop an interdisciplinary program within the [College of Arts] that centered on arts and technology... with music, dance, theatre, and visual art." Roland recalled that interdisciplinary collaboration across arts fields was project-based, rather than explicitly curricular, and described the example

of a technology-intensive production of *Doctor Faustus* that involved dance, music, theatre, and cutting-edge technology. These efforts were on a “project by project basis,” but in time faculty from the various arts disciplines formed a working group and “got some funding from the provost’s office for this [interdisciplinary arts technology program] to be developed.”

Roland described that the working group engaged in a few different activities in anticipation of developing an academic program:

Part of what this group did was, um, brainstorming, dreaming. Part of it was sort of methodic researching of other programs around the country that were collaborative. We had- at one point we had a trip to New York a group of us, a group of faculty and students to visit a number of programs there that were similar to what we might be looking at and so, so it was it was over several years and a lot of concerted effort to working towards this [program].

The collaborative arts technology program never came into fruition. Although the working group produced “proposals of what it might look like,” including features of core courses and “tracks” in each of the arts disciplines, Roland explained that

When it came to actually trying to get four different units, four different curricular committees from separate units to move forward on this, it just didn’t work... Because at least in terms of the sort of the way curricular change and things like that happens here, and if this is gonna involve all the departments then there’d have to be things that would come from each curriculum committee.

Roland and other collaborators in Music recognized that the interdisciplinary program was not moving forward but saw that they had certain resources in place that would allow them to create a music technology program. Those foundational resources included the audio

engineering coursework sequence that Philip taught, a laptop orchestra facilitated by Roland, and a faculty opening that paved the way for hiring Jason.

**Jason's hiring: 2011.** Roland and Philip both pointed to Jason's hiring in 2011 as a pivotal moment for AMT. Indeed, Philip described Jason's hire as "the most important hire in the school of music in the last 20 years." The music school director sought out a person with expertise necessary to support curricular content that would eventually comprise AMT. Jason's predecessor was in music composition and although Jason was hired for music composition, he had a background in music technology that prepared him to both construct and sustain a major like AMT. Roland elaborated:

We specifically redesigned that position to bring in a faculty member that had that kind of expertise and so once he got here there were changes that he made to the music composition program which involve having more electronic music and technology courses available for the composition program.

That expansion of electronic music and technology courses supported both the music composition program and helped lay the foundation for the AMT program.

Shortly after he was hired, Jason explained, the then-director of the school of music approached him about developing a technology program for the school of music. The intention was to bundle existing courses and opportunities, including the audio engineering courses, with new courses. In the following sections, I detail the program's development.

**Artistic Media Technologies Minor: 2013.** Although the director of the school of music wanted to start with a major, the first step became creating a minor. Roland explained,

Logistically, strategically, that we started with a minor. That's something that's easier to do in terms of, it's not as many classes that are required, there's not as many- if



something's a minor then in terms of um, accreditation, um, like, if you have a Bachelor of Music degree or a Bachelor of Science Degree or a Bachelor of Arts degree that then, both in terms of overall general sort of university requirements for what has to go in those, but also with our accrediting agency, the National Association of Schools of Music, there are certain things—that degree has to have these certain components in it. ...that problem doesn't exist for a minor.

Put another way, creating the minor was important in the development of the major because “what was pivotal was to be incremental.” Developing the minor also helped with determining “feasibility,” according to Roland, for identifying and developing student interest.

Faculty established the program's unusual name during the development of the minor. Roland explained that he and other faculty originally proposed the minor with the name “music technology.” However, there “were people on the music curriculum committee that refused to allow it to have the word music,” Roland explained. He told me those people believed “that wasn't the role of the school of music to be offering those kinds of things,” so they had to change the name. The name they chose – for which I use the pseudonym Artistic Media Technologies because the major name is unusual if not unique among music programs – discarded the word music. Roland then explained a second challenge to the name that required another change:

When it went to the college curriculum committee level, and it got to there, they wouldn't allow it not to have the word music on it.

*Interviewer:* So, you had the school of music saying it can't be music-

*Roland:* Right.

*Interviewer:* -and the college saying it has to be music.

*Roland:* Yes.

To satisfy the simultaneous requirement to use and not use the word music, curriculum change agents added “hyphen-music” to the program’s official title. For continuity’s sake, in this document I continue to refer to the program as AMT.

**AMT content.** In terms of program content, four important features of the AMT major’s development arose: the decision not to make the program an audio engineering program, inclusion of electives, the creation of variable topic upper-level courses, and development of a capstone. The decision to take up a scope broader than just audio engineering undergirds the other three features. Jason shared that Philip “was saying we can’t be graduating all these audio engineers every year. That’s impractical. It’s one of the most competitive fields, and people aren’t buying music and people are making recordings in their garage and their basements.” As I previously described, audio engineering courses were reliably popular with students, but Philip and others wanted the AMT program to be broader than just audio engineering. Ultimately, audio engineering was established as one of five areas, and the course sequence Philip developed in that area “fit right in.”

Roland also emphasized to me that there was an attempt to include coursework from other fields. This coursework would require students to take what Roland described as “cognate electives.” In establishing cognate electives, however, other departments expressed to AMT developers that courses could not be guaranteed for AMT students due to enrollment restrictions. Thus, Roland explained, the list of electives had to include something within the control of AMT faculty:

We had a list of electives of which each person said, yeah it’s fine for it to be on this electives [list] since you have these other ones that they can take ‘cause probably they’ll never have room in our class. So, we had to add to make it so that it was feasible for our

students to be able to graduate. We had to add one more, we made a special topics in [artistic media technologies], which is our own class that could count as part of that elective set so that if there wasn't anything available in physics or communications or art or something of those that they just couldn't get into, that we could offer our own that would fulfill that part... and to a large extent it had to be that way.

The electives created enabled AMT students to complete requirements related to cognates without depending on availability of courses in other departments. The need for electives within AMT led to the creation of variable topic upper-level courses, courses that explored advanced music and sound technology content such as video programming and MIDI orchestration.

Variable topic upper-level courses accommodated two competing needs: first, to offer a variety of courses for advanced AMT students, and second, to fulfill SVU's institutional "rule of 20," which states that each course must have 20 students enrolled. Curriculum change agents saw that creating the diversity of classes needed at the upper levels would mean under-enrolling them all. The creation of variable topic upper-level courses allowed the program to enroll all upper-level students in one course whose content changed as needs of the students changed.

Curriculum change agents also created a capstone course for the AMT major that allowed students to develop a technologically-oriented project independently. Capstone projects included phone application ("app") development, album production, and animation production. Jason believed the capstones to be an important feature of the new program, but one he described as "compromised" when the program's design changed from accommodating 40 students majoring (as in the original proposal) to 80 students. I address this topic next.

**40 students to 80 students.** When Jason and colleagues submitted the AMT proposal to the university provost, having been approved by school and college curriculum committees with

little fanfare, the provost sent the proposal back indicating that he wanted the program to have double the number of students majoring in it. That meant instead of the program accommodating 40 students (10 per class year), it would have 80 students (20 per class year). All three participants indicated this request from the upper administration as an important moment in the development of the AMT major. Philip captured the group's frustration in describing that the change from 40 to 80 majors would create a "preposterous workload" and asking rhetorically, "What in the marketplace makes you think that having 80 majors is a good idea? I don't think there's any reason to believe—I personally have absolutely no evidence."

Although there was little additional talk of Philip's marketplace concern, Jason echoed the workload concern, and concerns about having enough other resources for the program. By doubling from 40 to 80 majors, the capstone would also double in size, effectively requiring an instructor to oversee 20 capstone projects each year instead of 10. Later in our conversation, I asked about what the program would have ideally, and Jason brought up the limitations the capstone again:

So, the capstone is ideological, but we don't have the faculty resources where the students really get the attention they need for a year-long project. So, we're- we're not really doing it. Like, we are having capstone projects, but you know meeting with six students, um, meeting with three sections of six students is just—stretches somebody way too thin. We can't really know all the technical stuff or facilitate all the technical stuff required for twenty projects. We really need more space, like actual space like for students to do live sound and stuff like that. So, when we didn't have that space we made that class entirely compromised. ... It's not a dream to essentially not have them have a lot of access to various equipment to do live sound as a practicum. All of the events that we run and

everything where the students do the technology, as part of a live sound practicum, are all geared towards, not popular music and they're all in a recital hall. So that sucks. They should be in a space without reverb and it should be like, they should get to produce like bands in concerts, but we don't have a space for that.

Jason indicated that he and other curriculum change agents did not add an extra instructional position for the capstone, so the fixed-term faculty member overseeing capstones could not give individual attention to students. Space concerns and lack of resources also stymied the major's ideal roll-out. Jason also said, "We asked for one too few faculty, and not enough resources and certainly not enough perpetual budget." By perpetual budget, Jason specifically raised concerns about equipment wear and tear:

When they doubled the number of majors and we got more equipment and obviously that's more stuff breaking, more stuff to be replacing. And a whole 'nother room of equipment. Like a whole 'nother room. And none of that was calculated in, like what we thought we would need every year in equipment costs.

A new director of the school of music started around the same time as the AMT major's roll-out. The new director was not privy to the details of AMT's development, so to establish a budget for the major the new director told Jason, "Write up a plan." Looking back, Jason expressed that he could have used that prompt to get more resources for the program:

What I should've done is just pretended like it was a different amount of money. But I didn't, I took the actual amount of money per year that I'd agreed to with the previous director instead of just saying, "Oh we're double majors, why don't I just say it was double that." ... My inclination was just like, "Yeah, that's what we agreed to, that's

what I'll try to make work,” and then saying, “But we might need more money here and there,” not realizing that, um, that’s not how it’s actually gonna play out.

With that budget in place, AMT’s resource shortage remained a challenge. Indeed, even with the hiring of a new tenure-track faculty member in 2018, the program continued to be resource-constrained. Jason summed up frustrations about the doubling in majors this way: “that change, just really broke a lot of the idealism down into just, how the fuck are we gonna get this done.”

**Beginning and major review: 2014 to 2018.** The first AMT class started in Fall 2014 and some students had taken enough of the pre-existing courses that they graduated with a degree in AMT in the 2015-16 academic year. Following the establishment of the program, curriculum change agents revisited the upper-level variable courses. Jason described they “went through this gigantic curriculum review” that was detailed in documents submitted to a music accreditation agency. The bulk of this curriculum review involved addressing the upper-level variable topics because, according to one curriculum revision document:

With only 10 majors per year, our courses were at risk of being cancelled based on minimum enrollment requirements. To avoid this problem the curriculum was designed such that many of our classes were highly flexible, 5000-level, and variable topic. ...

With 80 majors we now have the opposite problem: our highly flexible, 5000-level, variable topic courses, some of which serve multiple student populations, will now have over-enrollment issues, such that the necessary class sizes will not fit in the appropriate classrooms.

Therefore, courses needed to be specific, rather than variable-topic. The revision involved transforming courses accordingly and processes within the institution and with the appropriate accreditation agency to approve the revisions.

Other revisions between 2014 and 2018 related to course offerings in other programs.

Roland explained that revisions have been common:

I think we've revised it three times. It's not a very, it's not a very old program. We've revised things three times in terms of, to make adjustments for things and new classes that we had, and changes of faculty and staff and things like that.

Roland continued by explaining that, because of the limitations other departments placed on elective courses for AMT majors, AMT revisions also removed many electives. However, Roland explained, "We got some of the other departments mad at us for taking them out." I clarified that other departments did not guarantee openings in courses for AMT majors but were also upset at those courses not being included as AMT electives. Roland responded, "this is how curricular development goes at a university." In the member checking process, Roland emphasized that this challenging back-and-forth with other departments, a process that echoed the earlier attempt to create an interdisciplinary, multi-department arts technology program, characterized many of the challenges in establishing the AMT major.

In addition to these revisions, Jason explained that the incoming tenure-track faculty member would probably be responsible for ongoing curricular adjustments. In this way, Jason showed how ongoing curriculum changes were still to come. I address aspects of future changes to AMT in the following section.

### **Next Steps for Artistic Media Technologies**

Participants indicated that the studio art department was working on an artistic technology major of its own. Roland hoped that program would be like AMT for studio art, in the way that AMT is currently for music. This way, the programs could be linked in both crossover courses and in name. However, Roland had not heard anything as of our interview and

since the studio art technology program's development seemed to be underway, he was not sure that program's faculty were going to affiliate in any formal sense with AMT in the music school.

As I was conducting interviews in spring of 2018, the school of music had just hired a new, tenure-track faculty member for the AMT program whom Jason described as “gung-ho.” That faculty member began in the department in Fall 2018 and, according to Jason, will be involved in future changes to the major. The likeliest changes to the major, curriculum change agents believed, would be connected to the university's investment in e-sports and competitive video gaming.

Jason explained that “The e-sports is to make it so people can go to our gym and play virtual reality sports. It's not part of a curriculum.” I asked, “what do you think about that?” To which Jason replied, “well, I think it's stupid.” He elaborated by explaining that, from his perspective, upper administrators expanded the e-sports opportunities without regard for potential campus partners or connections to curriculum. Nevertheless, possible opportunities to connect with e-sports initiatives at SVU could emerge. Roland explained some such opportunities for AMT:

If we have this—doing this video gaming competitions and things like that also then, well, we are educating and training the people that make those. That the other side of, it's like that we have performance students here, we also have composition students, that we're training people that make music that the performers play. So hopefully there'll be whatever opportunities come up.

Despite his skepticism, Jason expressed a similar sentiment that the institutional interest in e-sports could enable corresponding growth in AMT. That growth would be appealing to administrators and good for students.



## **The Importance of Artistic Media Technologies at Snowy Valley University**

The balance of doing good for students and appealing to administrators came up repeatedly at Snowy Valley. Jason described the reason for the program starting as two-pronged: “I think both, ‘it could be cool and good for students’ and, um, there’s a fear about what’s gonna be happening to all the things that we’ve always done unless we figure out new revenue sources.” Later in our conversation, I pressed Jason on why he thought AMT was important and “good for students,” and he shared, “I think it’s insane that mostly we teach, um, musical practices, museum music from the 19th century. I don’t think that should be the role of arts in society.” That expression of changing curriculum to be consistent with “the role of arts in society” expands on the notion of what is good for students into what is good for the world beyond SVU.

Because curriculum change agents saw this program as important for changing music, I asked Jason, “What do you see this program’s role in changing music or changing graduates?” He replied:

That might be more bold than I think about in my head. ... I think if I focus on culture right here that that will then have extensions. And I don’t pretend how big they will be, right. But so, in terms of culture right here, bringing in people who can get stuff done with technology will encourage performers to play and integrate more with their practice with technology and that’s already happening here. We get more students for playing recitals with technology. We get more composers writing music with technology. And then the [AMT] students, the tech students, can be programmers to make things happen that they didn’t imagine, like a clarinet plays different pitches and lights change color based on what pitch it plays.

Philip concurred that AMT students are part of a change for students, arguing that musical instruments are like controllers, but

controllers don't have to be a fucking French horn, which is almost impossible to play. People [in the future] are gonna look at that like a piece of plumbing, "play that fucking thing?" And even string instruments, which is my world, is you know, really, a vibrating string that you had to try to get tone out of? It just- really I think the transformation that's happening is, is hard, probably impossible to wrap our brains around and that institutions need to make an absolutely fundamental transformation to teach music in a way that is, uh, useful for modern creative people.

The AMT major is thus perceived as an advancement of music as a field and an essential adaptation to the outside world of music and the university's prerogatives.

Later, Philip emphasized that programs in music "need to evolve" and explained that he was committed to staying the course, even in the face of frustrations with upper administrators:

It's not just their disciplines that are changing and need to evolve, mine too. Absolu—all of us. What the fuck man. And I'm retired in probably 10 years. You know, I'd be glad to tell 'em look, I could not give a fuck, except we're fucking the students. And I can't take that in good conscience, come on. But I could just float through 10 more years just doin' what I'm doin'. I love it. I'll be done, and I'll retire, and then you guys figure it out, your sinkin' fuckin' ship. But, wouldn't it be cooler if we looked ahead and, uhh [*said derisively*], tried to do what's best for the students. And luckily it ties in. It should be very very appealing to the upper administration. 'Cause technology gives 'em a fuckin' boner. And so why not. So, it's not only- thank God it's the legit right thing to do for the students. So we can do both.

Here, I took to “do both” to mean doing the “legit right thing for the students” and appealing to upper-level administrators. AMT brought to bear music technology content in ways that could support students and fit administrative priorities to support enrollments and grow in ways of interest to them (i.e., regarding technology). At the same time, Jason, Philip, and Roland believed AMT was a good thing for students’ growth and their field as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

Artistic Media Technologies arose from multiple, long-standing efforts in the school of music, including interdisciplinary artistic collaborations and audio engineering coursework that enabled the operation of a sound studio at Snowy Valley. The school saw an opportunity in the hiring of Jason, who would go on to lead the creation of the AMT program. Its development, including its name and content, and ongoing revisions, demanded collaboration and compromises with other institutional stakeholders and navigating administrative interests.

No doubt, institutional demands related to resources affected the program, exemplified by the provost’s demand to double the number of majors in the program. Nevertheless, curriculum change agents were able to navigate institutional hurdles and relationships to ensure a high-quality program in an area they believed to be vital and timely. These aspects, namely the salience of administration and focus on an important area of growth for the field, also arose in the cases of Northern Waters and Little Falls State, which I address in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 5: DIGITAL HUMANITIES MINOR AT UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN WATERS

The University of Northern Waters (UNW) is a small campus with many interdisciplinary programs. Many participants spoke about their campus' idiosyncratic nature regarding interdisciplinarity and the role of the humanities. Whether idiosyncratic or indicative of other trends, participants agreed that UNW's culture was suited well for the development of a minor in digital humanities. In this chapter, I explain the development of a digital humanities (DH) minor at UNW. I begin with institutional context for the development of the minor. Then I lay out the chronology of the minor's development. I conclude with projection of future hopes and concerns at UNW regarding digital humanities and humanities at the university in general.

### **University of Northern Waters**

UNW is a medium-sized (enrollment between 5,000 and 10,000), primarily-undergraduate public institution in a U.S. state with a highly coordinated multi-campus system. Founded in the 1800s as a normal school, Northern Waters' curricular offerings expanded to feature many areas of liberal and pre-professional studies. In the 1990s and 2000s, the university divided into multiple colleges. Although the university offers academic programs in a nearby city, its primary campus location is in a small town distant from the region's largest metros. That said, participants indicated UNW recruits many students from those large metropolitan areas. An overwhelming majority of students are in-state and about two-thirds of students are White.

The state higher education system sets tuition prices, and state institutions in this region feature considerably lower costs of attendance than their private institutional peers. However, private institutions in the state and region nevertheless thrive. Indeed, one participant shared that he had a hard time recruiting students interested in a particular field of study to UNW because a

nearby, similarly-sized, private institution successfully recruited and enrolled those students. Many participants spoke about other campuses in the state system as peer institutions, which led me to perceive that UNW primarily benchmarks itself against other regional public institutions within the state. That benchmarking is beneficial for UNW, as one participant argued, because UNW is the only comprehensive institution within the system to experience flat or increasing enrollments since the Great Recession.

The college of liberal arts, home of most of the DH program partner departments, is the largest of the four colleges in the university in terms of student enrollment and number of departments. The college boasts about 20 departments and another 20 interdisciplinary programs. Computer Science and English faculty shared with me that their departments were connected to many interdisciplinary programs. A faculty member in a different field expressed that the STEM programs in the college rarely reached out to humanities and social sciences faculty for interdisciplinary opportunities and that Computer Science, a department with about seven different interdisciplinary programs, was the exception to that theme.

### **Development of the Digital Humanities Minor**

By all accounts, digital humanities as a field of study at UNW arose out of the Computer Science department and Bob's efforts specifically. To trace the chronology of the DH minor's development, I primarily use Bob's account. Bob is a non-tenure track computer science faculty member, and participants all indicated he was the central figure in the program's development. Because Elaine, former dean of the liberal arts college, also played a major role in developing the DH minor, I use her account as well, with reference to other participants' accounts as relevant. Table 4 details participants from UNW. I begin with more information about Bob and his role before I lay out the chronology of the DH minor's development.

Participant	Position, department
Bo	Professor and Chair, History
Bob	Visiting Assistant Professor, Computer Science
Cecelia	Assistant Professor, Communication Studies
Earl	Associate Professor, Computer Science; former director of Interdisciplinary Curricular Initiatives (ICI)
Elaine	Former dean of College of Liberal Arts
Ivar	Professor and Chair, Computer Science
Jack	Assistant Professor, English
Lionel	Assistant Professor, Computer Science
Lorraine	Assistant Professor, History
Margaret	Interim dean of College of Liberal Arts
Nils	Assistant Professor, History
William	Associate Professor, English

**Table 4:** UNW curriculum change agents who participated in this study.

**Bob's unique role.** Every participant spoke about Bob as the central figure in the minor's development. As I learned during my time at UNW, Bob had many connections across campus. Notable among these connections is his partner (i.e., spouse; partner was his word of choice to refer to her). She chairs a separate department in the college of liberal arts. Ivar pointed out that Bob's contacts through his partner laid the foundation to develop a collaborative program between CS and humanities departments. He also met new faculty during their job interviews, as my conversation with Nils (a pre-tenure faculty member in history) demonstrated, and through activities in the Interdisciplinary Curricular Initiatives (ICI, a pseudonym) office.

Bob had, in "2012, 2013, at various venues around campus," pre-emptively educated UNW faculty on DH as a concept to prepare for the establishment of a program like this minor. Further, to his telling, he used his capital around campus to help advance the program: "it's important, I think, in developing these new programs that the person who is the figurehead, if there are figureheads, that that person has a certain amount of visibility and has some cultural capital." Bob certainly was visible at UNW, and other participants' explanation of how the DH

minor came to be supported his argument that he had the necessary capital to develop the program.

**Pre-history of DH at UNW.** UNW featured interdisciplinary opportunities long before the DH minor. Two threads arose during conversations with participants Bob, Earl, and William. First, the creation of ICI, an office and space to support faculty involved in and hoping to expand interdisciplinary curricular opportunities. Second, a conversation Bob and other colleagues had in 2008 with a former provost regarding grant funding for digital humanities.

In 2001, ICI arose as part of an effort to understand and connect interdisciplinary activity on campus. William, an English faculty member, explained, “There were a lot of faculty members who were saying, ‘Let’s do interdisciplinary stuff. Let’s team teach courses,’ or whatever it might be. And so, there were lots of different initiatives all over campus, but there was no structure.” ICI served as that “structure” in the administration of UNW to give some support to interdisciplinary activities.

Earl, former director of ICI, offered a complementary reason for ICI: although it couldn’t provide resources to extant or potential interdisciplinary programs, it served as a “tangible sign” that UNW valued interdisciplinarity. Earl further explained that, “there are small things that are important” that ICI was able to do, such as meeting with a faculty candidate to discuss how ICI could amplify cross-curricular research and teaching interests. While Earl directed ICI, Bob went to him to begin some of the conversations about how an interdisciplinary DH program at UNW might unfold.

***Interest in pursuing DH grants: 2008.*** In 2008, “The real discussion of digital humanities got started,” according to Bob, “in my mind and I think in other people’s mind.” Bob

had a conversation with the then-provost and other institutional stakeholders because the provost was interested in seeking external funding for digital humanities projects:

And he noted that in 2008, the NEH was beginning to give large grants to institutions for doing something that they called digital humanities. And so [the then-provost] got me and a few other people together, one of whom's dead and the other one is not interested, to talk about possibilities of pursuing grants, but it became really apparent to me at the time that these grants were aimed at places doing digital renderings of manuscripts, digitization. They were aimed at places like Virginia, UCLA, Michigan, Michigan State, Big Ten universities, Ivy League schools, PAC 10 universities to help them digitize their collections and use them in electronic means. So, I pointed this out to [the then-provost] and I said, these grants are not really aimed at us. We're not gonna be able to be a major player, and there was also some reticence on the part of other people who were involved in this endeavor at the time and so it died. So however, in the back of my mind, I was looking at faculty appointments we were making and looking at strengths in the faculty and it became really apparent to me that perhaps there still was a market for digital humanities.

Therefore, DH at UNW began in 2008 in some ways. That said, when I asked Bob about key moments in the development of the DH minor, he specifically said that the conversation in 2008 was *not* a key moment, because the program didn't come into fruition then.

I asked Bob what happened between 2008, when conversations about DH at UNW apparently started, and 2012 when he went through university approval systems to create the introductory digital humanities course. He explained that he was director of the department's Information Science program and had other responsibilities to attend to but that his interest in



DH never waned. In 2012, he had the opportunity to create the course and, beginning in 2013, he offered the introductory DH course as a computer science course.

**Introductory course in digital humanities: 2012-2013.** The computer science department at UNW has offered a course in digital humanities since 2013. Bob began offering the course out of his personal interests in the field and in the hopes that it may lead to additional coursework, such as a minor. He put the course “through administrative hurdles in 2012” with a possible minor in mind, and first offered the course as an Information Science course (housed in the CS department) in 2013. According to the UNW catalog and conversations with Bob and Lionel, another computer science faculty member who taught the course in 2017-2018, the introductory DH course’s content included philosophical and theoretical dimensions of digital humanities and applied dimensions such as models and tools for retrieval and analysis of information in the humanities and programming.

Student interest was “paramount,” according to Bob, in ensuring the creation of a DH minor, because “we’re not gonna design a program for us [faculty]. We can just have a reading group.” Bob surveyed students who had taken the introductory DH course to see if they would be (or, if they were alumni, would have been) interested in a minor along the same lines. According to the DH minor proposal form, 20 (55.5%) of 36 respondents to the survey indicated that, yes, they would be interested in such a minor, 11 (30.5%) indicated maybe, and 5 (14.0%) indicated no. “They were no longer being graded by me, so they could’ve said, ‘No, forget it, you’re a madman,’ like a lot of them say,” Bob argued. “But most of them, the vast majority, responded affirmatively.” Another factor pushing along the minor Bob described, was, “There was a growing realization in people in the humanities that humanities students needed to have in the STEM world some sort of technical skill. And the higher administrators have repeated that to

me.” Therefore, the minor was founded out of faculty interest, student interest, and interest in student “skill” attainment. Importantly, Bob’s early work on establishing a minor was soon supported by the arrival of Elaine at UNW.

**Elaine’s arrival as dean: 2014.** The development of the DH minor was, in Earl’s words, a “slow simmer” until Northern Waters brought Elaine on as dean of the liberal arts college in 2014. Several participants highlighted Elaine’s role as dean in advancing the DH minor. Bob explained that although he believed the DH minor would have eventually emerged without Elaine in the dean role, Elaine was instrumental in speeding up the process:

But what really, again, augmented us, the next point would be the arrival of [Elaine] in the fall or the summer of 2014. Okay. [Elaine], because then we had an ally and- strong advocate in the administration. But again, like I said, it would’ve happened but because we were already having momentum, but it wouldn’t have probably happened as quickly. It could’ve taken seven, eight years. Things sometimes move slowly.

Elaine’s account of the development of the DH minor affirmed Bob’s sense that it could have been possible without her. She explained that the DH minor “really germinated from the faculty” and “came from an inherent—from the faculty desire to branch into new program development in these areas and a real faculty-driven embrace of interdisciplinary program development [that is] long-standing.” That said, she also acknowledged her role as dean was important as part of “a perfect constellation” that consisted of three elements: “Faculty interest, someone who was willing to put the time in simply to propose the program, and administrative support to see that it was done with the appropriate resources.” The person willing to put time in to propose the program was Bob and Elaine served the administrative role.

Elaine's reference to "appropriate resources" is salient. Many participants argued that Elaine's commitment of resources to DH was vital for the program to develop the way it did. Elaine committed resources in at least two ways: first, sending faculty to a DH professional development program using college resources; and second, approving faculty lines connected to DH. Beyond resources, Elaine also believed her role as dean to be one as a sort of "cheerleader." I explain these two dimensions of Elaine's role in developing the DH minor here.

***Elaine committing resources to DH.*** Elaine explained the prioritization of supporting faculty DH professional development this way:

As soon as I got on campus, I decided to allocate money to support sending teams of faculty to the digital humanities [professional development program] because I had been through their program for deans and chairs and I was really excited by everything they were doing and the kind of opportunity that presented for faculty to really develop in that direction. And so I sent up to five faculty members that first summer after I was the dean here and I continued that project, so I sent three teams and the fourth one is packing up to go right now, each year, and I saw that as an investment in the faculty who would then have skills to sustain a program when we finally developed it.

Supporting faculty to attend this training program was important both to develop the program and skills of faculty themselves. By having faculty learn and practice DH skills and topics at this professional development program, those faculty were able to be better equipped to support the program at UNW.

Bo, chair of the history department, highlighted that the dean played an important role in supporting certain hiring decisions as well. "The dean has to approve the job ad," he reminded me, "and 10 departments in her college will put in for an ad and she's only got five slots. ...So,

you have to do what you have to do.” Because Bo recognized Elaine’s interest in DH, he suggested to the department that they add language to their job ad about digital humanities. Elaine approved the faculty line, which Bo chalked up to his ability regarding the “politics of how to package” faculty job ads. Politics or not, the approval of a job ad with language indicating a preference for DH reflected Elaine’s prioritization of DH in human resources.

*Elaine “cheerleading.”* Connected to Elaine’s commitment of resources to digital humanities is what she called the “cheerleader role” of being an administrator:

I think it was important when I walked in, I was willing to say yes, I will resource this. I know that you have to put support into faculty in order for them to be able to develop and do new things and then recognize and value that work as important and boundary expanding and worth recognizing through the tenure and promotion process and all those things.

This role is therefore partially a matter of committing resources, but moreover the role is about committing resources as a recognition and valuing of faculty work. In this light, supporting faculty to attend digital humanities professional development programs is more than faculty development. Such commitment of resources is also about celebrating and affirming the abilities of the faculty involved in DH efforts.

One example of Elaine’s leadership was that she urged departments to evaluate their tenure and promotion policies in part to “make sure that they were not dusty,” which is to say, outdated. This effort was not explicitly about the DH minor. Elaine explained, “I didn’t go in and say, ‘Make sure you make clear how you value the digital.’ I said, ‘Make sure you are keeping up with your own disciplinary expectations as they’re changing, you know, in this moment.’”

Elaine’s reference to changing expectations was, in her words, “kinda code speak” that

connected tenure and promotion to the DH initiative. Elaine was concerned that if faculty would be spending time on DH projects in their research, those faculty would not necessarily have time to produce other kinds of documents more traditionally considered “standard” for tenure and promotion:

We don’t want anyone to suffer from having done really exciting projects in the digital humanities, for example, and then hitting a tenure review and being told, “Oh, but you don’t have a book, or you don’t have the right number of journal articles. What’s this digital archive thing you created? That’s nice and all but that’s an aside. In addition, we want you doing all these other things.”

She concluded that departments should adopt policies that are “very carefully spelled out” to include scholarly projects beyond the scope of book manuscripts and journal articles.

Elaine summed up the value of her leadership approach in the “contemporary moment” this way:

That’s why I call it cheerleading. Because humanists too often feel unseen, underfunded, like their salience is being questioned, but the work that they’re doing and the kinds of questions they ask, and the contributions are just as vital today as they’ve ever been. ...It goes again back to that question of feeling valued at a time when a lot of faculty feel really beat up, like they have to defend their work in our contemporary moment. When the value of a college education feels like it’s being questioned at every turn.

Although other participants did not explicitly mention Elaine as a morale booster, they did refer to her as supportive of the process and important in advancing the development of the DH minor in ways that would have been impossible without her support. In short, Elaine’s work, including

the commitment of resources as indicators of value and the alignment of policies to advance DH efforts, solidified the creation and presence of the DH minor.

**Creating the minor: 2014 to 2017.** By 2014, Bob explained, “What we had was already an interest in digital humanities that was kind of percolating about, and then we had an administrator who was a kind of final catalyst for bringing some of those together.” In Bob’s explanation, the interdisciplinary interests of faculty, himself included, were the foundation of the DH minor that Elaine served as “catalyst” to making happen when it did. To reiterate, Elaine was not essential to the process per se but was essential to it happening in the timeline and with the resources that it did.

Elaine’s efforts catalyzed the DH-connected faculty, as Bob explained, and Bob and faculty had the opportunity to proceed with the logistical elements of creating the minor. “I don’t think there was ever any real disagreement,” Bob shared about how he and faculty engaged in the construction of the minor. “We wanted to make it lightweight and accessible,” with few required courses and ample opportunity to pair the minor with majors in humanities disciplines and/or computer science. The minor was thus comprised of the introductory course Bob had established in 2012-2013, a culminating seminar course, one computer science course in programming (students “needed to know a skill,” Bob said of the computer science requirement), and three elective courses to be approved by the program coordinator (currently Bob). I learned this exact structure is not without some concern. Jack, an English faculty member, did indicate “there’s been a little bit of kind of pushing back and forth” regarding the place of the humanities in the minor:

I feel like sometimes people are like, “We’ll put the structure in place and then the humanities stuff will play itself out, will play in that structure.” And we’ve been invested on this side in making sure that the humanistic stuff is a part of the structure.

In this way, Jack demonstrated one tension between the computer science dimension and the humanities dimension of the DH minor. Jack believed that, because the “structure” of the minor was primarily grounded in computer science, that it was important to advocate actively for the role of humanities in the program.

Having established the structure of the minor, Bob shepherded the administrative process to approve the creation of the DH minor. Bob explained that he was the steward of the process for these reasons:

Because I know how to do it. I’ve done it before. Okay. And I thought to subject one of these bright young people to this nitty gritty and horse trading that has to occur would be unfair to them and a waste of their time, so I threw myself onto the train tracks, so to speak. ‘Cause I know how it’s done. And also, to be honest with you, I had enough social capital on campus where I could say, you know, call in a favor or two.

By all accounts, this administrative process was uneventful and non-controversial. But establishing the minor was just one piece of the puzzle. As Nils argued,

Paperwork was easy, as you may know... doing the paperwork as a faculty to get the minor, it’s not a big deal. Big deal is getting the labs. Big deal is getting the faculty rallying behind this project. Big deal is, like, getting the number of students that’s required to keep this thing alive.

As I have explained, Elaine supported the minor’s development with resources like those that Nils named. In addition to the resources Nils described, Elaine offered a brown bag lecture series

centered on DH, and approved many new faculty hires, as Bo described in his department. Additionally, she created a campus-wide body to support the humanities. I address these efforts next.

**Recent faculty hires.** Many of the faculty now teaching DH elective courses, regardless of department, are pre-tenure. Some of those junior faculty have been at UNW a few years, before Elaine's arrival as dean, and helped Bob think through the shape of the DH minor. Nils was one of the pre-tenure faculty involved early in the development of the DH minor. He explained that his involvement in the minor began as early as his interview:

I met [Bob] then. He actually sat at the table. We talked about what we could do if I were to get the job here, how we could like work with the computer science department and other interdisciplinary departments to kinda start some movement. At that time, we didn't really have a solid idea or a program. We knew that we wanted all these people sitting at the table, two computer science professors, and a human computer interaction professor were interested in digital humanities, they were, I think they were thinking about a center possibly, minor program. These ideas were all there but there was nothing kind of concrete yet. So that's how I first started to get into this and when I accepted the job, I always kept in touch with [Bob] and he always kept this alive until we finally got some administrative support to realize this project at the level that it became a minor.

Other faculty important to the DH minor came to UNW after the process of establishing the minor began. Several faculty, including Cecelia in communication, Lionel in computer science, and Loraine in history, were hired the year prior to my visit to UNW as a strategic effort to increase faculty in DH-connected areas. Bob felt that pre-tenure faculty interest in cross-disciplinary offerings and interdisciplinarity was also instrumental to the DH minor.



We have an unusual faculty here that, particularly in computer science but I think across the campus, and that particularly as you would expect, the young people are very interested in cross-disciplinary kinds of things and we've hired a lot of young people recently and so they are leading the charge.

Indeed, having talked to many of the “young people” who are faculty at UNW, I learned about their varied research interests and interdisciplinary interests. For example, Cecelia, a faculty member in communication, had a PhD in history, experience managing digital archives, and taught interdisciplinarily-styled courses in communication connected to DH. Lionel, a faculty member in computer science, focused on human-computer interaction and taught the introductory digital humanities course in the 2017-2018 academic year. I spoke with several of these faculty new as of Fall 2017 because they taught courses connected to DH, some of them attended (thanks to college funding) DH professional development, and all were part of the Campus Humanities Coalition. I explain this body as “one of several threads,” in the words of incoming interim liberal arts dean Margaret.

**“One of several threads.”** UNW’s computer science (CS) department is unusual, one participant claimed, because of the many interdisciplinary programs they offer. The chair of the department, Ivar, joked that they opted in to the DH minor because, “We’re suckers, we do anything.” That they “do anything” showed in their offerings. The CS department is home to six different programs that in some ways stray from what Ivar described as “mainstream, classic” CS offerings:

Two of them are more on the social cognitive et cetera side of computing. And we’ve always been a believer that we want to have good programs that span across those. And

so, this was a natural thing for us to start doing, and we've been doing information science forever. Cog sci next to forever, twenty years now I think.

With many years of hosting cognitive science and information science, along with a few years of offering a human-computer interaction program, the CS department seemed primed to offer opportunities in DH. Further, the CS department's offering of so many interdisciplinary opportunities suggested their interest in fields and knowledge bases beyond the typical confines of their discipline.

***Campus Humanities Coalition.*** Just as the CS department offers many tracks, the incoming interim dean of the liberal arts college, Margaret, described digital humanities as “one of several threads” in the college's ongoing efforts in the humanities. Another thread is the Campus Humanities Coalition (CHC, a pseudonym), a university-wide body many of the study's participants were involved in. Nils explained, UNW “administration actually put their weight on this and declared this past year a year of humanities which included interdisciplinary [CHC]... and we formed action teams to actually fulfill the requirements to have this minor program on campus.” Led by Elaine, the CHC's “action teams” worked collaboratively to address topics such as tenure and promotion, resources necessary to support the DH minor, and other humanities initiatives on campus. One action team, for example, sought lab space to support DH works for students. That action team, which included several of the pre-tenure faculty I spoke to at UNW, explored possible spaces and funding sources to establish such a space to support the advanced kinds of computer tools used in DH projects. Importantly, the action team applied for an institutional grant to fund a DH lab space; when the team did not receive the grant, Elaine identified monies under her control as dean to fund the lab space.

Elaine's leadership role is salient vis-à-vis the CHC. In a university news article, Elaine described the importance of the CHC as building bridges between departments traditionally concerned with the humanities and those who are not, such as computer science and other STEM fields. The CHC thus represented a continuation of committing resources to and elevating the place of DH at UNW.

### **Next Steps for Digital Humanities**

When I asked participants about plausible futures for DH at UNW, some pointed out current and future retirements that will likely have large effects on the future of the program. Specifically, a few participants brought up the unknowns inherent in Elaine's departure as dean. Participants also wondered what DH would become at UNW when Bob retires, which Bob indicated was not imminent, but still, he has "far fewer years ahead of me here [at UNW] than behind me."

Participants also talked about the possibility of a DH major. For example, Loraine, a new faculty member in history, said:

It'd be really cool if we could blow [DH] up into a major with a really healthy humanities component to it. 'Cause right now, it's so successful on the computer science side of it, so we want to really buff it up on the humanities side. So, I'm already like planning courses that I think will be really successful within that bracket.

Loraine continued to indicate that the computer science department was interested in creating a master's degree in DH and, because History had phased out its master's program, she expressed interest in crafting a strong history component in a DH graduate program.

By contrast, Bob was clear in his preference that there *not* be a digital humanities major. He explained:

I never thought of it as a major, I still do not think of it as a major on this campus. Simply because I think that students need to learn something substantive about the humanities and use this [DH minor] as an adjunct. So, they could do a digital humanities minor, maybe enhance it with some additional computer science courses. If we revved it up to full major, it, I think you need to know something about the humanities really to do this very well.

That said, Bob also explained that he wanted the future of DH at UNW to be in the hands of the current pre-tenure faculty who would carry it forward. William echoed that he, Bob, and other faculty were trying to “kind of shape the conditions into which [pre-tenure faculty are] emerging while we give them a chance to make it their own at the same time.” In this way, William, Bob, Bo, and others demonstrated the importance of recognizing the differential roles of senior and junior faculty.

In addition to hoping that pre-tenure faculty will be stewards of the DH program’s evolution, Bob hoped the CHC and the connections it has fostered will carry a legacy of supporting the humanities at UNW forward through the years. This interest in the capacity of the CHC to advance the humanities was rooted in Bob’s “old school liberal arts” perspective of the university, he explained. This is to say, Bob wanted to see threads of humanities continue throughout the university curriculum and believed the CHC was well positioned to maintain that legacy of the humanities at Northern Waters.

### **The Importance of Digital Humanities at University of Northern Waters**

Many participants hoped that DH would continue to serve a sort of dual purpose: one, providing humanities students with technical skills that enhance their capacity to take on technologically-oriented projects and their employability; and two, providing a humanist lens to

computer science and potentially other STEM students. Lionel argued that “We don’t need to separate the two,” which is to say, STEM and humanities. “If we actually marry the two, the outcome’s gonna be great. [DH is] one way of doing that... It’s a field that tries to set an example of how that collaboration could contribute to our understanding of the universe.” At the same time, Lionel found DH to be valuable because “students are gonna gain some more skills that are gonna make them more marketable in their job search.” Jack offered an iconoclast interpretation of the value of “marrying the two,” to borrow Lionel’s phrasing:

We’ve seen the like long-term impact of people who approach technology in an isolated, technocracy kind of way. We’re seeing the impact of that right now in the U.S., right<sup>2</sup>. Who are not thinking of big picture, humanistic or ethical responsibility, are not thinking of being socially responsive until all of a sudden, the shit hits the fan, right? And that kind of backwards approach to technology development is not helping anybody. So, I think that’s why it’s really important to me that part of the DH thing, not just be the humanists go begging to the technology people and ask them for software, right. No, software developers need to be in English classes. Because they need to understand the way that the codes that they’re dealing with are like kind of conditioning society in ways that they have an ethical responsibility to kind of, to, to think through.

Margaret pointed out the disciplinary advantages of the DH minor. She argued that humanities disciplines are in a moment of evolution because pedagogies have evolved, “the

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<sup>2</sup> In 2018, at the time of data collection, many news stories had recently emerged about ways technology companies, such as Facebook, were collecting and using user data for financial gain. One particularly central story Jack referred to later in our conversation was that of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, wherein data were user data from Facebook were harvested for political gains. See <https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/cambridge-analytica-files> for more information.

object of the study is always on the move,” and “the discipline is changing.” DH, to Margaret, was an adaptation to that evolution. Cecelia’s personal draw to DH echoed that sentiment:

I think that the possibility for working across numerous disciplines is just such a draw for the digital humanities because [Bob’s] in computer science and so you can have someone working in computer science collaborating with people in history and English and myself in communication studies. It just seemed such a natural answer to me anyway for solving some real-world problems and like doing interesting research and answering big questions.

For Cecelia, the digital humanities program was important for institutional reasons, but her investment in it comes from its applicability to “solving some real-world problems.”

Furthermore, Ivar explained, DH could help with the CS department’s “atrocious gender issue.” This claim meant that expanding CS offerings connected to the humanities could increase the number of women enrolled in CS programs. “We have exactly two female students,” Ivar explained in arguing for including DH in their program, so many CS chairs “think it’s good just because we want a more diverse student body.” I asked him why that was important to him a more diverse student body was important, and he answered simply that, “The world will be a better place.”

## **Conclusion**

Participants sensed that many idiosyncratic features of UNW gave rise to the Digital Humanities minor including the university’s unique computer science department, Bob’s position in CS and interests in the humanities, and the culture of interdepartmental collaboration and presence of ICI. At the same time, much of what participants shared with me was, in their views, indicative of trends and challenges found in arts and humanities programs in higher

education across the country: departments shifting priorities to maintain or gain resources, grappling with interdisciplinarity and the role of technology in arts and humanities, and questions of graduates' employability.

It is hard for me to play down Bob's role, perhaps because he was my primary contact at the institution and, outside of our eighty-minute interview, he and I had many conversations during my time in the field regarding DH, "Northern Waters" (the university and the town), and arts and humanities in higher education generally. However, as I reflect on interview transcripts and documents from Northern Waters, I see confirmations of my sense of Bob's role in this process. Indeed, Bob's supervisor, Ivar, told me the key decision in developing the DH minor was to "let [Bob] go." He laughed and continued, "Let him propose something." Every participant highlighted Bob's leadership, and Bob confirmed his centrality, saying he was "kind of reluctantly at the center of a lot of this."

## CHAPTER 6: WRITING MAJOR AT LITTLE FALLS STATE UNIVERSITY

At Little Falls State University (LFSU), faculty developed a studio-oriented writing major, which evolved out of a writing minor. That minor was left over from an earlier reorganization that separated literature from writing (rhetoric and composition). Writing faculty saw an opportunity for growth when the institutional reorganization realigned them with another program, whose faculty were amenable to the development of a writing major. Over time, faculty collaboratively developed the program and made several adjustments, including reconfiguration of general education requirements and offering the major online, in efforts to advance the program and support students. In this chapter, I detail how writing faculty collaboratively advanced the writing major through continuous and ongoing efforts and highlight a particular moment of tumult in 2017, wherein campus administrators cut two-dozen academic programs, and how it affected the writing program. I conclude with the state of the writing program in 2018 when I visited LFSU. I begin by describing the context at LFSU.

### **Little Falls State University**

Referred to as a public liberal arts college, LFSU is a small, public, baccalaureate institution in a U.S. state with a highly-coordinated higher education system. Like Snowy Valley and Northern Waters, LFSU was founded as a normal school. Through its early history it remained a teachers college and in the 20th century it became part of the statewide higher education system. In its state, LFSU falls in the middle of the price of public institutions' main campuses. LFSU in-state tuition is about 10% more than the least expensive (main campus) public institution in the state and about 25% less than tuition at the most expensive institution.

The student body is 80% white, about 10% international students, and about 10% domestic students of color. Among domestic students, about half are in-state and half out-of-



state, although most students are from the same region in the United States. As a baccalaureate institution, the student body is more than 90% undergraduate, and most are full-time and under 24 years old. In these ways, LFSU resembles some of the demographics of private liberal arts colleges (see Breneman, 1994). In contrast to private liberal arts colleges, however, it is less selective in admissions and offers many programs completely online (non-residential). The presence of considerable online enrollment was salient for participants in this study.

Participants described facing the same kinds of enrollment challenges as many smaller institutions of higher education. Institutional data showed that enrollment is currently down about 9% from its high in 2010, although enrollment numbers in 2017 were higher than in the three years prior. Such an increase may be due to a partnership formed between LFSU and a for-profit enrollment company in 2016, a partnership detailed in local press.

LFSU's academic programs are organized into a dozen departments that all report to an academic dean. Writing is housed in a department that emerged from an earlier academic reorganization. That reorganization separated faculty aligned with rhetoric and composition from those aligned with literature. The Writing Department once offered another program that was pre-professional in nature (for confidentiality's sake, I do not name the other program here because the grouping is unusual if not unique among U.S. universities.) At the time I visited LFSU, however, the department offered only a writing major and writing minor.

### **Development of the Writing Major**

Developing the writing major, like the other curricular changes I examined, was not a stand-alone process. Through conversations with five faculty members, institutional documents, and news articles, I present five connected developments: first, the creation of the writing department and subsequent development of a writing minor; second, the hiring of three new

tenure-track faculty in one year; third, the collaborative process of tenure-track and tenured faculty developing the writing major; fourth, changing the general education requirements related to writing; and fifth, offering the major online. I elaborate on these developments in the following sections.

Participant	Department role
Anthony	Assistant professor (started in 2018), tenure-track
Miranda	Associate professor, tenured
Nelson	Associate professor, tenured, and department chair
Rachel	Associate professor, tenured; department lecturer before becoming tenure-track
Victoria	Associate professor, tenured

**Table 5:** LFSU curriculum change agents who participated in the study.

**“Little seeds starting to sprout:” Creation of a writing department and minor.**

Before the writing major existed, a writing minor emerged in 2010 in the then-newly formed writing department at LFSU. All the participants who had been at LFSU for more than a year talked about the split of writing and literature into separate departments as an important milestone in the evolution of what would become the writing major. Rachel, the senior-most faculty member in the department, had been a senior lecturer in the previous department and was the only participant who had been affiliated with that department. “There were some conflicting ideas” in the previous department, she explained, that precluded the possibility of a writing major arising in that context. Indeed, Rachel was confident that the nature of the previous department was such that a writing major would have been impossible to create.

A news article from 2010 explained the minor as an opportunity to study options like professional writing, persuasive writing, and the writing of fiction and poetry. The writing minor joined minors in the department that were focused on the pre-professional program that was affiliated with writing at LFSU. Rachel's understanding of the writing minor was that it was developed with a major in mind:

When we first formed the new department, [the then-chair] must have had some conversations with the provost because she was pushing for the writing major. You know, talking about it as a major rather than just a minor, even as we were doing the search. I mean, they were kind of occurring at the same time but not necessarily one as a result of the other. So, there were just kind of all these little seeds starting to sprout. Among the “little seeds” were the writing minor, the foundation of what would become the writing major, and the hiring of three new faculty members.

**Hiring of Miranda, Nelson, and Victoria: 2011.** Rachel had been a contingent faculty member for LFSU for several years before becoming a tenure-track faculty member in Writing in 2010, just after the development and launch of a writing minor. Shortly after Rachel’s hire, the department conducted a faculty search that yielded three new hires: participants Miranda, Nelson, and Victoria. “They came on in 2011 and with that critical mass of faculty, that’s when the effort [to create the Writing major] really was able to get rolling,” Rachel explained. “So, then it was after they all came on board that we were really able to start talking about what is the future gonna look like and how do these courses fit.” As Victoria put it, the timing of retirements and incoming hires were important for the major: “there was two retirements and then [Rachel] and our former chair were like the old – you know, quote/unquote, old – group so then three new people made for a lot of excitement for changes.”

Miranda could not recall the development of a writing major coming up while she interviewed with the department, “but I could be wrong.” Neither Nelson nor Victoria mentioned major development coming up during interviews either. Nevertheless, Miranda expressed that after arriving “it was exciting to think about teaching a major.” Whether the major’s development was part of hiring at the time or not, the continuing role of these three faculty

members in crafting the writing major shows that their hiring was fundamental to the major's creation.

**Collaborative development of the writing major.** When I asked the four faculty members who had been in the department during the major's development about their role in the curricular change, they all indicated it was a collaborative process. Nelson told me, "We would meet at each other's houses and- you know, to work over the weekend on documents." Documents included paperwork to submit at the institution and system levels and course descriptions. Nelson continued, "We would sit together and group write, like five people in a room, just composing." Miranda explained the process as "kind of a, as I remember it, kind of a cool, collaborative writing assignment."

Nelson explained that the collaborative nature of the writing major's creation expanded beyond tenure-stream faculty in that they "included whenever remotely relevant, academic instructional staff... but we tried to be as open as we could without doing things illegally." As Rachel described, such efforts to include other instructional staff stood in contrast to the dynamics of the previous department. The writing department is "much more inclusive" than the previous department, she explained. All in all, as I've detailed, the new department—and its accompanying collaborative nature—was essential for the major. As Rachel put it,

There might be little disagreements or whatever, but we work beautifully together, and we might have different viewpoints on this and that, but we really share a common vision. And that might seem like more of a personal- interpersonal relationship thing but I think it has everything to do with the success of the writing minor and major.

Victoria concurred: “Sometimes I do say this, and it sounds very hokey, but we all love each other a lot and we work- I don’t know if you could tell, we like working together. Cool things happen.”

Although the process was collaborative, each faculty member highlighted their individual strengths and contributions. For example, Rachel explained that, “Partly because I had come on board a little bit before the others, I was doing a lot of course development.” Miranda, who had worked for a technical college prior, worked on transfer agreements. Victoria, who “likes to keep the files organized,” said, “We’d assign out parts but I kind of was like the file keeper.” Nelson wasn’t sure about his individual role specifically but told me, “I think my colleagues value my ability to publicly defend stuff.” That said, for the various approval meetings, Nelson indicated that department faculty “took turns going to meetings and defending things.”

Faculty detailed a few key steps during the collaborative creation of the major. These steps included creating a community advisory board, clearing out old courses, and advocating for the major’s establishment in the institution and state system. I detail these processes next.

***Community advisory board.*** Some faculty brought up the program’s community advisory board as an important element of creating the major. This body has served as a sort of sounding board for program faculty. Nelson described that

We meet with them regularly and we talk about evolving community needs and how industries are changing. We discovered, for example, that one of the most important things that people should know how to write in a number of different fields are press releases. You know, just very short summaries of large amounts of data. Types of stuff that works well in websites as well.

According to Miranda, who organizes that initiative for the department, the community advisory board has “been really helpful, too, in creating connections in the community. It’s helped out with some students finding internships and it’s been really helpful just to talk with like... we have an arts writer, journalist, someone who works in marketing.” The relationships faculty developed with this board have thus informed curriculum and provided extra-curricular opportunities (i.e., internships) for students.

***Clearing out old courses.*** A few faculty talked about addressing courses as an important step of developing the Writing major into its current form. Victoria explained that “Having a minor was good but it [the curriculum] had been, and I think this isn’t unique to writing or English, like courses based on people’s preferences or interests versus some kind of cohesive curriculum.” To move forward, faculty went through a process of “cleaning house” (Nelson’s words), which is to say, identifying and removing or modifying existing courses to be part of a whole curriculum rather than stand-alone courses. I asked Nelson for an example of a course that was removed in cleaning house:

There was another course called women’s autobiography, which was developed by a faculty member who had left before we got here, so that course was retired. And so, this is a unique case. It’s probably the best example, actually, because it goes back to that split in the departments. So, women’s autobiography was, they would read women’s autobiographies. It made perfect sense as a literature course, you know, as a really good, interesting, valuable literature course. But when the department split, that course became a writing course. So suddenly – and we had decided as a group not to teach, you know, literary criticism, essentially, because that was happening in English. So, we had this course that was called women’s autobiography which we’re not allowed to teach- I mean,

we could have but it would have angered other members of our community. So, it couldn't be offered really as a literature course. It had to be offered as a writing course. So, then it raised all these interesting questions about, well, okay, we're writing women's autobiography then, right? So, what do the people who aren't women in the class, for example, write in this autobiography class? And there actually were students, male students, for example, taking the class and they were just- we don't know what they were doing exactly. They were writing biographies maybe about their mothers or grandmothers, or they were sort of writing sort of critical reflections on women's autobiography 'cause they were reading models of women's autobiography and it just was a very awkward, strange course in this new program.

Although Nelson explained the women's autobiography course as a "unique case," his explanation that it was also the "best example" led me to describe it here as indicative of the larger task of evaluating course offerings to remove some. Other courses, such as another on women writers, were removed because they reflected an earlier structure of the department that no longer existed. Removal of the women's autobiography course, with its elements of the old department structure and retired faculty's interests and expertise, exemplified the transformation the writing faculty sought as they addressed course offerings.

***System and institution-level approval.*** Writing faculty were the first LFSU faculty to use a relatively new major proposal process at the state level. Victoria explained, "There hadn't been a new major proposed here in a very long time." To go through the process of approving the major, Miranda described,

We did research on what's the process through system and all of that and it's quite an involved process to apply for, ... where you have to, you know, go forth to system with a

statement, a notice of intent. ...And then it goes through the entire- gets sent out to like any department that might kind of have a similar program or have a stake in this throughout the whole system. They write back feedback, then once there's approval at the system level, you're permitted to like go forward with the process on your own campus. Miranda shared documentation with me that one department in the state had requested a change in language about LFSU's proposed writing major, but Miranda explained that it was a cosmetic change that would simply recognize the existence of a similar, but not identical, extant program.

Approval at the system level was non-controversial. As Victoria explained, when she and Miranda went to the system meeting to advocate for the major's creation,

A ton of huge agenda items come through that are millions of dollars' worth of like say renovations or building a new whatever, and so for us to be there, to be like, "support our major," it was not appropriate, we learned. We were sitting there, like, "yeah, they don't care about this major. This is not something we're gonna have to argue for." ... It really did make us laugh, like somebody's new basketball arena was getting voted through without comment or issue, and then our little thing is, like, not important. So, we had a lot of heightened nerves and stuff going in but then had to laugh at the end.

Although Victoria described the major's system-level approval as "not important," I interpreted this comment to not be deprecating of the major. Rather, she understood at that meeting that the major's approval would be a minor issue relative to other items at hand.

At the institution level, however, faculty expressed experiencing differing levels of support. Rachel indicated that the provost offered an initial approval to move the major forward. That said, there were some challenges. Victoria told me,



I remember being heightened and alert for resistance or pushback or problems and it really wasn't like that, but we did face a lot of problems on our campus. People were against it. With hindsight, I know now that the reason is because there hadn't been a new major proposed here in a very long time. Like I don't wanna overstate it and I wasn't here then, but nobody had used that [system] process. Nobody, like we kind of pioneered [laughter] ...So for us to have like walked through this very bureaucratic path and then have people on our campus be negative about it was very annoying. And the argument, then anyway, I think newness and just fresh faces and innovation made people nervous and then I think people have territorial issues so there were a lot of arguments about how are you, are we (and the answer to that was yes), stepping on people's toes, that we weren't doing it right. There was actually, interestingly, consternation that we weren't coming up through our own governance process here but it's like, look, the system document says no, we have to do this part first... It was, forging the new process for the first time on our campus made for some of the arguments against us which we had to then be saying, well, A, we have a right to propose stuff, and B, you're not informed up to the minute.

Miranda expanded on Victoria's explanation of tensions on campuses with an example. At one committee meeting to address the in-creation writing major, writing faculty were surprised with a proposal from another department to add an advanced course to the writing major. Miranda went on to discuss what such a proposal would mean, and why the other department may have proposed that change:

And that, that we wouldn't have purview over our own major curriculum, right? And we actually, we are one of the few majors on campus that do include and here- this was also

part of the process. Contacting other departments. Because we did go through the catalog, anything to do with, that we felt like could fulfill a writing elective requirement, we did include. So, we were including other [departments] but... This kind of went back into some historical stuff and a sense of ownership over, you know, us being a sort of subjugated program to English. ... So, someone from that program got up and I'm remembering like read this statement... there was the rationale given. We made our statements. I think there was a general concern, this is a point we made that other people seemed to agree with, that a precedent of a different department getting to determine- basically saying you must include one of our courses in your curriculum was not, isn't the way things work or wasn't a precedent that we wanted to set. ... That's kinda how it flew but that was very uncertain for a bit.

In short, lingering tensions between the old and new department arrangements resurfaced as faculty worked to create the major. Although the major was non-controversial for many, especially at the state level, it faced some challenges during the proposal stage.

The writing major began in 2014 and Victoria offered this “rose colored look back” at that time by explaining that some students graduated from the program in its first year of existence. “They switched their double major in December and were like, ‘I’m doing it and I’m graduating with two degrees.’” Thus, the Writing major struck a chord with some students quickly.

**Reconfiguring general writing requirements.** Around the same time as creating the major, writing faculty proposed reconfiguring the general writing requirements. Although not originally within the scope of my study, most participants mentioned it and Nelson even described the reconfiguration as essential to the writing major’s successful implementation.

Briefly, what faculty proposed was shifting the two general education writing courses to an academic writing and professional/technical writing course. Instead of both writing general education courses being required in the first year, as was the case prior, the academic writing course would be offered in the first year and the professional/technical writing course would be offered in the second year. To handle remediation, the change included a new, shorter developmental course that could be taken concurrently to the first (i.e., academic) writing course.

Miranda recalled that this proposed change began with conversations with the community advisory board:

We were talking to our community advisory board and they were like, people have to know how to write professionally. They have to have good resumes. We just thought, “well, gosh, maybe everybody needs this, you know. If that’s what we’re hearing five employers say in this room, you know- maybe that’s important for all of the students to have,” and that sort of got the ball rolling.

Some LFSU faculty responded negatively to the proposed change to the general education requirements. Victoria explained,

Some of the administrators really liked it because they knew it was saving money on adjuncts in the first year and then other majors didn’t like it because it just screwed with their curriculums. So, where they already required business writing, for instance, they were like, “well, now our students only get two writing classes versus three previously. Two required plus we require this, and now we’re saying well, these are the only two required.” ... And people argued, in those cases, people argued it was less writing for students, but we argued more students are getting writing at two levels than fewer at one level.

Nelson indicated a different source of resistance, “from all sorts of administrative units on campus.” To manage these sources of resistance to the reconfiguration, Victoria explained that they delayed implementation and had “a year of like a little bit of a PSA campaign and then we just implemented it last year.” In the “PSA campaign,” Victoria “held listening sessions and gave explanations to advisors and of like how it would go now.” In the end, as Nelson explained, “Now they like it. After fighting and almost terminating it – I mean, the provost, the chancellor actually sat on it for like, oh, gosh, months before finally approving it.”

In addition to employers supporting a change that featured more professional writing, Nelson pointed out that this change freed up faculty time such that it helped enable the faculty to offer necessary upper-level courses for the Writing major to thrive:

It made sense pedagogically and retention-wise, but also kind of one of the other hidden benefits was that there’s, you know, historical attrition rate from freshman to sophomore year. We had to offer the [professional writing] course within the first 60 credits because it’s a general ed course, so we pushed it into the sophomore year and that means that we would be serving approximately 20% fewer students for that second course, which means we would have more credit hours we could dedicate to upper level courses. So, it was a way that we created [the major] without any additional resources, right? We couldn’t cost any more money so we couldn’t suddenly be teaching more upper levels and still serving the same number of undergraduate students. And we couldn’t do that unless we freed up some time for ourselves somewhere and that was one way that we did it.

This connection between the changes in general education requirements and the writing major, along with their concurrence in time, led me to include in the case.

**Offering the writing major online.** Nelson, Rachel, and Anthony highlighted offering the writing major online as an important development. After developing the writing major, Nelson explained,

The next logical step was, well, we got this thing developed, and we're starting to offer courses online. Let's make sure we can offer enough courses online that we could, that we could have a minor and once we have the minor online, once again, then why not go to the next step and offer the major online.

I asked Nelson if the move to offer the minor, and then major, online was to enroll more students and he said, "Yeah, essentially." He went on to explain that, at one time, the structure of LFSU was such that any courses taught online had to be taught on overload, but "we've all stood firm that we can't- we will not teach more than four classes a semester." He continued that, in order to "comfortably exceed the [number of graduates] requirement of the [state] system," that "online was really the only way to do it." Likewise, Miranda described the online offerings as "a reasonable survival strategy" and Victoria expressed that the online offerings, and other strategies, were a "balance we're okay with striking," in contrast to "colleagues who refuse to teach online."

All that said, the shift to online offerings have featured some controversy. Rachel, who expressed the online shift as connected to "campus desires," shared with me some of her own skepticism with offering writing courses online. In particular, she expressed concern about shifting upper-level writing workshops online because

The students have been kind of indoctrinated in how to do those workshops, how to participate in those workshops. And the discussions that comes out of those are just

fabulous and beneficial, and students just rave about those workshops. So, we have a challenge trying to emulate that in the online format.

That challenge in mind, she continued, “some of us were, I think, initially kind of adamant perhaps that we not offer the major online.” I asked Rachel what overcame the conflict over offering the program online and she said, “we needed to reach more students and there was a demand.”

Although Rachel was initially opposed to offering the major online, she indicated that since that initial opposition, “We have kind of embraced it and are really trying to recreate that experience, especially in the upper level classes, the workshop experience.” At the end of our conversation, she described her current experience teaching an online upper-level writing workshop and was pleasantly surprised by the quality of interactions between students. In addition to that experience, she also came to appreciate developing courses online:

I was not necessarily on board at first with the whole idea but having now developed a number of courses online, it's- that's just- it's been a really, just personally, it's been a really interesting process. I kind of enjoy developing online courses. And it's just, it's a different delivery method that has its own challenges and so it's just as far as like kind of shaking things up and not falling into just a groove that you stay in. It's- it has done that.

Rachel therefore seemed to have come around to appreciate the online delivery of the writing major. And as she and others expressed, even if she hadn't come around, offering the major online was an important step in ensuring enough enrollment to keep the major alive.

**Summary.** With the writing major, both in-person and online, approved and implemented and general education requirements reconfigured, writing faculty's attention shifted to the ongoing adjustment and improvement of the program. Nelson explained that “every time

we did a step, a stage of revision, we would see the next possibility,” and that, “you just have to keep going, ‘cause we’re not done yet.” Indeed, a recent development affected the ongoing evolution of the writing major: the 2017 suspension of over two-dozen programs at LFSU. I discuss this development next as context for the future of the writing major.

### **“Where’s Your Humanity? It’s Been Cut”: 2017**

In Fall 2017, LFSU administration announced the suspension of 25 academic programs. The announcement came on the heels of other program cuts across the state and a legislative change shifting control over academic programs from each campus’ faculty to campus chief executives. The academic programs cut spanned disciplines. The rationale for their suspension was insufficient enrollments; the state recently created a rule requiring every major produce a certain number of graduates per year in order to remain active. Although not explicitly connected to my original intent for going to LFSU, three participants talked about it, and all participants talked about the program’s enrollment numbers which some connected to the continued survival of writing in the face of cuts. Indeed, when I asked Victoria about the cuts and their “program’s mortality,” Victoria responded by telling me about the “morbid” creation of a sort-of graveyard by faculty to protest the cuts.

“There’s a before and after and it’s last year on [date, masked for confidentiality’s sake] when the programs were cut,” Victoria elaborated. Furthermore, Victoria, explained, the announcement of cuts was surprising and sudden, with no apparent opportunity for debate: “it was a memo. Like, ‘attention, this is happening.’ It was weird. And weird is the term you use a year later. In eleven months, ten months, nine months, you know, it was horrifying, awful, crazy, shocking, demoralizing. Confusing.”

Following the memo, LFSU community members responded in a variety of ways. Participants and contemporaneous news articles mentioned acts of activism and clashes between faculty and administration. The graveyard was a notable example that Victoria shared with me and Miranda echoed. “I don’t necessarily love this imagery but some of the programs that did get suspended made like gravestones for themselves,” Victoria explained. Following our conversation, she brought me to a conference room down the hall from her office where the “gravestones” were displayed (figure 2).



**Figure 1:** Gravestones memorializing programs suspended at LFSU on display in a conference room near writing faculty offices.

Earlier in my time at LFSU, I had seen this conference room and noted a sign in its window that read: “WHERE’S YOUR HUMANITY? IT’S BEEN CUT” with a drawing of scissors. After Victoria brought me to the conference room, I made the connection between the sign in the window and the gravestones. I took the pictures in silence and Victoria seemed circumspect about talking about the gravestones while outside the privacy of her office. I interpreted her caution to be because of the awkwardness that her LFSU colleagues – whose offices were just down the hall – saw their programs suspended, and their jobs potentially put in jeopardy.



The suspension of majors at LFSU were especially salient for the writing program because, as Victoria put it, “Some [programs] were eliminated, some are under this under review category, and it’s based on numbers and if there’s a third invisible tier of that, we’re in it.” I asked Victoria, “So when you say invisible tier, like they haven’t said anything?” She responded, “Right, but we’re not stupid.” Put differently, the writing major’s enrollment numbers are close to numbers that would put it in the “under review” category at LFSU so the sense is that administrators may have writing on their radar as a potential future program to go under review. That said, program faculty did clarify that the major’s newness gave it a probationary status that allowed faculty to build up enrollments over a few years before being subjected to the same enrollment requirements that would lead to the major’s review and/or suspension.

The suspension of majors also affected faculty relationships and morale. Miranda and I talked at length about disagreements between faculty regarding the balance of surviving in financially constrained times on the one hand, and maintaining academic integrity (my words, not hers) on the other. To her description, the cessation of 25 majors brought faculty conflict to a head:

But [a department down the hall] was very hard hit with, you know, [two of their majors] getting cut, which are also kind of like unbelievable decisions, you know, and understandably, they were really upset but there was, I would say a lot of tension between like those of us that were taking a more, trying to take more of a navigating this in a different way role by people who felt more strongly that any compromise with admin or even at a certain point, talking with admin, like literally talking is a sign of like betrayal or, you know, that you basically are admin and I was on faculty senate last year and we got an email...

The email Miranda described, which came from a fellow faculty member, expressed anger at the perception that the faculty senate refused to challenge upper administration decisions to cut programs. The brief message concluded, “Thank you for contributing to the dismantling of the Educational System [sic] in America!” Clearly, tensions ran high among faculty in light of the 25 programs’ suspension.

The suspension of majors in 2017 was a defining moment for LFSU. The relationship a major’s enrollments and whether it was suspended or retained “makes us very nervous,” Nelson told me. “We know from recent history that if you don’t make the right decisions, you probably won’t be around very long.” This told me that as faculty continue to make ongoing curricular adjustments to the writing major, they are focused on making the “right decisions” according to those who have the power to determine academic programs’ fate, such as lead campus administrators and state legislators.

### **Next Steps for Writing**

The most recent development in the writing major is the recent hire of Anthony, who faculty talked about as specializing in technical and professional writing. Faculty were especially interested in strengthening this dimension of the major for students and bringing Anthony in offered them the opportunity to strengthen technical and professional writing as part of the curriculum. I asked Nelson if strengthening technical and professional writing was because of administrative pressure or internal, and Nelson indicated “It was really an internal decision. The program just felt that would be the wisest move.” Victoria argued,

The purpose is to re-evaluate and see if we can’t strengthen that technical and design arm and the professional- I mean, I guess we kinda see three arms and, I don’t know if everybody else sees it this way but: creative, academic, professional. ...[Anthony] sorta

strengthened the professional piece... I guess maybe some people call it selling out but if you promote the technical, the data based, the, you know, forward facing employer skills, then you get to still teach poetry. That's the balance we're okay with striking.

In short, faculty wanted to create a strong professional preparation dimension in the writing major both to provide students with the concomitant skills of such writing areas and as a survival mechanism for the major.

### **The Importance of Writing at Little Falls State University**

Balance characterized the ongoing evolution of writing at LFSU. Anthony emphasized early in our conversation that “balancing the liberal arts tradition with corporate mentality” informed his approach to teaching at LFSU. Anthony told me he wanted to blend the two—liberal arts and corporate—and was clear about that intention as early as his interview for the position. When I was at LFSU, Anthony was teaching a new technical writing course. He explained the course to me this way:

I'm designing it really with cutting edge technology that's highly applicable in contemporary workplaces. So, email marketing, digital marketing, analytics, Facebook campaign development. You know, market research, demographics. And we're doing some of the- literally, we just signed up for WordPress accounts on Monday so it's like, we're making stuff. That's part of the mentality is that maker idea. ... And then, too, because, you look around [Little Falls] and it's very industrial. We're gonna do some of the technical manuals and we're like- we were analyzing vacuum cleaner user guides and this sort of thing, user manuals- so there's some of the old school tech writing that still is important.

He concluded, “My goal there is like I want them to get very good jobs when they’re done” by providing students with “some real practical skills in the technical writing course that they can use.” Anthony was thus clear about his intentions in his course being related to marketable skills. At the same time, he emphasized the balance between liberal arts and corporate ideals, and conversations he facilitates with students about ethics while in a corporate environment. These combinations of elements regarding technical and professional writing echo similar debates and balances writing faculty made throughout the ongoing process of the writing major’s development.

Others at LFSU echoed the balance between liberal arts and corporatization that Anthony repeated. Victoria used the word “balance” verbatim to address the nature of the program’s content, and Miranda expressed that the program successfully addressed both “market needs” and “humanities elements.” Nelson emphasized that an important role for the LFSU writing major in the future could be as “a model for sustaining this branch of the humanities into this new economy, in this new political climate that we live in.” All in all, the LFSU writing major represents a program characterized by balance of the liberal and vocational.

## **Conclusion**

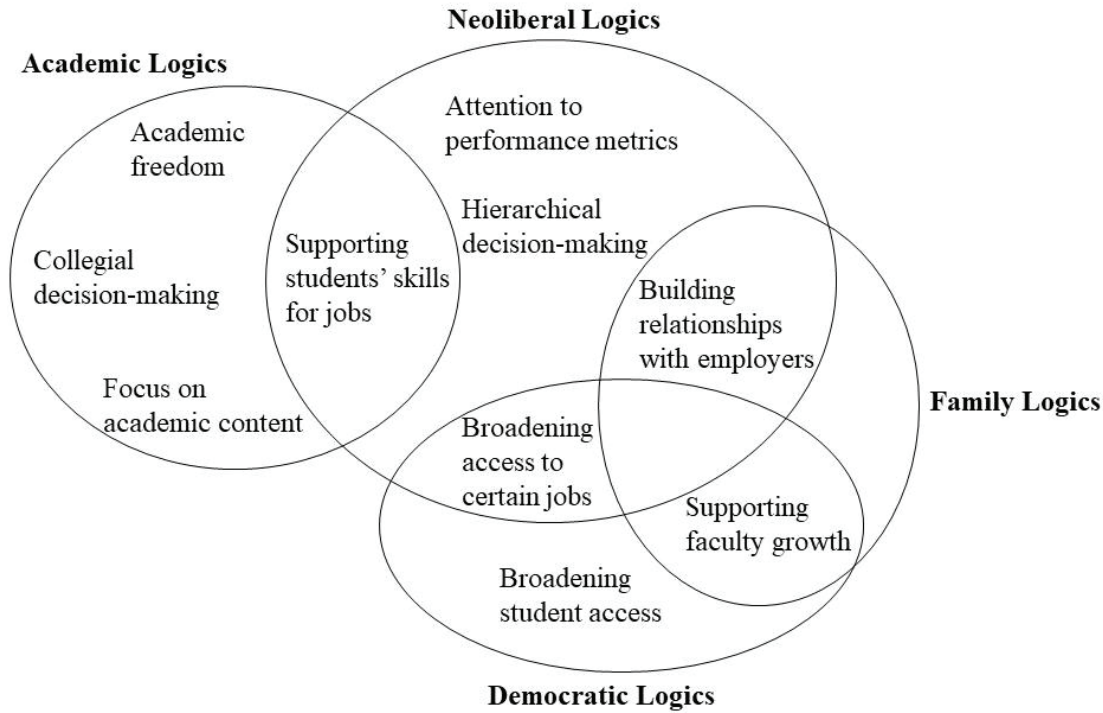
The writing major at LFSU began following the creation of the writing department and the hiring of three new faculty members – namely, Miranda, Nelson, and Victoria. The new faculty, along with Rachel and senior faculty colleagues, developed and implemented the writing major collaboratively, and continue to grow and change the major according to perceived student needs and enrollment demands. Most recently, writing faculty watched the suspension and review of several LFSU majors, a move that seemed to amplify the perceived need to adjust the program for increased enrollment.

When I visited LFSU, it seemed the Writing major was surviving. “I just- I feel good about what we’ve done as a department. I feel good about the writing major. I feel good about its growing numbers. It’s a healthy, robust program,” concluded Rachel. But a caveat was one I heard across sites; as Nelson put it, “we have cause for optimism, but you know, we’re still kind of inherently nervous people because we’re in the humanities in the 21st century.” As faculty explained, being “nervous,” to use Nelson’s word, seemed reasonable given the state’s and institution’s various actions to suspend programs. Importantly, though, he tied nervousness to being “in the humanities in the 21st century.” This nervousness highlights a possible widely-held logic of concern for contemporary humanities and how such concern motivates agentic actions that transform humanities in higher education. Seeing this phenomenon as a through line at LFSU, in the following chapter I attend to findings regarding institutional logics and how they shape curriculum changes in arts and humanities.

## CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS

Based on the case studies that addressed my research questions, 1) how and why do arts and humanities curricular changes proceed in a neoliberal higher education context and 2) how do individuals understand and enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum change processes, I present findings in three central themes. First, curriculum changes proceeded through a combination of collaborative and top-down, hierarchical decision-making. In this section, I highlight three archetypes of collaborative curriculum change. Second, curriculum change agents centered student experiences through emphases on content and learning, students' future encounters with job markets, and concerns related to access and equity. Third, curriculum change agents enacted agency to advance their respective academic fields, scholarship, and arts and humanities broadly.

Below, I present these themes with evidence from the three cases of arts and humanities curriculum changes I studied. I discuss the themes as they emerged in the contexts of each case, then summarize each theme across cases. Throughout, I analyze findings using an institutional logics (Canhilal et al., 2015; Lepori, 2016; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) framework. Regarding logics, I will demonstrate an overarching finding that these curriculum changes revealed multiple, coexisting institutional logics. Figure 3 shows salient manifestations of various institutional logics, and the relationships between institutional logics that these manifestations suggest. I describe how these logics emerged throughout this chapter. Finding multiple, coexisting logics in these cases suggests the possibility of hybrid logics (Lepori, 2016) guiding curriculum change agents' thoughts and actions.



**Figure 2:** Salient manifestations of various institutional logics in this study, including how they overlapped with other institutions' logics to form hybrid, academic-neoliberal, democratic-neoliberal, family-neoliberal, and family-democratic logics.

### Collaboration and Hierarchy

At all three sites, elements of collaborative decision-making, a manifestation of *academic logic*, coexisted with elements of hierarchical, top-down decision-making, a manifestation of *managerial logic*. Curriculum change agents made decisions and advanced their respective curriculum changes *collaboratively*. Indeed, at Little Falls State University (LFSU) and University of Northern Waters (UNW), participants used the word collaborative to describe their respective curriculum changes. That said, administrators used their authority in university *hierarchy* to make certain decisions both within the curriculum change cases and at the periphery of the cases in ways that affected curriculum change agents' thinking and actions. At Snowy Valley University (SVU), for example, participants talked about working together to advance the creation of the Artistic Media Technologies (AMT) major (collaboration) and administrators of

various levels (e.g., former director of the school of music, provost) exercised a great deal of authority (e.g., starting the major, requiring double the number of graduates). Additionally, curriculum change agents sometimes made decisions intended to appease administrators even when administrators did not require decisions of those sorts. Below, I illustrate the coexistence of hierarchy and collaboration at each site.

**Snowy Valley University.** The pre-history of the AMT major as a collaborative effort by multiple arts departments to advance their works related to technology reveals how AMT was, to some extent, born out of collaboration. Roland and his colleagues in theatre, dance, and visual art collaborated on projects and worked to develop an interdisciplinary major. The actions he described – travelling to learn about similar programs, preparing possible curricula – have the elements of a collaborative development of an academic program.

This original effort did not pan out, Roland argued, because there were too many barriers regarding getting an interdisciplinary program passed through multiple departments' curriculum committees. Those barriers represent collegiality in a different way; namely, it was because of the academic structure of group decision-making that the originally-planned interdisciplinary program did not come to be. All in all, the early stages of AMT show the contributions of faculty across fields working together to advance, and then hamper the advancement of, a new program's development.

What followed at SVU shows a mixture of collaboration and top-down decision-making. Roland explained, and others concurred, that the next step in creating AMT as a music-specific program was an administrator, then the director of the school of music, setting a foundation to create a music technology major. Vital in that foundation was, when a faculty member retired, searching for a new hire with expertise such that the new hire could be central in creating a



program that taught music technology. Thus, the AMT program's origin was also born out of intentional efforts by an administrator to make changes as he saw fit.

The search for a new faculty member ultimately brought Jason on board. Once Jason got to SVU, he quickly became responsible for leading the effort to create what would become the AMT program. He described collaborative elements of this process, such as working with Philip on aspects related to audio technology and what would be "cool" to include. Further, Roland and the then-director of the school of music helped with shepherding the curriculum change regarding processes specific to SVU and the state because of their knowledge about the institution as faculty and administrators.

I pause here to draw attention to this model of curriculum revision: hiring a new faculty member to lead a collaborative curriculum change effort. This model is one of three different archetypes I identified in this study for developing a new program, the other two being an existing faculty member leading a collaborative curriculum change (as at Northern Waters) and group effort collaborative curriculum change (as at Little Falls). Although other models may exist, these three represent archetypal arrangements for collaborative curriculum change. Each presents various challenges and opportunities that I will discuss in relation to each case.

For Snowy Valley, a challenge for Jason as leader of the curriculum change was, to his description, that he lacked savvy to navigate dimensions such as requesting resources and negotiating with administrators. His lack of savvy was a salient challenge when the provost returned the AMT major proposal to faculty, demanding they double the number of majors in the program from 40 to 80. The provost was willing to add more resources, including a faculty line, if the program could reach 80 majors, but Jason explained that he did not negotiate for enough resources as part of the 40-to-80 change. As a result, he and other faculty have too high an

advising load, the capstone course is too full for individual attention, and equipment replacement costs are greater than anticipated. The example here of a challenge related to a new faculty member navigating curriculum change also reveals how the development of AMT involved administration making a top-down decision. Specifically, the provost's request/demand for curriculum change agents to double the number of students in the program represents a top-down decision typical of the managerial logic.

On the other hand, Roland and Philip were thankful for Jason coming to the program and pointed to his arrival as a vital aspect of the major's creation. This dynamic shows how having a new faculty member lead a curriculum change can be exciting for those already in the institution. Further, Jason brought expertise the SVU school of music did not have. Inviting a new arrival's opinions, as the SVU music colleagues did, may offer fresh perspectives.

Looking ahead, the curriculum change agents associated with AMT recognized SVU administrative priorities that focused on gaming and virtual reality. That forecasting showed how they sought to keep abreast of ongoing changes to shape the AMT major. Curriculum change agents' interest in keeping current with administrative priorities reveals how administrative, top-down decisions affect thought and action even when administrators are not explicitly demanding such responses. This is to say, administrators' current interest in gaming and virtual reality is a top-down decision that affects curriculum change agents' decisions and actions in the ongoing revisions and delivery of the AMT program, even though no curriculum change agents indicated being explicitly told to adjust for the gaming and virtual reality components. At the same time, curriculum change agents were willing to appease these administrative interests in part because it is content they believe it is important for learners to engage with. I address content in the next

section, but first attend to the nature of collaboration and hierarchy at University of Northern Waters and Little Falls State University.

**University of Northern Waters.** Participants highlighted the central roles each Bob and Elaine played in creating and implementing the digital humanities minor and related initiatives such as the Campus Humanities Coalition (CHC). At the same time, many faculty expressed that aspects of the minor and CHC were highly collaborative. To describe the nature of collaboration and hierarchy in the development of the digital humanities (DH) minor, I address Bob's and Elaine's roles and how they reveal elements of academic and managerial logics in the curriculum change. I will also detail how the combination of hierarchical and collaborative decision-making at UNW reflects a *hybrid*, academic-managerial logic (see Lepori, 2016).

First, Bob's actions in the DH minor's development emphasize academic freedom and, thus, the academic logic. Bob's role in DH dates to the pre-history of the minor when he met with then-administrators interested in seeking digital humanities-related funding. Later, when he had time outside of other academic projects, he began the digital humanities course in the computer science department as a precursor to what is now the DH minor. These efforts express neither collaborative nor top-down decision-making. Instead, they reveal a different manifestation of the academic logic: the freedom faculty have to teach and research as they see fit (Canhilal et al., 2015).

Bob's next two efforts emphasize each collaboration and hierarchy: reaching out to other faculty as potential contributors to what became the DH program (collaboration) and building a relationship early on with Elaine (hierarchy). I categorize Bob reaching out to Elaine to talk about digital humanities as hierarchical, rather than collaborative, because he recognized the importance of having an administrator commit resources to an academic initiative for it to move

forward. Participants, including Elaine herself, emphasized resource commitment as a major reason the DH minor and the associated CHC moved forward when and how they did. When Elaine declared a “year of the humanities” at UNW, she exercised her power as administrator in a way consistent with managerial logic.

At the same time, Bob’s emphasis on working on the DH minor with other faculty – particularly those newer to UNW because, his hope was, their careers at UNW would extend past his own – illustrated how the academic logic of collegial decision-making guided development of the minor. Elaine, too, emphasized collaboration. In establishing the CHC, Elaine invited the perspectives of a variety of faculty to consider topics ranging from faculty promotion and rewards to physical spaces that could advance DH-related initiatives. The coexistence of top-down and collaborative decision-making in the case of Elaine using her power to commit resources and establish a collaborative body suggests one way the academic and managerial logic may work in congress as a hybrid logic (Lepori, 2016). The hybrid nature of the CHC at UNW also explains what happened when the lab space-focused working group did not receive an internal grant, and Elaine committed dean’s office resources to the project. Specifically, Elaine saw the collaborative effort toward a project (academic logic) and, believing it to be important, made a top-down decision to fund it (managerial logic).

Hiring represented another hybrid logic guiding the development of the DH minor. In the history department, Bo, the department chair, explained that he and his colleagues took note of the dean’s interest in digital humanities and added it as a preferred qualification in the job ad. Here, history faculty made the collegial decision to advance the search for a faculty member in a way that met administrative interests. By forecasting administrative interests, history faculty showed how top-down decisions can influence collaborative decision-making even when

administrators do not explicitly direct those decisions. The presence of both administrative interests and collegial decision-making suggests hybrid (academic and managerial) logics. In the next section, I demonstrate ways collaborative and hierarchical decision-making proceeded, and sometimes coexisted, at Little Falls.

**Little Falls State University.** Every participant in this study who was involved in the development of the writing major – namely Miranda, Nelson, Rachel, and Victoria – indicated the process as collaborative. Participants highlighted skills from their respective backgrounds they brought to bear in developing the major, such as Rachel’s knowledge of the institution and courses offered and Miranda’s knowledge about community college and transfer agreements but worked at developing the program as a team. Faculty generally presented a united group throughout the major’s creation. Indeed, as Nelson explained, faculty “took turns representing” the program as they shepherded it through presentations and meetings involved in the approval process.

The centrality of the group shows one way the Little Falls writing major’s development stands in contrast to the development of each AMT and DH at Snowy Valley and Northern Waters, respectively. Specifically, no one curriculum change agent was at the center of developing the writing major. This dynamic at Little Falls highlights the third archetype for collaboration in curriculum change: group-led collaborative curriculum change.

That said, Rachel and Victoria both suggested that the impetus to create the writing major predated the major’s actual development. Faculty who had since retired, notably a former department chair, began to think about and plan for a writing major before the department hired Miranda, Nelson, and Victoria (an important precursor to the writing major’s development.) This thinking and planning made up the “little seeds starting to sprout” Rachel told me about.

Between the former chair's initial planning and faculty's individual skills and backgrounds being used, it is clear that group-led collaboration does not mean the group collaborates on everything or at every stage. Instead, this archetype suggests that the central figure in advancing the curriculum change is a group, rather an individual.

Like other archetypes, challenges and opportunities alike arose for group-led collaborative curriculum change. One challenging aspect of the process at LFSU was the amount of time department faculty committed to advancing the major's development. Certainly curriculum changes generally involve considerable time and effort beyond one's typical workload, but when LFSU participants described group writing at each other's houses over weekends to ensure the development of the major, I sensed that they committed even more time than they would have had just one or two people been at the center of developing the major. On the other hand, this level of group involvement ensures group buy-in and broadens ownership of the developed program. Participants who had been involved in developing the major expressed pride and/or excitement, and enjoyment working together on this process. Those intrinsic rewards of the group-led collaboration may also have broader implications, such as increased team integrity.

I also draw attention to the role of hiring in the development of the LFSU writing major and how it contrasts with the role of hiring in the development of AMT at SVU. On the one hand, both cases involved new hires who were central in developing curriculum, and in both cases the newly-hired faculty drew on their backgrounds and skillsets to advance the curriculum change. On the other hand, the newly-hired faculty's roles when they arrived at their respective institutions suggested different levels of centrality of curriculum change agents. When Jason began at SVU, he became arguably the central figure in advancing AMT. When Miranda,

Nelson, and Victoria began at LFSU, they joined a department that developed the writing major as a group effort. In short, although hiring played a role in both curriculum changes – and, to a lesser extent, in the development of the DH minor at UNW – the group-led collaboration archetype still describes the writing major’s development at LFSU because of the centrality of the group, rather than the individual.

Lastly, I highlight the role of top-down decision-making associated with the managerial logic. The suspension of 25 academic programs at LFSU in Fall 2017 was one of the most important single moments participants highlighted and was a decision administrators at LFSU made. That decision affected writing faculty and, to participants’ explanations, faculty across the campus as a whole; as Victoria explained, “there’s a before and after,” and the date the majors’ suspension were announced was the date in question. Furthermore, performance measures motivated decisions regarding which programs were eliminated and which were kept. This is to say, programs cut had average numbers of graduates over a five-year period under a certain threshold. Such attention to performance measures (in this case, graduation rates) without regard to any other aspects of quality highlights managerial logic (Canhilal et al., 2015).

Here, the decision to suspend academic programs represented top-down, managerial decision-making. Importantly, the decision also had ripple effects that further spread thought and action guided by managerial logic. As Victoria explained to me, there were two tiers of programs whose performance measures were considered subpar: those that were eliminated and those that were “under review.” She then suggested the writing faculty sensed their major was on a “third, invisible tier” for consideration of review or elimination. The sense that writing would be on such a performance measure-focused tier reveals the managerial logic again. That sense of being so close to being eliminated or under review also points toward faculty’s alignment with the

administrative focus on maintaining a certain number of graduates every year. That focus on performance measures helped inform their decision to create the online program, include technical/professional dimensions of writing alongside creative/rhetorical, and advertise the program. Just as was the case at SVU and UNW, faculty made these efforts not out of explicit direction from administrators but out of a sense of needing to appease administration.

**Summary.** All curriculum changes in this study involved collaborative and hierarchy-driven decisions, illustrating the coexistence of academic and managerial logics in curriculum change. Furthermore, this coexistence of logics can manifest as a hybrid, academic-managerial logic, wherein actions taken illustrate the combination of thoughts and values of the academic and managerial institutions, as I argued was the case at UNW. Regarding the nature of collaborative curriculum change, I established three archetypes: new faculty member hired to lead collaborative curriculum change (development of the AMT major at Snowy Valley), established faculty member leading collaborative curriculum change (development of the DH minor at Northern Waters), and group-led collaborative curriculum change (development of the writing major at Little Falls). Regarding hierarchy, curriculum change agents sometimes acted in direct order of administrative objectives and sometimes acted in appeasement of administrators without being explicitly prompted.

I want to highlight a final note on the balance between collaborative (academic logic) and top-down (managerial logic) decision-making in these curriculum changes. In all cases, most decisions related to content, learning, and advancing the field were made collaboratively. By contrast, when administrators intervened to make decisions, those decisions were often related to performance measures (e.g., doubling the number of majors at SVU, suspending programs with fewer than a certain number of graduates per year at LFSU) and resources. Put differently, I



found that academic logic tended to guide academic aspects such as content whereas managerial logic tended to guide aspects related to accountability such as metrics. That said, this divide is more nuanced than a simple either-or. For example, as Roland at SVU argued, administrative decisions affected academic aspects because they rendered certain curricular aspects possible and others impossible. I expand on elements of curricular content in the next section.

### **Doing What’s “Cool and Good for Students”**

At all three sites, participants highlighted the importance of serving students in one way or another. I identified at least three especially salient ways curriculum change agents attended to students: focus on academic content, learning, and growth; students’ employment options; and expanding access to the program and the field. As I will describe, these aspects related to students show academic, democratic, and market logics. In the following sections, I address these dimensions of serving students, first by institution, then by category.

**Snowy Valley University.** Curriculum change agents at SVU took interest in doing what was “cool” (i.e., cutting-edge and relevant to students’ interests), considered student employability, and saw music technology as a vehicle to expand access to the field. Jason is responsible for the title of this section; he explained to me that the development of AMT took into consideration both institutional fiscal dimensions and doing what was “cool and good for students.” I address cool content and opportunities for students first.

**Cool experiences.** Jason, Philip, and Roland all highlighted, with great enthusiasm, the kinds of projects artists could partake in through the AMT program. These projects included collaboration across performing and visual arts disciplines with music technologies as a central guiding aspect tethered to the various performances and creations, phone applications that allowed for music-making, and virtual reality-based works. Curriculum change agents’ interests

in these “cool” (which, in this context, I took to mean technologically-sophisticated and relevant to students’ interests) experiences—I use the word cool because of Philip’s repeated use of it to describe quality content in the program—expressed their commitment to creating important opportunities for students.

The focus on cool experiences extended back to AMT’s pre-history, when Roland and colleagues wanted to create a program along the lines of AMT to expand opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate across artistic disciplines with technology connecting artistic forms. At the time, the interest in a new major centered the contemporary, cutting-edge kinds of experiences students would have access to that were otherwise unfeasible. After the initial attempt to create an AMT-type major failed, Roland created the laptop orchestra as one technology-oriented experience that could address some of the need he saw in an interdisciplinary arts technology program. Later, in the process of creating the AMT major, Philip explained searching other programs’ course offerings to get a sense of what he and his colleagues could do at SVU (but “cooler”). All these aspects of the development of AMT at SVU highlight a focus on academic content and, connected to that, what students could experience as part of the AMT program. Attention to academic content highlights the academic logic because it emphasizes the value of program faculty (and academic staff) teaching as they see fit.

***Preparation for employment.*** Curriculum change agents also emphasized the role of technology in music as a vehicle for improved employment opportunities, which they believed to be good for students. The salience of employment indicated a market logic at play in the AMT program development. Roland suggested that the skills developed in AMT made graduates more competitive for jobs. Philip talked about the unlikelihood of getting work in an orchestra as an instrumentalist compared to music technology-oriented programs and skills that could translate

to a variety of industries and employers. He and Jason also explained that a main reason AMT transcended beyond simply audio engineering, beyond opportunities for cool experiences, was the limited opportunities for jobs in audio engineering. Philip also raised the issues of the number of jobs for graduates in regard to the provost's request to double the number of majors in the program. Whereas Jason's primary concern seemed to relate to resources for the program with double the number of students, Philip was additionally concerned that the workforce could handle 10, but not 20, graduates from SVU's music technology program each year. The presence of a market logic here highlights a frame of thinking that prioritizes dimensions such as what skills graduates would develop to make them competitive for employment opportunities and the state of the workforce in music technology-related fields. Such a market logic is consistent with the neoliberal paradigm, but coexisted with elements of students' artistic experiences that were not neoliberally-oriented per se.

*Access beyond privilege.* In our conversation, Philip lambasted the traditional, instrumental curriculum of schools of music as inequitable and accessible only to "the sons and daughters of the privileged people." By contrast, he explained, music on contemporary technological "instruments" like cell phones and laptops was more accessible to a wider group of people. This contrast highlighted how AMT, in not requiring instrumental ability, expanded access to music to socio-economic classes otherwise less reachable. Roland also talked about how the AMT program changed the school of music's demographics and Jason told me AMT had a higher percentage of students of color than the school of music as a whole. These various ways of focusing on access to the school of music for a more diverse population suggest that the logic of democracy guided curriculum change agents to some extent. The logic of democracy suggests that expanding access and capacity for groups of people broadly to participate in society

is a central good. Curriculum change agents, especially Philip, demonstrated how they subscribed to this value of expanding the group of people who could participate in music as an academic and creative endeavor.

**University of Northern Waters.** At UNW, many of the themes I noted at SVU came up in similar manifestations. Students' learning and growth, their opportunities on the job market, and support for underserved or underrepresented groups guided curriculum change agents in the DH minor's development. I address these below.

*“Interdisciplinary thoughts” and skills.* Bob emphasized that his creation of the introductory digital humanities course and his role in developing the minor came in part from an interest in “getting students engaged with the world of ideas and learning,” or, as Earl put it, providing students with “interesting interdisciplinary thoughts.” As I have explained, this focus on creating learning experiences Bob saw as valuable highlighted the academic logic in centering Bob's freedom to teach as he saw fit. This focus also centered students' experiences. What Philip at SVU called “cool” experiences, Earl at UNW called interesting thoughts; the two represent comparable approaches to curriculum development in emphasizing the value of what content students will encounter.

Another similarity between SVU and UNW arose in the role course development played. Jack, in the English department, indicated a major activity in the DH minor's creation involved collaboratively creating courses and ensuring they worked, fit with Bob's guiding vision for the DH minor, and had “integrity” with the English program. Jack expressed elsewhere in our conversation how he valued and ensured student learning and growth through his teaching and curricular development.

Other faculty also expressed that developing, refining, and delivering coursework, especially humanities courses that featured digital humanities skills and theory, were essential in the development of the DH minor. Many highlighted the importance of skills in particular. Bo, UNW history chair, wanted the DH minor to develop “some skill set,” and see to it that students “can do certain things we could not have our students do ten years ago.” Even Bob, who was more interested in the philosophy of digital humanities and the importance of considering questions related to humanity, indicated that “external pressures” for “humanities people to have STEM skills” played a role. The pressures he described lead to the next way curriculum change agents explained the development of the DH minor as important: how DH skills would support humanities students searching for jobs.

**Marketability.** Many faculty pointed to the DH minor’s ability to support humanities students’ success as future job seekers. In response to why the DH minor’s development was important, Lionel, who taught the introductory DH course in computer science in the minor’s first year, made this point simply and explicitly: “students are gonna gain some more skills that are gonna make them more marketable in their job search.” Loraine and Nils, both history faculty, concurred. Nils highlighted too that learning skills like RGIS could even open doors for better-paying jobs while students were enrolled. He explained that he worked on maps while he was a student and earned a considerable wage and contrasted that wage to more typical student jobs that pay half the wage.

Margaret, interim dean of liberal arts, took the importance of supporting students as future job seekers a step further by suggesting doing so was part of UNW’s mission as a public institution. She talked about the importance of UNW serving the public good and that part of that public good was the public’s perception of universities as sites for career preparation and serving

state taxpayers. These market-oriented considerations of the role of the university show how pervasive the market logic can be. The idea that the state should create positive circumstances for the market is textbook neoliberalism, and Margaret employed that conceptualization in her role of the university's commitment to public good.

Margaret's and other curriculum change agents' perceptions of marketability as a positive of the DH minor came up at the same time as concerns for student learning and growth. This is to say, Margaret and others – including Jack, Lionel, and Loraine – expressed that the value of developing the DH minor was in supporting both students' marketability and students' learning. Jack even argued, “there's a danger in imagining, kinda making it a one-to-one, ‘college is about jobs,’” but nevertheless believed that student learning and preparation for careers could and did coexist. Others echoed that coexistence that demonstrated a hybrid, academic and market logic at play. In short, curriculum change agents valued learning (academic logic) and preparation for a career (market logic) as connected in supporting students' success.

***Supporting working-class and women students.*** Specific interests in underserved populations highlight a democratic logic that values equity. Bo connected the importance of DH skills and marketable components of the new minor to supporting “working-class” students, who made up what he explained to be a considerable portion of UNW's student population (and the audience of public regional universities [Fryar, 2015; Henderson, 2007; McClure, 2018]). In this way, he echoed much of what I have indicated for many faculty who emphasized the importance of students improving their chances on job markets. At the same time, by specifically emphasizing the employment potentials of working-class students, Bo highlighted the role UNW could play in serving equitable ends, especially as a regional public institution. I noted the democratic logic at play here because Bo's interest in UNW serving working-class students

connected to his interest in helping that student population improve its position and improve access to opportunities beyond college.

Ivar, computer science chair, also highlighted the democratic logic in expressing his hope that the DH minor would increase the number of women in computer science. Ivar seemed interested in increasing the number of women in computer science for two reasons: to improve gender parity as a performance measure, which suggests a managerial logic, and because he believed “the world will be a better place” with more women in computer science. Although he did not go into more detail, expanding access to an underserved group (in the case of computer science, women) suggests democratic logic.

**Little Falls State University.** Regarding support for students, writing faculty at Little Falls drew on much the same logics I found guiding thought and action at SVU and UNW. Below, I describe how writing faculty focused on academic content and student learning, internships and supporting students’ skills for future employment, and the promise of access connected to LFSU’s institutional type and region. Like the other cases, these dimensions highlight aspects of academic, market, and democratic logics.

*“You wanna affect students.”* LFSU writing faculty showed their emphasis on academic content in their focus on changing academic requirements and removing and developing courses. All those involved in the writing major’s development talked about how they assessed their program of study: eliminating certain courses, developing other courses, and addressing other aspects related to the program of study such as requiring foreign languages as part of making the program a BA, rather than BS degree. These conversations about content – what was eliminated, what was new, how the program was distinct from English literature – were salient throughout

my conversations at Little Falls. Faculty even talked about moments meaningful to them wherein students demonstrated growth in their capstone projects or other class assignments.

Indeed, the impetus to create the major even seemed to be motivated by a desire to help students grow. Victoria argued that the reason to create the major was because “you wanna affect students,” and the extant minor was great but insufficient in affecting students. Miranda argued that the program’s development has led to “a lot of well-rounded, well-educated writers and thinkers graduating” from LFSU. All in all, faculty were interested in fostering their students as writers.

***Internships, advisory board, and application to employment.*** Faculty highlighted the roles of internships, an advisory board, and technical/professional writing as connected to their graduates’ professional success. Regarding the latter, faculty especially highlighted the hiring of Anthony, who, at the time I was in the field, was teaching a new course on technical and professional writing. Importantly, faculty described the balance between “market needs” and “humanities elements,” in Miranda’s words.

Offering internships served multiple roles in the writing major. They led to future professional opportunities and served as connections to the Little Falls region. Students were able to see possible roles for professional writers in industries and expand their networks. The department’s creation of an advisory board consisting of local employers and others helped secure internships and developed relationships between the department and the local community. Because of this connection to employment, one might see the advisory board as representative solely of the market logic. However, I argue the LFSU writing advisory board also highlights aspect of academic and family logics. Regarding the academic logic, connections to community informed the curriculum; for example, the importance of learning how to write certain



professional documents arose first from the advisory board. Furthermore, building community between the department and local stakeholders suggests a family logic in the focus of nurturing relationships beyond campus.

Students' access to internships as part of their writing program highlighted one dimension of integration of technical and professional writing in curriculum. Hiring Anthony to increase technical/professional writing content represented another dimension. Indeed, three of the four other faculty explicitly highlighted Anthony's presence in the faculty and his concomitant focus on professional writing as an important milestone in the ongoing development of the writing major. The focus on Anthony's hire hearkens back to the important role hiring plays in curriculum change; for example, at SVU, hiring Jason enabled the creation of the AMT major. Likewise, the LFSU writing department hiring Anthony enabled the expansion of technical/professional writing in the major.

Anthony himself highlighted explicitly that he wanted students to "get very good jobs" and "make more money than me when they graduate." His approach to the new technical writing course included "cutting edge technology that's highly applicable in contemporary workplaces" and "some of the old school tech writing that still is important." The latter he emphasized in part because of industries specifically in the Little Falls region. All of this indicated his commitment to students as future job seekers, highlighting the neoliberal, market logic at play.

At the same time, Anthony talked at length about how he worked with students to consider ethics and fostered their skepticism of advertising. In this way, Anthony showed how he balanced content that directly informs professional preparation (market logic) with content that builds students' capacity to be critical consumers of information. Teaching in this way reveals

the coexistence of the academic logic, because Anthony taught in a way he saw fit, with market logic.

Balance characterized Little Falls curriculum change agents' approach to these market logic-driven aspects with what one might call the "traditional" humanities elements of the writing major. "Maybe people call it selling out," Victoria argued, "but if you promote the technical, the data-based, the forward-facing employer skills, then you get to still teach poetry. That's the balance we're okay with striking." Here, I took Victoria's reference to poetry to be an indicator of many dimensions of writing that might not be considered "useful" in the market logic. This attitude of striking a balance between "forward-facing employer skills" on the one hand and poetry on the other epitomized writing faculty's approach to inclusion of employment-oriented content. Indeed, as Anthony explained to me, LFSU's mission explicitly emphasizes balance between liberal learning professional preparation.

Nelson brought up another balance of market logic, specifically regarding democratic logic. Just as Margaret at UNW had argued, Nelson argued that LFSU, as a state institution, was beholden to the public good. Nelson explained that because the legislature in the state was publicly elected, they represented the public interest and the institution should work toward that public interest in "the way the public perceives the good and not the way you individually perceive the good." How did the public perceive good? State legislators emphasized the role of higher education in job preparation, revealing how the market logic guided democratic (public-driven) decision-making. Therefore, Nelson rationalized, it was important for LFSU faculty to serve the public by enhancing academic programs' capacity to advance market-related outcomes.

In short, the market logic only guided thought and action in the writing major's ongoing development when coexistent with an orientation toward the academic, or occasionally the

democratic. This dynamic highlighted how LFSU writing curriculum change agents employed hybrid logics even regarding the neoliberal focus on job preparation. Lastly, the focus on market and democratic hybrid logics highlighted the role of LFSU as a public institution, a core aspect of its role in access.

*LFSU's access role in its state context.* I identified two ways Little Falls writing faculty suggested the importance of access for students: first, the expansion of the major into the online format; and second, the role the institution plays in its part of the state. To the first point, Rachel argued that although putting the major online was in large part due to meeting graduation performance measures, it also served students in helping them complete the writing program no matter their physical location. To the second point, LFSU's location puts it in close proximity to many rural state citizens. In proposing the major at the state level, curriculum change agents had to argue it was not replicating existing programs and did so in part by emphasizing their proximity to rural communities in the state and the value of providing a writing program for those communities. Like at SVU and UNW, these actions that highlighted expanding access to the program in question highlight the salience of a democratic logic in the curriculum change process.

**Summary.** These cases highlighted how curriculum change agents foregrounded their roles in service of students and as parts of public education. The market logic was pervasive, emphasizing the role neoliberalism plays in shaping thoughts and actions in higher education. That said, curriculum change agents' relationships with that neoliberal logic was complex. By considering the roles of student learning and access and equity alongside dimensions that emphasized students as self-enterprising job seekers, curriculum change agents employed multiple logics that upheld the neoliberal paradigm without subscribing to it wholesale.

## **Advancing the Academic Field, Scholarship, and the Arts and Humanities**

The final central theme I found relates primarily to why curriculum change agents contributed to their respective curriculum changes and why they believed those changes were important. At Snowy Valley and Northern Waters, curriculum change agents expressed that the changes were vital to responding to changes in their fields and shaping what they believed to be the roles of arts (at SVU) and humanities (at UNW). For Little Falls curriculum change agents, advancing the field was not as salient per se, but the development of the writing major did represent one local manifestation of broader changes in the field; namely, the schism between literature and writing programs. I address these dimensions below.

### **Artistic Music Technologies at Snowy Valley University: “Revolutionizing the arts.”**

All participants agreed that developing the AMT major was important because contemporary technologies – specifically those based in computing technologies, such as laptops, phone applications, and virtual reality – have advanced the study and practice of music. Music technology was important not just because it provided students with good experiences, as I explained in the previous section. Rather, curriculum change agents argued, the arts, including music, are changing. Those changes necessitate programs like AMT that embrace the various possibilities contemporary technologies present to music.

I learned from my time at Snowy Valley that others in the field did not embrace the technology-related changes Jason, Philip, and Roland sensed as important. Accreditation documentation and interviews alike revealed those challenges. Specifically, the accreditation agency asserted AMT was not a music program. At the same time, faculty requested the word “music” be removed from the name of (at the time) the minor. These dynamics point to some musicians’ resistance of AMT as an actual contribution to music as a field of study and practice.

Furthermore, these reveal the fault lines between instrumental music and other studies of music (Jones, 2012).

I bring up these examples of resistance to illustrate how some individuals enacted agency. Although Jason explained that the points of resistance were less challenging than anticipated, resistance nevertheless arose. Curriculum change agents could have stopped the development of AMT in response to that resistance, just as earlier attempts among SVU arts faculty to create an interdisciplinary program failed to manifest into the intended outcome. Instead, curriculum change agents at SVU continued to implement aspects of music technologies because they believed it was vital. When asked why AMT's development was important, Roland described it as "an essential part of our arts field," Philip bemoaned the school of music's commitment to a decades-old model when "technology is just absolutely revolutionizing the arts," and Jason said, "I think it's insane that mostly we teach musical practices- museum music from the 19th century. I don't think that should be the role of arts in society." All three went on to share examples of how they hope the program will explore cutting-edge technologies and embrace collaborations within music and across arts fields. In these ways, SVU AMT curriculum change agents showed how the development of the major was more than a service for students; Artistic Media Technologies is essential to advance the field of music.

I argue that this dimension of the importance of AMT reveals academic logic in two important ways. First, the academic logic suggests that faculty (and, perhaps, academic staff) have freedom to teach how they see fit. In the case of developing AMT, curriculum change agents believed it was important to teach musicians using contemporary technologies. Second, the academic logic suggests fealty to academic disciplines. For the participants in this study, they expressed fealty to music in ways that transformed the practice and scholarship of music.

Together, these motivations show how academic logics guided the belief that music at SVU (and beyond) should move toward greater implementation of contemporary technologies.

**Digital humanities at University of Northern Waters: “The discipline was changing.”** At UNW, Margaret Leonard explained that some humanities scholars are skeptical of digital humanities and treat it as a passing trend. Nils pointed out that group of scholars too, having told me his mentor from his graduate studies was one such scholar. Likewise, Cecelia, communication studies faculty, brought my attention to scholars who have argued the digital humanities is neoliberal and harmful (see Allington et al., 2016).

However, Margaret argued, digital humanities represents more than a trend; instead, to her telling, “it seems to be the course of history” in the field’s ongoing changes. A major role she played in the development of the DH minor was advancing faculty hires with DH skills because “the discipline was changing” and faculty hires should respond to those changes. These elements show how a larger sense of the field changing guided decision-making.

Cecelia’s investment in DH embraced those changes in the field. She told me “it’s not just that we’re teaching [DH] because the classes sell but because they help us answer rigorous research questions and that’s why digital humanities is useful to us.” Cecelia’s focus on scholarship stood out to me because it added an extra dimension to creating the DH minor at UNW. By developing curricula and resource for digital humanities at UNW, curriculum change agents also supported faculty growth and scholarship. Indeed, Elaine brought up the importance of faculty learning and growth, especially in regard to sponsoring groups of faculty to attend digital humanities institutes to improve teaching and scholarly practices. These aspects of developing the DH minor show a relationship wherein the institution amplifies curricular aspects and faculty scholarship, aspects which in turn support and inform each another. Furthermore, by

supporting faculty scholarship, the DH minor was positioned to expand the capabilities of the field because of the role scholarship plays in shaping academic fields.

The connection between DH and scholarship at UNW show how it served the field. Bob and others, however, were invested in more than the field. Jack, for example, expressed that he hoped humanities and STEM would embrace a reciprocal relationship wherein humanities students and scholars developed computing skills, *and* computer science and other STEM students and scholars could become better informed in regard to humanistic concerns. He brought up contemporary issues like the Cambridge Analytica scandal<sup>3</sup> and implications related to the ethics and manifestations of oppression in the development of data.

Bob stated his hope that DH would serve the humanities even more broadly, and channeled Aristotle and human “survival and flourishing” to explain that he hoped developing the DH minor would help answer essential questions of being human. “I happen to believe that the humanities have a vital role in higher learning, and, more importantly, in society,” he told me. As such, he hoped to be in service of the humanities using his role as a computer science faculty member. In this way, he exercised his agency as a faculty member in service of his belief in the “vital role” of the humanities.

I note the academic logic guiding beliefs in the importance of DH to expanding humanities fields, like how the academic logic guided similar beliefs at SVU. I highlight Cecelia’s point regarding scholarship to add that the academic logic suggests faculty freedom to teach *and* conduct research as they see fit. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that Bob’s implementation of an introductory DH course in computer science expressed the academic logic.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2018, media outlets uncovered that the data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica had used, without authorization, personal data related to millions of individuals through the social media website Facebook. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/cambridge-analytica-files>

I build on that argument with his (and Jack's) beliefs in the importance of DH as managing questions related to humanity and mitigating contemporary challenges regarding the digital. The academic logic guided their sense that addressing these questions and issues are vital in the DH minor.

**Writing at Little Falls State University: "Part of the zeitgeist in the field."** Victoria explained two elements that expressed how the LFSU writing major's development demonstrated advancement of aspects of their discipline. First, creating the major was "part of the zeitgeist in the field," or a larger trend wherein higher education faculty created writing programs. I address this in more detail below. Second, she emphasized that the curriculum and her and her colleagues' scholarly foci changed over time. "I'm proud of us for being active scholars," she told me. This point emphasized that advancing scholarship was valuable to Victoria and she believed her colleagues valued that too through their various scholarly efforts.

Regarding the "zeitgeist in the field," I point to the writing program's origins in LFSU's English department. In an earlier academic restructuring, English and writing (including rhetoric and composition) were separated and merged with other departments. Faculty believed that split made the creation of the writing major possible. The split resembles what happened for English programs throughout higher education; generally speaking, literature scholars on the one hand and rhetoric and composition scholars on the other split away from each other to create separate programs. Writing programs like the one at LFSU are relatively new to higher education, especially compared to English programs that center literary studies. Because of this broader context, the development of the writing major at Little Falls represented the kinds of changes in the field scholars in various English studies saw and created over the last few decades. Although this context did not come up very much in my conversations with LFSU participants, it



nevertheless suggests that the development of writing at LFSU advances its field in a similar way to the advancements of each music and digital humanities at SVU and UNW, respectively.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explained three central themes of how three cases of curriculum changes in the arts and humanities proceeded and how curriculum change agents in these processes enacted agency. First, curriculum change proceeded collaboratively but administrators and, in one case, state legislators, exercised their power to influence curriculum change processes through hierarchical, top-down decision-making. The collaborative decisions and actions, guided by an academic logic, largely controlled academic components whereas top-down decisions and actions, guided by a managerial logic, largely controlled neoliberal dimensions such as attention to performance measures. That said, curriculum change agents in all cases made decisions they believed would be favorable to administrators, revealing how curriculum change agents sometimes enacted agency in the name of upper administrative interests.

Second, curriculum change agents prioritized students' experiences through attention to academic content and student learning and growth, students' chances as future (and current) job seekers, and considerations related to access. Considerations of students revealed coexistence of several institutional logics, including neoliberal (market and managerial), academic, democratic, and family logics. In particular, curriculum change agents enacted agency in ways that emphasized a market logic (especially as it related to students as job seekers) while also considering the norms of content in their field and supporting students' growth. Curriculum change agents also took interest in expanding access. These various dynamics showed the coexistence of neoliberal (especially market) logics with academic, family, and democratic logics.

Third, curriculum change agents enacted agency in ways that advanced their academic fields, scholarship, and arts and humanities generally. In this theme, which was especially salient for the development of each Artistic Media Technologies at Snowy Valley University and the digital humanities minor at University of Northern Waters, I found curriculum change agents professed what they believed to be important in their academic fields and in higher education. Those beliefs motivated their sense of why the curriculum changes were important and why they contributed to their respective curriculum changes. These dimensions emphasize again the academic logic, which suggests faculty should teach and research as they see fit and express fealty to their academic fields.

An overarching finding is in how curriculum change agents employ multiple institutional logics as they enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum changes. I summarize salient logics and, how some were combined with neoliberal logics, in figure 3. The presence of multiple logics in these cases of arts and humanities curriculum changes merits further consideration to address how and why arts and humanities in higher education are changing more generally. In the next and final chapter, I take up how the coexistence of logics, including hybrid academic-neoliberal logics, functioned as an indicator for the changes in arts and humanities fields and curriculum change generally.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss my findings across cases as they apply to arts and humanities in higher education and public regional universities, as well as advance implications for theory, practice, and policy and future directions for research. Given the contemporary context in which scholars debate the “crisis in the humanities,” this study addressed how and why arts and humanities fields in higher education are changing. Throughout this study, I have argued that changes in arts and humanities that manifest neoliberal effects may serve as a bellwether for broader changes in higher education and threaten the positive qualities of arts and humanities education (Di Leo, 2013; Geiger, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Kindelan, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010). To address this problem, I asked:

- 1) How and why do arts and humanities curricular changes proceed in a neoliberal higher education context?
- 2) How do individuals understand and enact agency in arts and humanities curriculum change processes?

I described the chronological processes of the developments of the Artistic Media Technologies (AMT) major at Snowy Valley University (SVU), digital humanities (DH) minor at University of Northern Waters (UNW), and writing major at Little Falls State University (LFSU). These cases pointed to three central themes that answered my research questions: 1) curriculum changes proceeded through both collaborative and hierarchical, top-down decision-making; 2) curriculum change agents prioritized students in regard to learning and growth, future chances as job seekers, and broad access; and 3) curriculum change agents sought to advance scholarship, their academic fields, and arts and humanities broadly.

In chapter seven, I illustrated how curriculum change proceeded and how curriculum change enacted agency in these processes. An overarching finding, I concluded, was the presence of coexisting institutional logics guiding thought and action in curriculum change processes, echoing previous scholars' findings (e.g., Canhilal et al., 2015; Lepori, 2016; Martin, 2018). Figure 3 showed how multiple logics manifested and how some of these manifestations pointed to hybrid logics that aligned with neoliberal ideals. The presence of various logics in these cases of arts and humanities curriculum changes helps reveal underlying reasons related to how and why arts and humanities fields are changing in higher education and how public regional universities navigate neoliberal contexts.

Below, I discuss my findings through two topic areas: arts and humanities in higher education and public regional universities in the United States. To the former, I asked how curriculum changes proceed in a neoliberal context and how curriculum change agents enacted agency to address how and why arts and humanities fields in higher education are changing. Drawing on findings from across the three cases of curriculum changes, I offer possible paths arts and humanities fields may take, and discuss the findings in light of coexisting institutional logics, including academic and neoliberal logics. I argue how this analysis complicates broad-strokes narratives about the state of arts and humanities. To the latter, I focused this study on public institutions of higher education (see Hutner & Mohamed, 2016) and, further, excluded R1 (very high research activity) institutions in the study as possible sites to focus on sites with resource constraints. I describe the group of four-year institutions, which includes research, comprehensive, and liberal arts institutions, that fit criteria for inclusion as *public regional universities*. Although the three institutions in this study had varying levels of out-of-state student populations, in general all three talked about their roles in serving their states and

sometimes local region. Recognizing the particular challenges for public regional universities in a neoliberal context (Dugas et al., 2018; McClure, 2018), I explore how institutional type affected curriculum change agents' sense of programs' purpose, regional relationships, and students served. Having established how this study addresses how and why arts and humanities fields are changing and how institutional type affected curriculum change processes and exercises of agency, I put forth implications for theory, practice, and policy and future directions for research. I conclude with a summary of the study as a whole.

### **Arts and Humanities in Higher Education**

As I addressed in chapters one and two, scholars across arts and humanities fields see declines in relation to arts and humanities student enrollments, programs, and faculty lines. Recently, leaders at Western Illinois University laid off over 100 employees including faculty in foreign languages and other disciplines (Greene & Barnum, 2019). Likewise, Little Falls State University (LFSU) administrators suspended two-dozen programs, many in arts and humanities fields, less than two years ago. These cuts and lay-offs illustrate important details for the context of this study; many faculty and staff in arts and humanities at public regional universities feel they operate in an environment of fighting for program and institutional survival.

For these individuals, the neoliberal environment is part of the impetus to carve out paths to maintain or advance their fields. As Jason, music faculty at SVU, said, “we’re either gonna have to structurally adjust ourselves or we’re gonna be structurally adjusted from the outside.” In chapter two, I proposed four possible paths forward for arts and humanities fields in higher education, some of which involved “structurally adjust[ing]”: one, asserting the value of the arts and humanities; two, a laissez-faire path to allow arts and humanities fields to develop in whatever directions arise; three, adapting to neoliberal impulses and emphasizing marketable

dimensions; four, recognition of and resistance to neoliberal impulses. In the cases here, I found evidence of all four paths with additional nuances. At Snowy Valley, the development of AMT suggested both adaptation to neoliberal impulses and following directions that arise. In chapter two, I identified these two paths as connected. I argue that the development of the AMT program emphasized both because it embraced the market-related advantages of music technology and responded to administrators' interests.

I found that the changes at Little Falls and Northern Waters embraced all four paths, to greater or lesser extents, and that the change at Northern Waters also followed a fifth path built off the first. In both of these curriculum change processes, change agents advocated for humanities disciplines at and beyond their campus (path one), sensed and followed changes in their fields and institutions (path two), strategically aligned with neoliberal goals (path three), and addressed the neoliberal through course content that addressed ethics and human dimensions in the fields (path four). A fifth path I did not initially propose suggests that non-arts and humanities disciplines can embrace the arts and humanities to protect and advance the concomitant concepts and knowledge of those fields. I identified this path because of the role the UNW computer science department, especially Bob, played in starting and sustaining the program. Bob and his computer science colleagues, including participants Ivar and Lionel, were interested in the DH minor in part because they supported its academic and philosophical underpinnings.

Identifying these various paths is important because it suggests multiple ways arts and humanities fields are changing in higher education. If just three cases of new arts and humanities programs can illustrate options that both embrace and critique neoliberal ideals, then the multitude of curriculum changes unfolding in arts and humanities may also be able to

simultaneously embrace and critique aspects of neoliberalism. Arguments from critics who call into question contemporary changes to the humanities (e.g., Allington et al., 2016) or declare the humanities dead (Stover, 2018) are not sufficiently nuanced for the three cases here; they cannot possibly be sufficiently nuanced for arts and humanities generally.

Additionally, the paths I have demonstrated here present possibilities for arts and humanities faculty, especially those in resource-constrained programs, to follow. Indeed, Nelson, writing faculty at LFSU, even described that he hoped their experiences developing the writing major could serve as a “model” for faculty in other programs and institutions. Identifying institution-level opportunities to advance a program’s standing (see also Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010) and aligning with better-resourced fields, as the DH minor was, serve as possible options for arts and humanities faculty.

These options may not be ideal or even acceptable to some. Indeed, as Osei-Kofi and colleagues (2010) argued, aligning with institutional interests in program development holds the danger of “commoditization” (p. 336) of equitable ends and may ultimately undermine those goals. For arts and humanities programs, this danger could manifest through administrative powers emphasizing arts and humanities at a surface level without providing necessary resource commitment to meaningfully support programs.

I thus offer signs of concern and signs of hope in response to the so-called crisis in the humanities. Faculty can strategically align themselves with neoliberal ideology (i.e., managerial and market logics) to advance their fields. Fields like digital humanities and music technology, though threatening for some in arts and humanities, may strike enough balance between the “classical” and the “contemporary” and may be vital to the continuation of arts and humanities fields. As I argued in chapter seven, these changes are vital not just because of market forces, but

because of changes in academic fields. DH and AMT curriculum change agents at UNW and SVU, respectively, recognized the job market-related benefits of these fields but did not develop those programs solely to advance (neoliberal) market ends. Rather, they saw the integration of contemporary technologies as an essential way of advancing academic disciplines.

Considering this point – that curriculum change agents advance both explicitly neoliberal goals *and* other goals beyond the neoliberal paradigm – I want to emphasize the presence of coexisting institutional logics and what that coexistence means for arts and humanities in higher education. Regarding decision-making and considerations of students, a combination of neoliberal and other logics, especially academic logic, guided thought and action. Certainly neoliberalism – particularly in the forms of financial pressures, senses of “return on investment” for students, and depicting students as future job seekers – emerged as a central guiding construct for decisions. However, as I have previously argued, neoliberalism is pervasive in U.S. higher education and manifests in myriad ways (Giroux, 2014; López-Calvo, 2019; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Therefore, I expected to find manifestations of neoliberal ideology.

The coexistence of market and managerial logics with the logics of other institutions, such as academe, democracy, and family, suggests that although neoliberalism is pervasive, it is not universal. As I established in chapter seven, the academic logic guided considerable thought and action related to decision-making and academic content. When the academic logic did coexist with neoliberal (managerial and market) logics in decision-making and content, what emerged revealed ideals reflective of both neoliberal and academic paradigms. For example, when Elaine at UNW exercised her power as dean to resource certain initiatives, she did so in response to faculty collaboration toward similar ends, such as in the funding of a digital humanities lab. Elaine exercised top-down decision-making (neoliberal (managerial) logic) to



accomplish goals established by collaboration (academic logic). The combination of aspects of these logics suggests a hybrid logic: a singular way of enacting agency that combines elements of institutions (in this case, managerialism and academe).

Perhaps the most common manifestation I identified of a hybrid logic was in doing right by students. Curriculum change agents across cases emphasized that supporting students involved both their learning and growth in various academic fields and in preparation for jobs. As I detailed in chapter seven, some participants took great pains to emphasize this point precisely: that supporting students' academic growth and preparing them for jobs could be one in the same. At SVU, curriculum change agents believed integrating technology with music was both profitable for future job seekers and an essential element regarding music-making in the 21st century. English faculty at UNW and writing faculty at LFSU talked about how the skills they developed as writers and thinkers were beneficial unto themselves and for future jobs. Indeed, at these two sites most faculty emphasized the importance of helping their students' future chances as job seekers but never to the detriment of the kinds of learning appropriate to the various academic fields.

The hybridity of logical actions in arts and humanities curriculum changes suggests that, in contrast to conceptualizing actions as motivated *either* by academic or neoliberal logic, some actions are *both* academic and neoliberal. The dean who exercises hierarchal authority in the name of collegiality is enacting a hybrid, academic-managerial, logic; the faculty member who imparts skills on students that improve their critical thinking and career possibilities are enacting a hybrid, academic-market, logic. To return to the paths I proposed for arts and humanities fields, these hybrid logics reveal possibilities to strategically align with neoliberal ideals in ways that maintain some level of academic integrity.

The presence of the hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic that considers job preparation alongside learning in arts and humanities fields also echoes Miller's (2012) theoretical framing of "humanities two." Humanities two describes two dimensions of arts and humanities fields: majors that use humanities disciplines in vocational ways (such as communication studies), and the institutions that emphasize vocational preparation as core mission (such as public regional universities, the institutional type I highlight in this study.) The finding of a hybrid academic-neoliberal logic guiding arts and humanities curriculum change at public regional universities shows evidence for Miller's framing. Because my finding supports Miller's theory, I also repeat his recognition that humanities two fields should be recognized as valid, important forms of arts and humanities. The combination of an academic and neoliberal logic in these fields may be part and parcel of the reality of arts and humanities in higher education.

To reiterate, some may find this strategic alignment with neoliberal ideals to be unacceptable. Participants at various sites talked about faculty they sensed believed that way; as examples, LFSU faculty who believed others were "dismantling higher education" and music faculty at SVU who refused the value or legitimacy of music technology as musical form(s). I am sympathetic to this view. After all, as I described in chapter three, my academic background is in liberal arts colleges and I benefitted greatly from a college education that emphasized "liberal" learning and paid "vocational" aspects little mind.

However, this study's findings do not support hard line resistance to neoliberalizing changes in arts and humanities. The ways curriculum change agents aligned with neoliberal ideals enabled those individuals to support meaningful academic changes and serve students in ways they valued. If faculty and others had instead *wholly* resisted neoliberal ideals, they may have risked not serving students in appropriate ways and not having opportunities to advance

their fields in important ways. Further, curriculum change agents across all cases emphasized they did not want to further only neoliberal goals. Instead, they supported neoliberal goals when doing so meant furthering academic and democratic goals. I reflect again on Jason’s belief that “we’re either gonna have to structurally adjust ourselves or we’re gonna be structurally adjusted from the outside.” Thus, aligning with neoliberal ideals enabled acts of agency that also allowed the growth of academic and democratic goals.

### **Public Regional Universities**

Participants across cases, particularly at LFSU and UNW, emphasized aspects related to institutional type, such as their public mission, role in the community, and constraints on resources. I begin this section by discussing concepts of the public good, how public good particularly emphasized job preparation, and the salience of public regional universities’ lower-socioeconomic status student populations in this job preparation mission. I then address the roles public regional universities can play in their local regions vis-à-vis findings at LFSU and UNW. I end this section by commenting on the resource constraints arts and humanities fields in public regional universities face, and what that means for these fields within institutions of similar type.

**Public good.** Some participants spoke specifically about the importance of public good at their institutions. Just as Margaret, interim dean of liberal arts at UNW, explained that doing “good” (she used air quotes to emphasize the term) meant different things to different people, Nelson, writing chair at LFSU, highlighted, “We’re a public institution, we’re very aware of serving the needs of the citizens of [state], quite frankly.” The salience of public mission and its various meanings of “good” for the public highlighted how this arts and humanities curriculum change agents in this study face challenges that may be distinct from their private institution colleagues.

Participants in this study particularly emphasized the role of their institutions in preparing students for jobs as part of their public mission. Although preparing students for jobs may seem to be a private good in that an individual in a job reaps private benefits, participants like Margaret and Nelson expressed that many in the public want universities to serve as sites for job preparation. To serve the public, these administrators and faculty reasoned, they must provide job preparation in their institutions and disciplines. This dynamic reveals how a state may indeed consider filling certain professions and ensuring economic well-being to be public goods. At the same time, the prevalence of job preparation as serving the public good without as much mention of non-economic outcomes (e.g., civic responsibility, community service) reveals neoliberal ideology at play, both within universities' perceptions of the public and in the priorities of legislators and state citizens.

As a result of this emphasis on job preparation as public good, I point to the pressure for public regional universities to advance job preparation as a mission. This mission harks back to their historical role in job preparation (Henderson, 2007) that emphasized the importance to the public of having an educated class who could serve as teachers. That job preparation mission pre-existed the neoliberal era. That said, public regional universities face neoliberal pressures that affect work and mission alike (Dugas et al., 2018). The neoliberal push for job preparation may, in the public regional university setting, increase the emphasis on job preparation and threaten to exclude the balanced mission of vocational and liberal education these institutions historically embraced (Henderson, 2007). Within arts and humanities at public regional universities, a neoliberally-aligned increase in interest in job preparation could crowd out these fields, which do not emphasize utility per se (Fish, 2018; Newman, 2019).

Furthermore, public regional universities' student populations tend to include disproportionately more low-socioeconomic status students and other marginalized populations (Fryar, 2015; Henderson, 2007; McClure, 2018). Bo, chair of the UNW history department, talked about how the student population at UNW and schools like it features a diverse student body in terms of socioeconomic status and academic preparation. In thinking about students who have experienced homelessness and other manifestations of economic insecurity, Bo believed it was natural for faculty to support students' job preparation so that those students are better-equipped to financially support themselves and their families. Anthony, at LFSU, echoed this sentiment when he told me, "I want my students to make more money than me when they graduate," referring as well to his previous experiences with economic insecurity. The combination of democratic and neoliberal logics in these cases emphasized broadening access (democratic) to social mobility through improve job market chances (neoliberal).

In sum, the concept of public good drove some thinking and action in this study's cases. Participants primarily considered public good to refer to job preparation, which reveals the presence of neoliberal ideology in curriculum change decision making. At the same time, job preparation may be salient in part because of public regional universities' historical and contemporary role in the higher education landscape (Henderson, 2007).

**Local regions.** I did identify another aspect of serving the public beyond job preparation. Curriculum change agents at LFSU and UNW described some ways their institutions served the local regions. For example, the writing faculty at LFSU established a community advisory board that allowed them to build connections with local stakeholders, especially local employers. Those relationships informed aspects of curriculum, such as the change in general writing requirements to emphasize professional writing, and created opportunities for student

internships. Thus, LFSU's attention to the local region supported employment-related aspects of students' experiences in the writing program. I note too that these emphases on employment were specific to local needs, which harks back to the dimension of job preparation as public good in the sense of a region's needs for individuals to fill certain professional roles.

At UNW, projects related to the Campus Humanities Coalition (CHC) showed connections with local partners such as farmer's markets and small businesses. Elaine and Margaret, former and interim deans, respectively, of the liberal arts college, talked about how these projects enhanced local relationships and gave students opportunities to collaborate across disciplines in service of initiatives that were real and timely in the region. To the latter aspect, Elaine highlighted a multi-disciplinary project that used RGIS software to map the Northern Waters campus and surrounding community. These, along with the internships LFSU faculty discussed, show ways campuses' local communities serve as sites of learning.

These collaborations and local sites of learning suggest that serving and engaging with the public is both a statewide concern and a local activity. Curriculum change agents at both LFSU and UNW were committed to building strong, collaborative relationships with local stakeholders. Neoliberal many of these relationships may seem (because of their connections to business and employment), these efforts may have provided other benefits. Anthony described to me that the people he had met in the Little Falls region were enthusiastic about LFSU: many had friends or family who had attended the university and "everyone loves the small class sizes and the feeling of the small university." Thus, the regional relationships may have inspired nearby stakeholders to invest their time, energy, and interest in the institution as an essential part of the local region's tapestry. Such investment may be especially important for places like Little Falls and Northern Waters, both former sites of industry whose absence residents have felt. All in all,

the local relationships faculty and staff built highlight ways public regional universities can interact as part of region-based coalitions. This potential role echoes McClure's (2018) finding that public regional university presidents took pride in their institutions' roles in serving the welfare of the local region. Furthermore, this dynamic highlights how arts and humanities faculty at regional public universities can embrace a public humanities that connects campus to community (see Newman, 2019; Nowviskie, 2016; Sipress, 2014).

**Resources and the arts and humanities.** Many participants pointed out resource constraints as important dimensions affecting decision-making in curriculum changes. At SVU, for example, Jason contrasted their school of music with "places like Brown that can have their experimental Ph.D. and take however many students they want, and they're not gonna have a problem." This contrast highlights the crux of Miller's (2012) differentiation of what he termed humanities one and humanities two. As Miller described them, Brown and other private, prestigious institutions represent humanities one, which emphasize a liberal educational model of humanities and have privilege and resources to maintain this model. Financially-constrained institutions like LFSU, SVU, and UNW represent humanities two (Miller, 2012), which emphasize a vocational educational model, in part due to financial necessity.

Why is the difference between humanities one and humanities two important for this study and for arts and humanities? In this study, institutional financial constraints and perceptions of students as concerned about their future job prospects affected how curriculum change proceeded. As Jason explained, he and other AMT curriculum change agents could not just make an experimental program like Brown's and "not... have a problem." Likewise, LFSU writing faculty expressed that people, especially prospective students' parents, asked what students could do, in terms of jobs, with a writing degree. These concerns with institutional

resources and students' future job prospects emphasize the need for less-prestigious institutions, including public regional universities, to create curricula that emphasize practical aspects. As a point of clarification, I do not mean to suggest humanities one institutions are unconcerned with finances and their students are indifferent about jobs. Rather, a focus on vocation is not as salient at those better-resourced institutions or for their comparatively privileged student bodies.

For arts and humanities fields, attention to these different resource levels is important because, as Miller (2012) argued, there are more humanities two institutions and students than humanities one. Fryar (2015) likewise pointed out that public regional universities educate most public-sector students in the United States, and over 40% of all students enrolled in postsecondary education in the country. Hutner and Mohamed (2016) raised similar concerns, namely that scholars of postsecondary humanities have disproportionately focused on prestigious and private institutions. Curriculum change agents in humanities two institutions, including public regional universities like the institutions in this study, may need to act differently in curriculum change processes than their humanities one colleagues. Because of resource limitations and the student populations likelier to enroll at public regional universities (Fryar, 2015; Henderson, 2007), strategic alignments with neoliberal ideals may be necessary in these institutions for curriculum change agents to serve their students and fields.

**Summary.** Institutional type was salient in this study because of aspects related to serving the public good, interactions with local communities, and specific constraints for arts and humanities fields. I do not suggest that public regional universities are the only institutions that consider public good, local communities, or resource constraints affecting arts and humanities. Indeed, all public institutions likely consider public good, albeit perhaps in different ways, and public and private colleges alike could be described as humanities two. Rather, in congress, these



three dimensions of how institutional type affected decision-making and agency highlight particular challenges and opportunities for curriculum change in arts and humanities at public regional universities.

### **Implications for Theory**

This study used an institutional logics framework to consider arts and humanities curriculum change in a neoliberal context. Considering the presence of coexisting, hybrid logics in the neoliberal context, I suggest implications for each body of theory (i.e., institutional logics and neoliberalism). I discuss each in turn below.

**Institutional logics.** I identified the presence of academic, democratic, family, managerial, and market logics as salient in this study's findings. Importantly, I found multiple logics guiding thought and action in all three cases. For example, as UNW faculty and administrators discussed pre-tenure faculty roles in the development and implementation of the DH minor and CHC, they argued for protecting and supporting the advancement of pre-tenure faculty in ways consistent with both democratic and family logics. It seemed these participants reasoned that long-term, equal participation (democratic value) was contingent on fostering personal and professional growth through mentoring and attention to structural issues (family value). This study thus echoes previous scholars' positions that the academy harbors coexisting logics (Gumport, 2000; Lepori, 2016).

In chapter seven, I emphasized the coexistence of academic, market, and managerial logics specifically. I discussed market and managerial logics together as neoliberal logic because of the ways neoliberalism manifests in the academy; namely, by emphasizing managerialism and positioning institutions and their constituents in competitive markets. This was not a perfect combination; for example, a classical liberal view would still emphasize a market logic but not

be neoliberal because of differing views of the role of the state (Harvey, 2005). However, in the context of this study I argue the combination largely holds water. Moreover, the benefit of combining these and juxtaposing the resultant neoliberal logic with academic logics revealed how the latter could still guide thought and action in a neoliberal context. I argue, the benefits of considering market and managerial logics together as a singular, neoliberal logic outweigh the drawbacks of instances where market and/or managerial logic defy neoliberalism. Future research may take up this approach similarly to continue to consider neoliberalism's manifestations in individual actions.

In some instances, hybrid logics emerged. I concur with Lepori (2016), who suggested the hybridity of logics in higher education presented an important theoretical consideration. An important example relates to the hybrid logics present in participants' discussion of what's good for students. Participants highlighted both neoliberal and academic goals as part of student growth; the convergence of those separate goals represented emergence of the hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic. The presence of hybrid logics in this case can inform future applications of the institutional logics framework in higher education. Instead of using the classical institutions often referred to, such as U.S. society institutions like democracy and the family and the institution of the profession, scholars can identify evidence of multiple institutions to explore the merging of institutions in individual thought and action.

Furthermore, approaching future studies of higher education programs with this hybrid logic in mind would complicate simplistic approaches that distinguish neoliberal ends from "pure" academic ones. For example, the hybrid approach complicates Brint and colleagues' (2005) vocational-liberal binary in tracking relative popularity of majors over time. The hybrid approach reveals, for example, how "liberal" fields (e.g., history) can emphasize vocational skills

(in the case of history at UNW, digital humanities skills). Applications of the hybrid logic could inform scholarly and popular perceptions of liberal-vocational differentiations by blurring the lines between the two.

**Neoliberalism.** I argue this study complicates some previous scholarship of neoliberalism in higher education. Specifically, although I found considerable evidence to support the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology, I also found curriculum change agents channel academic, democratic, and family logics in curriculum change in ways that sometimes reify and sometimes resist neoliberalization of higher education. The presence of multiple logics here complicates a reading of neoliberalism as a singular guiding ideology. I discuss here how the specific presence of a hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic complicates extant scholarship on neoliberalism in higher education.

A key aspect of scholarship on neoliberalism in higher education is that it manifests in all aspects of academic life (e.g., Olssen & Peters, 2005; Saunders, 2010, 2014; Torres, 2011). What I find less common in this literature is evidence of faculty and staff using other social scripts – those informed by the logics of other, non-neoliberal institutions – to think and act in ways that can reject neoliberal goals. Giroux (2014) and Schubert (2013) addressed the possibilities of activism in rejecting a neoliberal paradigm but did not attend to curriculum in the sense it is discussed in this study.

In the cases here, curriculum change agents approached curriculum in complex and multi-faceted ways. At UNW, for example, Jack and Lionel, both pre-tenure faculty, talked about the importance of coupling helping students think about jobs (neoliberal logic) with helping them think critically about various dimensions within their respective fields (academic logic). To reiterate, this simultaneous, coexisting presence of academic and neoliberal logics suggests a

hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic. As another example, at LFSU faculty talked about the change in general education requirements as a neoliberal goal because it saved money and prepared students as future job seekers. At the same time, writing faculty addressed the change's academic ends, such as reaching more students and better preparing them for writing in more varied formats. Furthermore, as Nelson explained, the change in requirements reduced faculty resources needed for those courses such that faculty could then have the freedom to teach in other writing areas. That freedom to teach as faculty see fit expresses the academic logic. In short, the emergence of neoliberal logics in hybrid form with academic logics reveals how the academy merges ways of thinking and acting to both maintain academic ends and survive in the neoliberal context. Others have found the coexistence of academic and neoliberal logics in regard to faculty and administrative work (e.g., Canhilal et al., 2015; Martin, 2018). This emerging body of scholarship directs scholars of neoliberalism to considering more nuanced navigations of neoliberalism as a pervasive force that organizational actors can simultaneously reify and reject. Future scholarship of neoliberalism should attend to this dynamic and how it affects dimensions of the academy, rather than painting broad-strokes pictures of either academic or neoliberal.

I also raise questions about the reach of neoliberal ideology, particularly considering emphases on job market chances at regional public universities. Supporting students' abilities to contribute to the public via careers has been a mission of public regional universities since their founding in the United States (Henderson, 2007; Ogren, 2005). Therefore, the arts and humanities at public regional universities may also be called upon to prepare students for jobs. Indeed, participants saw it as part of their work as academics to prepare students for jobs. It is worth further examination to consider the extent to which job preparation in arts and humanities at public regional universities stems from a neoliberal flattening of academic missions into job

preparation or something else, such as historical mission or democratic logics that prioritize broadening access for minoritized populations to certain dimensions of society.

### **Implications for Practice**

Based on the cases of curriculum change in this study, I suggest implications for practice for higher education faculty, administrators, and other staff, within and beyond arts and humanities fields. I first address implications related to curriculum, with an emphasis on excellent practices of curriculum revision. Because this study also revealed aspects related to faculty, such as hiring and rewards, I also present implications related to faculty careers.

**Curriculum.** How curriculum change proceeded at the sites in this study provides some blueprints for future curriculum change agents. First, the collaborative nature of curriculum changes points to Briggs' (2007) previous recommendations of excellent curriculum practice. Second, all curriculum changes proceeded incrementally, which participants argued was effective for their purposes. Thereafter, I describe other dimensions I identified in this study as potential excellent curriculum practices. I conclude this section with implications for curriculum vis-à-vis state policy.

**Collaborative curriculum revision.** Many of my findings regarding the process of curriculum change echoed findings from Briggs' (2007) landmark work, which explored the vital role of both voluntary involvement and developing communities of practice in continuous curriculum renewal. I agree with her conclusion that "a combination of enculturation, freedom and support to experiment, and informal opportunities and individual actions that provide examples and inspiration to others" (p. 706) supports curriculum collaboration and found evidence of these dimensions in curriculum change agents' collaborative efforts. The three archetypes of collaborative curriculum change I described in chapter seven – namely, new hire-

led, established figure-led, and group-led – can all encourage involvement voluntarily and use the community of practice design, in line with Briggs’ recommendations of excellent curriculum practice.

That said, the top-down decisions that affected curriculum change in this study complicate Briggs’ conceptualization of the ideal community of practice committed to curriculum renewal. Administrators’ managerial actions can overrule determinations faculty collaborate to identify; further, I sensed from participants that administrators’ actions that countered programmatic efforts (e.g., the SVU provost’s instruction to double the number of Artistic Media Technologies majors, program cessation at LFSU) led faculty to feel demoralized and devalued. It would be compelling to recast Briggs’ work in a neoliberal context to update her recommendations for an academy guided by the hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic that expects both collaboration and top-down decision-making.

***Incremental program development.*** In all cases, I found participants advanced curriculum incrementally. The incremental steps usually began with a course (in the case of UNW, the introductory digital humanities course) or sequence of courses (in the case of SVU, the audio engineering sequence that pre-existed collaborative music technology courses). Having a small number of courses enabled a minor. Roland, associate director of the SVU school of music, emphasized that a minor was important in part because it was incremental and in part because it did not require accreditation the way music majors do. Although program-level accreditation would not be a barrier for writing or digital humanities per se, curriculum change agents should consider accreditation standards or other field standards and the possibility of starting a minor or other smaller-scale program to build a foundation for future curriculum.

***Other curriculum change practices.*** Lastly, I suggest a handful of practices I identified in this study that may be useful for faculty and staff undergoing curriculum change of any kind: 1) forecasting administrative priorities, 2) building relationships with various stakeholders, 3) determining student needs and interests, and 4) assessing faculty capacity and other resources. These recommendations overlap with those Bland and colleagues (2000) recommended regarding curriculum change in academic medicine. The first recommendation is consistent with my finding that curriculum change agents strategically aligned with administrative priorities; determining administrative interests and forecasting how priorities may change in years to come is the first step to aligning with those interests. For example, Jason and Philip at SVU recognized administrative interests related to e-sports and virtual reality and thus began thinking about how to include similar elements in the AMT program to appease administrators.

The second practice, collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, generates ideas, secures buy-in, and builds a community of collaboration (see Briggs, 2007). Bob's meetings across the UNW campus to teach others about digital humanities, build support for a potential program, and develop relationships with new faculty as possible successors to managing DH at the university all point to how relationship building was important in the development of the minor. Likewise, Bob's initial student survey about a DH minor was important to his own description: it showed him, and other institutional stakeholders, signs of interest that would sustain the program. Student, faculty, and administrative interest in DH – all identified through relationship-building and assessing students' needs and interests (the third curriculum practice) – allowed the program to grow.

At LFSU, Nelson pointed out that the change in general writing requirements lightened the load related to those courses enough that faculty could teach the array of upper-level writing

courses befitting a major. Additionally, he explained that faculty only embraced an online version of the major until they could do so without going over their teaching loads. This awareness of human resources, specifically in the form of faculty capacity to teach, was important for acknowledging limitations in expanding the writing major. By contrast, Jason at SVU expressed frustration that, with the doubling of the number of majors, he had insufficient resources to conduct the program in an ideal way. These aspects of the changes at LFSU and SVU, respectively, highlight the fourth practice, that curriculum change agents should attend to resources, including faculty capacity, as they proceed through curriculum change.

***State policy and curriculum.*** At LFSU in particular, state policy was salient in effecting curriculum changes. Specifically, state legislation that required graduation requirements for academic programs was part of writing faculty's reasoning for offering their program online and focusing on marketing the major to prospective students. Furthermore, the same state legislation weighed on faculty as they conducted their work.

At the most basic level, the dynamic at LFSU is a reminder to faculty and administration that curriculum is situated in a broader context and informed by external forces such as policymakers (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). For curriculum-related practice, it is thus important to communicate aspects of curriculum to various stakeholders, such as state legislators, and ensure responsiveness to the state where appropriate. By opening up this line of communication, campus curriculum stakeholders

Public regional university administrators must also consider how state-level policy, such as laws mandating certain accountability measures of individual programs, affect faculty quality of life and work. If the mission of these state institutions is to serve the residents and needs of the state, then it is important to staff universities with faculty capable to provide that service.



Demoralized, distressed faculty who become more concerned with achieving numbers than educating students does a disservice to the students, and, in turn, to the state. Administrators might consider alternative models that balance state policy requirements with support of faculty life and work.

**Faculty careers.** Aspects related to faculty careers arose during this study. My overarching implication echoes Boyer's (1990) recommendation to expand beyond the typical faculty-as-researcher paradigm still common in hiring, promotion, and tenure practices (see Kelsky, 2015). I present these implications related to hiring new faculty, developing skills and expanding the scope of recognition of skills, and reward in the following paragraphs.

Faculty hiring was salient in all cases and show how bringing new faculty on board can advance curriculum change. At LFSU, the writing major's development began in earnest following the same-year hires of Miranda, Nelson, and Victoria. At SVU, the former school of music sought someone with Jason's expertise to further curricular goals related to music technology. At UNW, faculty like those in history geared their hiring ads toward digital humanities because Elaine, former dean, prioritized DH. These cases highlight the importance of identifying a colleague who can serve curricular goals through expertise and collegiality, echoing Briggs' (2007) recommendations on hiring for curriculum change. Further, individual academics searching for jobs may consider highlighting their skills and capacity to contribute as a collaborator in processes like curriculum change.

Relevant to skills, I found that participants drew on their skills developed during graduate school and previous professional experiences to inform their approaches to teaching and curriculum. This was especially true at LFSU, where Rachel used her background and institutional knowledge as an LFSU adjunct instructor to handle responsibilities such as course

forms. Miranda managed transfer agreements because she had experience in two-year colleges. The ways faculty used their skills developed in varied backgrounds to advance activities connected to curriculum change expands conceptualizations of faculty work beyond the four dimensions of scholarly activity (see Boyer, 1990). By emphasizing the role of professional background and the potential application of various skills in faculty work, I suggest faculty development and hiring, promotion, and tenure in line with this expanded view. Educational developers might consider engaging and fostering various professional skills and knowledge of faculty and staff in support of curriculum revision and other faculty work activities. For example, educational developers can engage faculty in departments embarking on curriculum change on excellent practices related to topics such as communication, navigating institutional politics (Bland et al., 2000), and collaboration (Briggs, 2007). Further, faculty and administrators conducting hiring might consider the broad scope of skills and knowledge candidates bring to their positions.

Lastly, participants talked at length about how curriculum change was rewarding. The intrinsic rewards here might be emphasized to encourage faculty and staff involvement. At the same time, faculty commit considerable time and effort to curriculum change and should be rewarded for their efforts, not just intrinsically. In short, I argue universities should consider highlighting curriculum development and revision as an opportunity, rather than a chore. For example, a college dean might collaborate with department chairs to host faculty development related to curriculum change (see above) and encourage scholarship related to curriculum development and revision in the field. Administrators should also reward curriculum activities accordingly, to recruit and retain excellent faculty. To relate reward to my last example,

scholarship on curriculum should be recognized for promotion and administrators might consider allocating resources to reward faculty monetarily for their involvement in curricular projects.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Future studies can highlight changes in academic fields and, using an institutional logics framework, show how different value systems emerge in the academy's activities and decisions. Continued attention to arts and humanities fields can extend and complicate aspects of this study and previous scholarship on arts and humanities changes (e.g., AAAS, 2015; Baker et al., 2012; Di Leo, 2013; Kindelan, 2012; Miller, 2012). Future studies may consider going either wider or deeper. This is to say, a future study could be wider than this study, and feature a large-scale survey of changing arts and humanities programs with details that reveal values and logics, for example using data from the AAAS *Humanities Indicator* (<https://www.amacad.org/project/humanities-indicators>). Alternatively, a future study could go deeper: paying attention to a single site or change, perhaps using a longitudinal design. A collaborative, participatory action research project could also nuance detail of a single site as a microcosm of arts and humanities change. Both large-scale and small-scale have their advantages and limitations related to the size and scope and, together with this study, can show a clearer picture of the state of the arts and humanities. Additionally, using data collection methods not used here, such as surveys and observations, would further clarify or complicate findings discussed here.

Quantitative or mixed-methods research may also support hypotheses related to institutional logics and neoliberalism in arts and humanities curriculum change. As Lepori (2016) suggested, institutional documents (e.g., new major proposal forms, like those included in this study) can reveal logics. Quantitative analysis of frequency and combination of various

logics would show how various macro-institutions manifest in curricular changes. A mixed methods study might compare such quantifiable manifestations of logics with curriculum change agents' descriptions of curriculum change processes in interviews.

Lastly, because neoliberalism works in congress and conflict with other dimensions of oppression (Apple, 2017), future study of arts and humanities curriculum in higher education might take up how curriculum change agents navigate these multiple dimensions of oppression. Recent scholarship in the field of higher education has taken up questions of racial justice and indigenization. Given the complicity of arts and humanities fields in racism, settler-colonialism, and oppression in other forms, attending to how these dimensions manifest in curriculum can point to the nature of the curriculum as a site of oppression and, perhaps, the contestation thereof.

## **Conclusion**

The guiding focus of this study considered how and why arts and humanities fields are changing, and how individuals enact agency in those changes, particularly in response to concerns about these fields' future and neoliberal demands related to finances and accountability. To this end, I asked how curriculum changes in arts and humanities proceed in a neoliberal context and how curriculum change agents understand and enact agency in these processes. I presented multiple cases across institutional and state contexts to show microcosms of arts and humanities curriculum changes as possible blueprints of curriculum changes and ways of complicating the manifestations neoliberalism.

This study sheds light for those interested in the state of the arts and humanities in the academy by showing five overlapping paths arts and humanities curriculum changes can take and how coexisting academic and neoliberal logics guide those changes. At the same time, these

changes in arts and humanities fields may serve as a bellwether for other changes in academic fields. I thus invite any individual involved in curriculum change to consider how to strategically align with dominant, neoliberal values in ways that enable the advancement of academic fields and students' capacity to learn and grow. Some arts and humanities scholars may balk at my suggestion to align with a neoliberal paradigm to maintain and advance academic ideals and goals. I sympathize with this concern but ultimately find there is opportunity in the strategic alignment that manifests from a hybrid, academic-neoliberal logic. Furthermore, I echo participants' concerns that choosing not to align with dominant norms may result in program cessation, lay-offs, or other top-down decisions that curtail the capacity of faculty to support students and advance the arts and humanities.

## APPENDIX

## Appendix: Interview Protocol

### Introduction/warming up

1. What's your role in [program]?
  - a. Probe: beyond position title, what other roles do you hold?
2. How have you been involved in [program change]?

### About the case

3. As you know, I'm interested in learning about this program change. Can you tell me the story of it?
  - a. Possible probes: how and when did it start? How has it proceeded? Where is it now? How has it changed?
4. Why did [program change] start? Why was it important for [program] to initiate this change process?
  - a. Probes: was there anything about bigger-picture/context/environment things in [field/discipline], higher education, or anything else that led you to understand the program change as important? Did anything about these bigger-picture/context/environment things affect how you understood other aspects of [program change]?
  - b. The context/environment could include the university, the state, higher education... any context the program is situated in

### Making retrospective sense of the case

5. Reflecting back on the process as a whole, what were the key moments or decisions made?
6. What made those moments/decisions important?

7. To what extent were you involved in those moments/decisions? What was your contribution?

### **Plausible actions and changes**

8. What do you think [decisions they've mentioned] will lead to?
9. What do you think the program change as a whole will lead to?

### **Relational dimensions - rationalizing understanding to and with others**

10. What are the kinds of conversations you have with colleagues about the [program change]? How do you talk about [program change]? How do they?
  - a. Probe: is there a difference between conversations with those involved in program changes and conversations with those who are not involved? Is there a difference between conversations in formal settings as compared to informal settings?

### **Wrapping up**

11. Is there anything else that you would like to add about the [program change]?
  - a. Probe: are there other questions I should be asking in future interviews?
12. Who else would you suggest I talk to about [program change]? This can include anyone - faculty, staff, students, or external folks.



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