TPC Program Administration in Small US Institutions: Recruitment and Assessment

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Abstract: In the current educational environment, technical and professional communication (TPC) directors are always looking for new and innovative ways to sustain their programs, particularly through recruitment and assessment efforts. This article takes these sustainability concerns to the understudied field of TPC programs in small US institutions which make up a little over a third of all TPC programs in the US. To do this work, I interviewed TPC program directors at twenty-six small US institutions to inquire about how they recruit and assess their TPC programs. This article provides summary narratives from these directors, discusses the implications of those narratives, and then offers reflective questions that TPC program directors at any size institution can use to think about their own recruitment and assessment practices.
Keywords: sustainability, TPC administration, small US institutions, recruitment, assessment

The field of technical and professional communication (TPC) is asking important questions about its own sustainability. With many institutions closing their doors and university administrators bemoaning the decline in undergraduate numbers, questions about how to sustain the TPC discipline and its future in higher education are questions that TPC directors are forced to think about in today's educational climate. Two important facets of sustainability that are on the forefront of many TPC directors minds concern recruitment and assessment: How do we get students into our programs? How do we evaluate those programs?

In order to answer these questions, I turn to an understudied avenue of TPC programmatic scholarship: small institutions.[1] Small institutions with less than six thousand undergraduate students constitute about 37% of all TPC programs in the US. This percentage is derived from Lisa Melonçon's *TechComm Programmatic*

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[1] While explained later in the article, the definition of small institution is an institution with an undergraduate population of six thousand or less, and the definition of a program is something that can appear on a student's transcript (major, emphasis, track, minor, microcredential, etc.).

Central database which houses 324 programs – with 121 programs of those programs located in small institutions (Melonçon, 2022). These numbers mean that small institutions house over a third of the field's programs, yet studies have provided barely a handful of small school's reflective narratives and case studies (Yonker & Zerbe, 2010; Kungl & Hathaway, 2010; Pitts, 2010; Henning & Bemer, 2021); and as of yet, there is no scholarship on a collective understanding of the types and situations of these 121 programs. Such numbers indicate that small institutions have a place in the TPC discipline, suggesting that scholars might next work to name that place in a comprehensive way.

This article takes the questions about recruitment and assessment to the space of small institutions in the United States (US) by asking the following research question: How do small US institutions sustain their TPC programs through recruitment and assessment? Scholars have been discussing lean means of creating and sustaining TPC programs through discourse about visibility, standardization, flexibility, globalization, administration, stewardship, social responsibility, innovation, etc. (Johnson et al., 2017), and I believe that small institutions provide examples of TPC directors sustaining their programs in lean ways that can benefit the TPC field at large, not just small institutions. The more the TPC field is exposed to how a variety of TPC directors recruit and assess their programs, the more the TPC field can learn how to sustain itself.

While I believe this topic has great significance to the TPC field, it also has personal significance to me. When I first approached this study, I was writing my dissertation for an R1 institution while working full time for a small rural institution. In my institution of employment, there is no TPC program, so I honestly approached this study with one personal question: can a small institution have a TPC program? I genuinely wanted to know if it was even feasible to start and sustain a TPC program in a small institution. This personal question is far too big for a single article to answer because a TPC program takes more than just good recruitment and assessment practices, but I wanted to share my unique positionality and personal connection behind the rationale and personal purpose of this study.

So, in order to answer my research question about recruitment and assessment, this article is structured in the following way. I first provide a brief literature review of a few notable pieces of scholarship about recruitment and assessment practices in TPC, and then I outline my method for collecting twenty-six one-hour interviews with TPC program directors in twenty-six different small US institutions. Next, I provide narrative summaries about how those twenty-six TPC program directors recruit and sustain their programs. Lastly, I discuss the major findings of the article and provide reflective questions for TPC programs directors to think about in their own local contexts.

Literature Review

This article is not the first to conduct research regarding TPC programs in the United States (US). In 2005, Sandi Harner and Anne Rich mapped curricular trends

in TPC undergraduate curriculum from 80 bachelor degrees at the time; in 2010, Dave Yeats and Isabelle Thompson collected data from 147 institutions where 62 of them offered bachelor degrees, undergraduate certificates, and/or a minor in TPC; and in 2013, Lisa Melonçon and Sally Henschel conducted a follow-up study from the 2005 study that found 185 undergraduate programs in the US, representing a 131% increase. These scholars collected data on the total landscape of TPC programs, so this article will not be re-collecting data on all TPC programs; rather, this article only examines small four-year US institutions with undergraduate populations of six thousand or less with a particular focus on how these schools recruit and assess their programs. With this focus, I am not looking at all TPC programs; rather, I am exclusively examining small institutions' TPC programs to fill a gap in scholarship on these institutions' identities. Since scholars have not collected comprehensive programmatic data from small institutions, this brief literature examines the different voices relevant to the conversation concerning recruitment and assessment.

Recruitment

It is no surprise that the field of TPC has been discussing recruitment for a while. In fact, as early as 1975, faculty have been presenting information about recruitment strategies at the CPTSC (Andrews, 1975). In 1975, Clarence Andrews from Michigan Tech presented about how he replaced the technical writing major with a new Scientific and Technological Communication major with 45-credits in communication classes and 45 credits in science and technology classes. The major challenge of this new program was recruitment because most people do not know about the concept of technical communication, so he sent newsletters to local science teachers in the high schools to bolster TPC students.

Thankfully, we also have more recent discourse about TPC recruitment strategies from scholars such as Aimee Roundtree (2016). In her CPTSC white paper report, Roundtree summarizes the current scholarship on recruitment into five categories: Prevalence and Efficacy of Recruitment Practices, Research Studies of Strategies, Student Perceptions of Recruitment Success, Recruiting Dynamics and Problems, and Tactics for Encouraging Diversity in Recruiting (p. 2). From these categories, she composes a list of recommendation for TPC programs which include the need for personal connection (FTF, emails, calls, campus visits,), an optimized website presence, financial assistance specific to TPC program, lauding the profiles of TPC faculty, a robust recruitment plan, and diversity-specific programs, mentorships, and support (p. 5). Roundtree's last recommendation reiterates Christopher Dayley's (2020) later article on students' perceptions concerning diversity where he found that students who identity as a person of color care deeply about their TPC program supporting diversity efforts.

Assessment

Compared to recruitment, the field of TPC has a lot more to say about assessment. A possible reason that assessment is such a large conversation within TPC scholarship is because it covers such a vast array of topics. For example, in their edited collection titled *Assessment in Technical and Professional Communication*, editors Margaret Hundleby and Jo Allen (2010) demonstrate this vastness with

chapters on assessing institutional values, faculty, program directors, cultural change, oneself, undergraduate students, graduate students, Engineering and professional programs, technologies, physical sites, virtual spaces, classrooms, workspaces, etc. Any one of these topics could warrant its own book.

To narrow down the topic of assessment to a programmatic lens, scholars have focused on what competencies should be in TPC programs, and many scholars have addressed these exigencies including Kelli Cook (2002) and Geoffrey Clegg et al. (2021). Back when the TPC field was relatively younger, Kelli Cook (2002) proposed a theoretical framework of six literacies that should be addressed in TPC programs and curricula: basic, rhetorical, social, technological, ethical, and critical. She defined basic literacy as being able to write well and clearly, rhetorical literacy as being able to identify audience and purpose, social literacy as being able to collaborate with other stakeholders, technological literacy as being able to critique and use different technologies, ethical literacy as being able to uphold ethical standards, and critical literacy as being able to recognize and critique ideologies and power structures (Cook, 2002). Almost twenty years after Cook (2002), Clegg et al. (2021) published an article on their analysis of 376 program student learning outcomes in 47 institutions that had undergraduate degree programs in TPC (p. 21). Through qualitative coding, they found that the top four outcomes of TPC programs are rhetoric, writing, technology, and design. Compared with Cook, three out of four of these outcomes are three of Cook's literacies: basic, rhetorical, and technology. Cook's literacies also overlap with Clegg et al.'s ethics, collaboration, critical thinking, and culture categories showing how Cook's theoretical framework is still applicable to today's TPC undergraduate outcomes. In short, these outcomes proposed by Cook and Clegg et al. show how the TPC field can have consensus on what it proposes to be teaching—as aspect important to identify for assessment.

But it is not enough to name what needs to be assessed, it is important to actually continue to assess. In their article, Joanna Schreiber and Lisa Melonçon (2019) argue that TPC programs need to implement a continuous improvement model to ensure that their programs are working towards sustainability. They particularly argue for the GRAM approach to assessment that includes gathering data from the program, reading multiple perspectives about programs, analyzing the gathered data, and making the adjustments needed to the program (p. 262-263). This method of assessment pushes back against a program's stagnation and enables programs to have a clear vision.

One small institution who seems to be using Schreiber and Meloncon's continuous improvement model is Michigan Technological University (MTU), a small institution who revised their program based upon gathering program data and reading current scholarship. In their *Programmatic Perspectives*' showcase article, Ann Brady et al. (2012) explained the history of assessment over the fifteen years of MTU's TPC major by informing the reader about three separate approaches that were implemented over the years: system-centered, user-centered, and participatory approaches. System-centered assessment mainly relied on the end product but lacked assessment on rhetorical and user awareness. Practically, this looked like students turning in various workplace genres in their final portfolios

that had undefined audiences and missing user testing. In 2004, MTU changed its assessment metrics to be user-centered, requiring students to take more classes in user design. But this approach ended up failing because it was only assessed by one faculty member which felt like busywork to many of the senior TPC majors who saw no connections between it and the careers that they were about to start. Finally, in 2007, MTU built on the ideas of user-centered assessment to create a participatory assessment that incorporated multiple stakeholder voices to assess portfolios. When portfolios were turned in to the department, TPC graduates, advisory board members, STC committee members, faculty, and the program director all gave comments on these portfolios—making these meaningful learning experiences for the students. This assessment also created a bridge between the academic and industry divide by including industry stakeholders to be a part of assessment. Participatory assessment also includes the inclusion of student voices; for example, MTU sends out an exit survey for all graduating seniors to understand what they experienced while in the program and how they thought the program could be improved. Many of them wanted more interactions with industry leaders so MTU implemented a senior oral presentation component that was presented in front of MTU's advisory board which was exclusively made up of community leaders—connecting students to their community. MTU's program showcase proves how small institutions can still have robust assessment practices that evolve over time in response to scholarship and internal reflection—working with a continuous improvement model that moves the program towards sustainability.

Both the sections about recruitment and assessment indicate that the TPC discipline cares deeply about its recruitment and assessment practices, proving how these topics are critical for a program's vitality. While my study only examines recruitment and assessment practices in small institutions, questions and practices around these two topics will always be a relevant conversation.

Methods

To add to the scholarship on recruitment and assessment, this article examines small four-year US institutions with undergraduate populations of six thousand or less where sometimes TPC programs exist but sometimes do not. With this focus, I am not looking at all TPC programs; rather, I am exclusively examining small institutions' TPC programs to fill a gap in scholarship on these institutions' identities.

For this project, Melonçon's TPC database was used to determine which TPC programs were in small institutions for a total of 121 small institutions. For the purposes of this study, I define "small" as six thousand or less undergraduate students, and I define "program" as encompassing majors, minors, concentrations, emphases, tracks, and/or specializations – something that can appear on a person's transcript (Harner & Rich, 2005; Melonçon, 2014). Therefore, if a small college has an undergraduate minor and not an undergraduate major, my study considers this college to still have a program. The figure below shows the distribution of programs interviewed (information found on the institution's website):
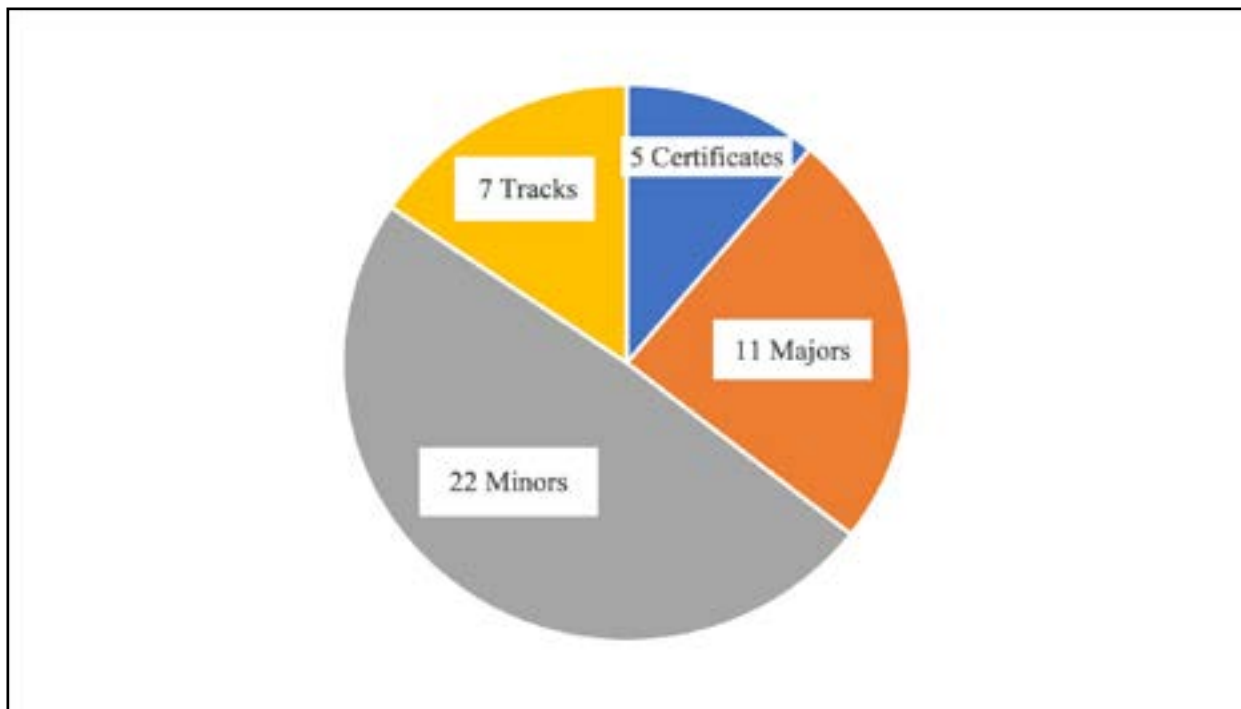
Figure 1: Distribution of Programs by Type

After determining the institutions that fit my study parameters, I individually emailed all 121 institutions to request an interview with their TPC program director. Out of 121 institutions, 26 of them consented to an interview with me—so, I was able to interview roughly 21% of the population I am studying. Before their Zoom interview, I sent participants access to my list of questions as well as my IRB.[2] It is important to note that my original study is much larger than the results presented in this article. My original study included questions about the program's history, major stakeholders, challenges, successes, student population, curriculum, institutional visibility, funding, community partners, advisory boards, administration support, faculty credentials, cross-listing of courses, relationship to general education curriculum, assessment, future vision, recruitment practices, faculty development, software, technological support, etc. I could not effectively present all of these results in a single article; therefore, this article only presents the findings from two of my original study's questions: How do you recruit students to your program? How do you assess your program? This data was collected in the fall semester of 2022 from August to October, and participants' agreement to participate in the interview was the study's consent form.[3]

After collection of all twenty-six interviews, I implemented John Creswell and David Creswell's five steps to the data analysis process: "(1) organize and prepare the data for analysis, […] read or look at all the data, […] start coding all of the data, […] generate a description and themes, […] and represent the description and

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2   An IRB application to Old Dominion University was submitted on July 6, 2022 and received approval on August 15, 2022.

3   Additionally, I asked interviewees for their pronouns and a pseudonym during the interview, so this article uses the pronouns and pseudonyms chosen by the interviewees.

themes" (p. 193-195). To enact these steps, I first downloaded the transcripts automatically generated by Zoom and then listened to all recordings again to check that the transcripts were accurate, making changes if necessary and making the document more readable by deleting unnecessary spacing. Next, I read over all the transcripts to get an overall impression of the tone, ideas, and meaning of the data. While listening and reading through these transcripts, I kept an interview journal where I jointed down my impressions of the participants' answers and some general thoughts about their answers.

After reading through the transcripts to get a general impression of its content, I started coding the data by uploading my transcripts to MAXQDA, a coding software used by many writing researchers (Geisler & Swarts, 2019). To code, I used a word or phrase to capture an aspect of the data, ideally a word or phrase from the actual language of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194). Both prefigured codes and emergent codes were used depending on the data, where prefigured codes are the interview questions and emergent codes are developed through the coding process. For example, my prefigured codes were "recruitment" and "assessment" and some of my emergent codes were "flyers," "website," "LMS," "Admissions Department," etc. The next section summarizes my findings from my two prefigured codes with my emergent codes called out throughout the narratives.

Recruitment Findings

This section of the article examines different methods of recruitment strategies used by my participants which include providing recruitment materials to the Admissions Department, local high schools, and community colleges; speaking about the TPC program in general education courses and TPC service courses; targeting undeclared/undecided majors; revising the institution's website to include robust content and videos; delivering recruitment materials to key campus stakeholders like non-English departments, Career Services, Academic Advisors, and the Registrar's Office; and using simpler methods like word-of-mouth as well as physical and digital flyers.

To sustain a program, institutions need students to be in that program. It seems like a simple concept, but many small TPC programs struggle to get students into their programs. Several of my participants felt that their recruitment efforts were largely a waste of time and were a massive time suck to their teaching responsibilities. Two participants did not realize that recruitment was going to be part of their job responsibilities until starting work at their institution (Izzy, Amy). And while a few participants found successful ways of recruiting, the majority were frustrated with themselves and their institution in regard to supporting the TPC program. After finishing three of my interviews, I even had three participants (Doug, Theodore, Ron) specifically inquire about my initial findings on recruitment in other small TPC programs; and when asked what the biggest challenge for her TPC program is, Elizabeth responded, "Probably recruitment, and having the time to do it. So it's hard when you make the program, make the course, flyers, reach out to faculty. Hard to know sometimes how to communicate and how best to get the word out to recruit people from other majors." Elizabeth's musings summarize

many of my participant's frustrations.

One type of recruitment frustration that participants discussed was through the Admissions Department. It might be assumed that the Admissions Department at the institution is in charge of recruitment—their full-time job is to get students on campus and into majors. Out of my twenty-six institutions, eleven of them mentioned the Admissions Department in some way throughout the course of the interview. Elizabeth wished her Admissions Department actually recruited for her program, and Wendy wished her Admissions Department was not so picky about only using admissions-approved presentations. Amy and Jane both felt that all of the focus goes to the health sciences and engineering that they are not even sure the Admissions Department knows about, let alone values, their program. While commenting on her own recruitment initiatives through her Admissions Department, Jane said,

> So you know we try to recruit […] we take part in open houses and we do things. It's getting students here that seems to be the problem. So you know I have great presentations about the practicality of the degree and the success of our alums because they're gainfully employed. They're happy. I have great materials to show to these students and their parents, but I don't have the students and the parents to show them to, because people aren't coming to the open houses. You know, and that's just a multi-faceted problem.

Jane attributes the failure of her recruitment efforts to a combination of state demographics and her Admissions Department's high turnover rate of staff.

But there were some success stories related to the Admissions Department. In Sarah's situation, they had admissions counselors reaching out to them to set up meetings to ask more questions about her TPC program; they found these meetings productive in helping admissions articulate her program. And in Diane's situation, she has a wonderful relationship with admissions and receives names, numbers, and emails to correspond with prospective students. Others also mentioned attending admissions events throughout the school year. Diane goes to two admission events every year, Amy attends three events per academic year, Manuel goes to an admissions recruiting event once a month on Fridays, and Ron does one Saturday a month. In Diane's institution, local high schools bring in buses of high school students, and Diane is able to conduct a forty-minute session with them to explain her program and demo some technical writing practices through fun activities with dominos and Lego. And in Bert's institution, they are able to have a presence at the robotic state competition for high school students which is hosted by her Engineering Department.

While the Admissions Department might be expected to take on the brunt of recruitment, there are also recruitment efforts that exist outside this sector of campus. For example, a few of my participants go to local high schools and community colleges to recruit students into the major, though their results are varied in success (Jane, Sarah, Sandra, Amy, Wendy). Through the National Writing Project, Sarah puts together each year an event at a local high school where they

were able to host a technical communication session where the students played with Lego. Sandra regularly sends flyers to the high schools about her TPC program, and Wendy's institution is going through a recruitment initiative where all faculty reach out to local high school teachers and recruit for the major. Similarly, Amy also reaches out to high schools by sending them what she calls "a major in a box" that includes swag from the institution and information about the professional writing program. She sends the boxes to the high school counselors that she has the best repour with and then goes to the high schools that show the most interest in her program. Jake has reached out to several local high schools to come and be the "Professor Guy" who talks about creative and professional writing; but so far, no teacher has taken him up on his offer. In regard to community college outreach, Wendy has found it to be more productive to talk to the newspaper staff at her local community college rather than attend classes.

Getting students to come in as TPC majors their freshman year is only one form of recruitment. Many programs have had successful initiatives recruiting students into the program who came into the institution as a different major—specifically through speaking in different general education courses about the TPC program. For example, Sandra has a lot of success recruiting out of her institution's Introduction to Business and Professional Writing course that is required by several majors across campus; additionally, Sandra and her colleague have attended various courses to give a presentation on their program, but she is not sure how effective those presentations are since she believes only a few people found the program that way. Sean teaches an Introduction to Technical Communication class where he gives his students a survey of the different types of TPC in the workplace, and he tries to get the students who are most interested in the class to take on the minor. But he also realizes that "if you're a good teacher sometimes you'll get students who just like you and want to take more classes with you"—something that can be accomplished in a small school where professors teach sometimes exclusively undergraduate classes. Diane also recruits through attending courses; but instead of her presenting in different courses, she has her TPC students in the major present a pitch about the TPC program in different first-year English classes in hopes of recruiting more students to her major.

Other participants of my study decided to target exclusively undeclared/undecided majors (Theodore, Hannah, Amy, Izzy). Theodore has academic major events in his institution's gym where freshmen and students who have decided to attend the institution participate in a majors fair where they can talk to different professors about their program. And Amy gets a list of all undeclared/undecided majors who have been accepted to the institution so that she can individually email them about her program. Hannah goes a step further than Amy by getting the list of all undeclared majors (ideally with strong English placement scores) on campus as well as their dorm addresses and then individually writes them letters addressed to their mailboxes on campus. She commented, "they [students] love snail mail in the dorm. So busy getting texts and getting email. And I'm like, let's just see how this goes, so I did a handwritten note to each one personalized." As the chair of the English Department, Hannah also helps students who come in as English majors but have not picked their emphasis within the program.

While some of the professors I interviewed focused on talking and reaching out to students individually, other professors decided to recruit more indirectly by putting more time and effort into their institution's website that provided information about the program and into different social media platforms that also promoted the program (Melissa, Wendy, Amy, Hannah, Izzy, Manuel, Jane). After asking and being denied a recruiting budget for three years in a row, Amy was finally able to get a $9700 grant from her institution to employ her TPC students to rewrite their TPC website to include videos. She finds that she is able to get more financial support through her institution if she can frame the request as student learning. Melissa was also about to create videos for her TPC program only to be told by administration that they would have rather her start an undergraduate journal than work on recruitment for the major. Jane posted videos of interviews she conducted with the successful alums of her program and posted them to her TPC program's website page at her institution. When Manuel arrived at his institution, there were only two sentences on the institution's website about his TPC major, and one of those sentences was just about how many credits were in the major. Manuel blames the lack of information on the website as the cause behind having no incoming freshman who wanted to major in TPC. Over the last ten years of Manuel's employment, he has gradually added something to the website every year and now he consistently has incoming freshman every year who declare the major from the start of their academic career. Lastly, Wendy has made several videos in conjunction with the Admissions Department for them to show at different admissions events. Both Izzy and Manuel mentioned social media as part of the recruitment efforts but did not go into detail about how they used it.

Besides indirectly recruiting through the internet, some participants found additional indirect recruiting methods through other academic departments, career services, and the registrar's office. To get more people in her minor, Sarah regularly attends departmental meetings other than their own to promote their minor and answer any questions they may have about their program. Sarah claims the biggest obstacle of their minor is that faculty just do not know about it. Likewise, other departments at Tracy's school advocate for the applicability of her program which brings students to her minor. Krista found a lot of success by sending her career services department flyers about her program; they promoted the program to the students they worked with because they see her program as a strong line to put on one's resume. Sadly, Doug has not found as much success with his institution's registrar's office who continually forgets that he has a program.

Though this point is not surprising, it is worth mentioning that a few people talked about recruiting students into their program through switching tracks in the English major (Jean, Ron, John). Jean specifically targets English Education majors that realize that they do not like teaching but still love the English field. And even if they do not want to switch tracks, Jean's friend who is the advisor for the education major still tries to convince them to take a TPC minor. Similarly, Ron addresses English majors' concerns when they are interested in English but do not want to become teachers; he has a pitch to all English majors about what they can do with their English majors that is not teaching related.

Other recruitment topics that participants discussed during the interview was word-

of-mouth and public readings. Five participants (Bert, Mary, Rose, Stacy, Tracy) mentioned that many of their students find their program through word-of-mouth. Bert and Mary both discussed how they believe that most of their students find their department from current students talking to their peers about the program. Stacy would also agree with Bert and Mary's statement but would add that some students hear about the program through word-of-mouth from alumni of the program or even some high school teachers that think highly of Stacy's program. In a very different approach to recruitment, Theodore has found a lot of success getting the word out about his program through public readings of creative writing. He says that many students find out about his program through students inviting their peers to this event, and then they become interested in the English majors on campus and the literary journal that the professional writing students edit.

Most participants just answered my question about current recruitment practices, but other participants wanted to spend more time during the interview reflecting on the challenges of recruitment specific to their contexts. Wendy spent quite a bit of time during her interview reflecting on how much the first-year writing program affects TPC recruitment. For example, when a program has TPC professors teaching in the FYC program, they are more likely to talk about their major and the benefits of the TPC career. Unfortunately, at Wendy's institution, most FYC courses are now taught by adjuncts who do not have as much investment in the program or institution, so she correlates this change with declining numbers in her program. Wendy also laments how common it is now to come into college with AP and dual enrollment classes that bypass any chance of interacting with TPC professors in FYC, losing the opportunity to engage with the best writers at the institution. Besides Wendy, Sarah discussed the challenges of having the TPC program buried within the English Department where seemingly no one can find it, and William addressed the challenges of a 17-year-old audience who gets their understanding of the world through their parents, siblings, movies, TV, and the internet—where a professional writing degree does not exist in the cultural imagination.

One of the surprising emergent codes from my data was flyers. Out of the 26 institutions that I interviewed, 10 of them brought up the use of flyers in their recruitment strategies (Elizabeth, Hannah, Jean, John, Krista, Ron, Rose, Sandra, Sean, Amy). While many of the participants did not give extensive details about their use of flyers, it is interesting that these small schools saw the use of flyers for the advertisement of their programs and classes to be a successful way of reaching future and current students. These flyers consisted of physical flyers that professors stapled to buildings around campus, digital flyers that professors sent out to current students through the weekly student email blast about things happening around campus, and admissions flyers that professors handed out during admissions events that included statistics like job placement percentages. Krista even made the point to make sure that all advisors on campus had a flyer so that they would be aware of her program while advising for different majors.

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated the ways that TPC programs in small undergraduate universities sustain their program through recruitment efforts, revealing the ways that many program directors still struggle to get students into their program because they are not sure how they should recruit students and if

their recruitment efforts are even working—a similar sentiment of any institution. As these narratives reveal, it is hard to assess which recruitment efforts are working and which ones are not. Based on this small sample size, it seems that creating flyers and updating the university's website for TPC is the best way of recruiting students into the program according to a labor-to-results ratio, and going into high schools for recruitment seems like the least effective method of recruitment according to a labor-to-results ratio. Given the continual decline in people going to college and/or people in the 18-25 age range, the problems of recruitment are not going away regardless of institutional size. I hope that all size institutions can read this section and reflect on the affordances of their Admissions Departments, administrative attitudes, English Departments, TPC classes, TPC faculty, etc. to see what would optimize the best recruitment strategies for their program's situation.

Assessment Findings

This section of the article summarizes assessment practices in the small institutions that I interviewed, revealing how all of the program directors are in some way grappling with the why and how of assessment. I first delve into a discussion of the problems and challenges of assessment experienced in the small institutions of my study, including coursework, programmatic, and administrative frustrations; and then I present the success stories of some program directors that have found a lot of meaning and purpose in assessment practices for their TPC program.

Problems and Challenges

"What do we want these students to graduate with? And how do we know that they're getting them?" (Rose). "Don't you want to know that your students are actually able to do the things that you promise they can do?" (Stacy). These quotes from two of my interviews uncover some of the ways that program directors are thinking about assessment. Assessment is a complex, rhetorical situation with an array of audiences with potentially opposing objectives. In an ideal world, there would be no disagreements between accrediting bodies, administration, departments, professors, and students, yet this is not the academic reality that most professors work in. My study shows that program directors generally grapple with two main questions about assessment: (1) Why should we assess? and (2) What should we assess? The first question is complex because it reveals the motivations behind assessment. If the motivation to assess is only to receive accreditation status, a program's assessment might only assess the program's major because some accrediting bodies do not care about assessing minors and certificates ("SACSCOC: Substantive Change Policy and Procedures," 2019, p. 41). If the motivation to assess is to argue to the administration that the program should exist, a program's assessment might focus more on quantitative data from student, alumni, and employer surveys rather than instructor graded portfolios (Rose). And if the motivation to assess is to track student progress in meeting Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) over the course of their college, then a program's assessment might focus more on capstone classes and portfolios (Izzy, Krista, Rose, Sarah, Doug). The second question, which is informed by the first question, is the question of what to exactly use to measure whatever it is the program is measuring, like surveys, students' work, instructors' grades, nationwide statistics, internships, job

placement, learning outcomes, etc. In short, assessment is contextually situated, evidenced by the fact that none of my participants have the same exact assessment procedures. But many had one aspect in common: their frustrations.

People had a lot of negative comments regarding assessment, calling it "not useful" (Sean), "redundant" (Melissa), "myriad of chaos" (Hannah), "going through the motions" (Ron, Adam), and "Oh god, that's a mess" (Amy). The gambit of these negative comments included complaints about not enough assessment, too much assessment, not enough administration involvement, too much administrative involvement, too much qualitative assessment, not enough quantitative assessment, not enough program assessment, not enough course assessment, not enough instructor assessment, not enough time to do assessment, etc.

Some people of my study feel that they do not do enough meaningful assessment that benefits their program (Doug, Sean, Ron). During Doug's interview, he said, "To be like frank, this is one of my least favorite aspects of our program. While we are certainly doing an appropriate amount of assessment for our accreditor and for everyone else, it's difficult to get a beat on what students are learning." Doug went on to discuss his desire for "a more robust assessment regime" that does not rely so much on informal conversations with his colleagues and more on quantitative data. He sees the real problem of his TPC major in that there is not one class that all TPC students take, which is wonderful for students' flexible schedules but harder for assessment practices.

Likewise, Sean also feels frustrated with assessment and has taken steps to get out of assessment for his program because he argued to his administration that the program is too new with not enough students for actual assessment. He says,

> Yeah, I have problems with assessment. Anyways, it always seems weird to me; I've yet to be convinced or see a real use. Not that I've been everywhere, you know, but what are we really assessing: the students, the lectures, the program? How does this work? How are changes made? I mean, certainly there's readings out there to say this is the way you do assessment things like that. Yeah, in practice again. I've only taught it in a couple of places, but it's very hard. It's very hard to and properly in a useful way [and] I want to get it right.

With the newness of his program and small sample size, it is hard for Sean to see any meaning in putting labor into assessment. He believes that a program needs to have a regularity of classes to implement sustainable and useful assessment; and his program just does not have that component.

Ron also struggles with the meaning of doing assessment when he only has six students to assess. He said, "I feel bad saying it, but I kind of just go through the motions because I'm asked to. I'll read the eight reflection papers and check a box here. Sure, but I'll be honest about it, but it's just such a small sample size." Another factor that adds to the meaninglessness of his assessment is administrations' ability to lose data. Supposedly, the university had all of the assessment data in cloud storage but somehow a third of the data went missing.

While Ron always keeps a backup on his computer, he finds it frustrating that the university who demands assessments also loses assessments.

Other participants are on the other side of the spectrum of assessment. While Doug, Sean, and Ron lack assessment, Hannah, Melissa, and Jake criticized their institution's over-assessment. For Hannah, she has two major assessments due every third and fifth year in which she collects data on the individual, course, and programmatic levels. Every year, Hannah collects data from courses, peer observations, student reviews, graduating senior survey, and conversations with her colleagues during department meetings as data for her assessment that is given to the Governance Committee for evaluation. Unfortunately, the pandemic postponed assessment deadlines so she now has three five-year assessments due for her current school year. Hannah calls this assessment procedure "cumbersome," "arduous," and "awful" that gives up a healthy work-life balance for "ultra-assessment." She comments, "There's a general consensus among the faculty that we're over-assessing ourselves, that we made it too hard and convoluted and difficult, that we should be simplifying our assessment process substantially." Yet even with her distain for the current assessment procedures, Hannah still spends significant time and effort filling them out because she knows that it means the success or failure of the program—despite the reality that she spends more time assessing than actually making changes to the program.

Similar to Hannah, Melissa and Jake also find their institutions' assessment procedures a waste of time. Melissa talked about the redundancy of her assessment where she has to upload her assessment documents to multiple systems for her to get credit for doing the assessment. She attributes this "replication of energy" to her chancellor's lack of classroom knowledge: he has neither classroom experience nor an advanced degree. For Jake, he states, "I feel more assessed than anything else." Every year, he chooses new assessment tools in the fall semester to be implemented in the spring semester; then, at the end of five years, he compiles all of his data to indicate the health of the program. It is this assessment that indicated to Jake and the institution that the TPC program needed to be eliminated.

Others take a less hostile approach to institutional assessment and just approach assessment with a "just got to do it" philosophy (Wendy, Theodore). Wendy concludes that if she is forced to do assessment for accreditation purposes, then some of it should at least do something for her program. Theodore takes a similar approach with his institution's assessment tool of reflection. Every year, he has to reflect on the program's goals, accomplishment of those goals, and improvement of the program. Though most faculty do not like filling these assessments out including himself, Theodore greatly appreciates that the institution actually reads them but does not overly critique his program by telling him exactly what to do which allows him to keep his autonomy and authority concerning his expertise and program.

Amy has an interesting story in regard to assessment, because her story is one of declining assessment procedures despite her desire for robust assessment. When she first came to her institution, there were robust assessment guidelines from the university. Both university and programmatic outcomes were clearly defined, where university outcomes were general objectives (e.g. ethics, communication) that

needed to be imbedded in all programs and programmatic outcomes were objectives created by individual departments. What altered all of this was the change of administration. The institution got rid of its assessment coordinator and the office of assessment being replaced with a Vice President of Faculty Relations and a Vice President of Faculty Affairs who is now supposed to be in charge of assessment but there is still no talk of any student learning outcomes like there was before or any student learning outcomes at all. To this situation, Amy commented, "Nobody knows what's going on […] I'm serious like nobody knows." Amy explained that she is supposed to assess her students according to her program's programmatic outcomes at the end of the year; but when I asked Amy what the assessment form looked like and what percentages were involved like "70% of students score a B or better in the outcome of collaboration," Amy replied, "That's a good question. We don't know." At one time, one component of assessment was supposed to be a student portfolio that they turn in at the end of their college career. But in the five years of Amy teaching at her institution, she has only seen two portfolios. There still is a course in the catalog for the portfolio class that is supposed to include a committee to review the portfolios, and Amy has no idea what happened to any of that.

Solutions and Successes

The previous section focused on the problems and challenges of assessment—a section that does not include many positive aspects of assessment. This section takes a turn in the discourse of assessment by summarizing the ways that program directors are positively approaching assessment in ways that they find successful.

One way that Rose was able to positively use assessment was in the actual creation of her TPC minor. When Rose initially put in the paperwork for her new interdisciplinary minor in TPC, administration rejected it because it needed clearer outcomes and assessments. They specifically wanted more details on how Rose was going to assess the program to ensure this program was actually going to work at her institution. This rejection from administration was an opportunity for Rose to rethink the structure of her program to include a portfolio requirement that met the needs of administration but also did not require her to assess every single one of her new TPC courses which was too much for her as the only TPC professor at the time of the program's creation in 2001. With this change, Rose's program was approved because her assessments were perceived as strong by administration. While reflecting on her program during my interview with her, Rose made a point to tell me that programs need to use assessment to "fight the fight about why this program should be saved if it's so small." In other words, see assessment as more than just a menial task required by administration.

Another way that program directors in small undergraduate programs find success in assessment is through indirect and direct methods of data collection. In my study, most people defined indirect methods as referring to alumni surveys, employer surveys, and student exit surveys, and direct methods as TPC professors directly assessing students, like capstone classes or portfolios. For indirect methods, Jane was given by administration alumni survey answers pertinent to her program that she was able to include in her assessment report. In Krista's assessment, she

collects employer surveys of experts evaluating the work of her TPC students. And Krista, Rose, Stacy, and Hannah all stated that they use student exit surveys as part of their assessment report. Krista, Hannah and Rose use the survey as a form to have graduating senior TPC students reflect on their time in the program. Stacy takes this a step further in her exit survey and asks students to describe what the program is missing; for example, Stacy began to see a pattern of students wanting more practice and instruction on html so she added more of this component to her digital writing course in the program.

As for direct methods of assessment, some participants specifically mentioned using capstone courses and portfolios as writing artifacts to assess and measure (Izzy, William, Krista, Rose, Sarah). Sarah uses the seniors' portfolios to both evaluate students' performance and their program's outcomes; likewise, Krista also makes her students do a portfolio in her capstone class where she only assesses the portfolio and not the course. She believes that courses should not be assessed because instructors are already doing that with their grades.

Something unique happened in Doug, Annish, and Theresa's interview (all colleagues in the same program and institution). They do not have a capstone or portfolio component as part of their program, but they used the space of the interview to brainstorm ways to change this element. Doug mentioned that "at present there is no PW exclusive course that all PW students would take," and Theresa commented, "and it would be cool if we could assess just the professional writing concentration in a more structured way." All three agreed that having a class that all TPC majors took would make assessment easier; Doug ended the assessment conversation with "I don't know how much capacity we have to add something to the curriculum per se without taking something out, but that's something we should certainly consider looking at. And I'm certainly open to the idea; I love the idea. I hope we're able to do it." Here, Doug who is the chair of the department is using the space of the interview to brainstorm his department's assessment practices.

Similar to how Doug, Theresa, and Anish solved problems through conversations and reflections, other participants also found these informal chats with colleagues that reflect upon teaching and the curriculum to be highly effective forms of assessment (Elizabeth, Hannah, Tracy, Wendy, Sandra). In Elizabeth and Dorothy's institution (colleagues from the same institution), they are not required to assess their minor; and with all of their duties, there is no time or energy to assess a minor other than talking informally with colleagues about the minor's outcomes and if students successfully met them. Dorothy identifies her colleagues and herself as "highly reflective teachers" whose reflective practices inform future iterations of courses and programs. In Sandra's English Department, these reflective talks happen with her colleagues in intentional faculty focus groups and in conversations with the assessment committee. Both Tracy and Hannah talk about their programs anecdotally with colleagues, chatting about what is working and what is not in their curriculum. And Wendy talked about improvements that her and her colleagues made to their catalog's course descriptions to better help advisors understand and articulate the curriculum – these changes coming from informal department discussions.

Other successful conversations did not just happen in the department but also with administration. While there were plenty of program directors' complaining about their administration as mentioned earlier in this section, there were also other program directors had positive interaction with their administration through their Assessment Coordinator (also named, Assessment Committee, Office of Assessment, Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Institutional Effectiveness) (Diane, Hannah, Jane, Krista, Sandra, Bert, Stacy). Jane's Office of Academic Affairs sends her a scorecard of data for her to cumulatively assess: data such as student evaluations, alumni surveys, cost of the program, average class size, etc. Administration requires Jane and her colleagues to evaluate the report, talk about it, and then report a follow-up report about ways to improve the program. Diane also works with her assessment coordinator but in a different way. Her assessment coordinator collects all of the data from faculty individually rating their students' work based on the programs chosen outcomes, and then the assessment coordinator produces course averages for all of the TPC courses. Unlike Jane and Diane who work with their university administration, Bert works with their engineering department's administration. Though they are not required to fill out assessments for the engineering department, Bert chooses to submit their assessment as part of the ABET accreditation, and their program is repetitively marked as one of the exemplar programs in ABET's accredited engineering programs.

The participant who raved the most about her program's successful assessment was Stacy. Notably, Stacy was the most excited participant to talk about assessment and the program with the most students compared to all of the other programs I collected data from. Stacy's assessment plan evaluates her programmatic learning outcomes (PLO) on the course level by requiring faculty to implement PLOs in the final assignment of TPC courses. Then, with a Canvas (LMS) tool, faculty assess other faculty members implementation of the PLOs and how students score according to the PLOs; Stacy was adamant that faculty never assess their own courses. Stacy is looking to see if students are making the benchmark goals set by the department and to see if her instructors have implicit bias. What was particularly unique about Stacy's assessment is that she collected information about the students such as gender, transfer, native, ethnicity, etc. which allowed her to see if her instructors where harboring implicit bias against a certain student populations. She is not as concerned with one semester's data as she is with examining patterns overtime. So far, she has not found any alarming biases that she has needed to address, but she continues to add to her Excel spreadsheet of data every year.

In conclusion, this section has shown what many scholars already know: that assessment can work effectively. Assessment can certainly have it challenges, but this section presents hope of effectively using direct and indirect methods of assessment that can bring visibility and improvement to a TPC program. I believe this section on the successes of assessment presents a different narrative to the first section on the challenges of assessment. Sometimes TPC program directors just need to see how other programs are approaching assessment to give them new ideas to implement in their own context – moving their programs from mere survival to actually sustainability.

Discussion

In this section, I summarize and discuss the implications of my findings concerning recruitment and assessment and then provide reflective questions that TPC program directors can use to think critically about their own recruitment and assessment practices.

Recruitment Discussion

My participants discussed recruiting students to their programs and the difficulties of just getting students into their programs. The reasons for these difficulties were varied. Many of my participants had a tenuous relationship with their Admissions Departments, making it very difficult to know their expected relationship with the Admissions Department or even recruitment efforts in general. Several participants said that their recruitment efforts to high schools were a large waste of time with little return on the exorbitant amounts of time spent attending high schools. While Manuel was able to recruit some students to come in as a TPC major, Manuel admitted that the few students who came in as majors were definitely fought for with a lot of time and resources.

Thankfully, there were several success stories in my data. According to my participants, updating the institution's website and handing out physical flyers on campus were the most successful ways of recruiting students to the program. Instead of wasting time on small audiences in high schools, program directors who spent time and resources into creating, maintaining, and growing the information about the TPC program on the institution's website saw rewards for these efforts, and some program directors even had current TPC students help with the project. Turns out that actively thinking, contemplating, maintaining, and growing a TPC online presence was highly successful. This result reinforces Roundtree's (2016) finding that optimizing an institution's website with robust content about the program's courses and faculty can correlate to higher recruitment success. The other success was through placing physical flyers around campus. Most participants found more success in getting students into the program after a student had been admitted to the university because students found the program through FYC courses, TPC courses, creative writing readings, and word-of-mouth. This might suggest that recruitment into the TPC program is fundamentally different from other academic programs, or it might suggest that TPC is still so nascent of an academic program that people have not heard of it until college—or possibly a mixture of both. Regardless, flyers were a successful recruitment effort that was exclusively targeted at students who were already attending the university. While there is no scholarship on TPC physical flyers, Felicia Chong and Aimee K. Roundtree (2021) discovered that students most desire the presentation of practical and research skills in TPC advertisements that use strong visual and document designs. I did not ask my participants exactly what they included on their websites or flyers, but these elements should be considered by TPC programs that want to increase their recruitment efforts that get students into their programs without having to give up exorbitant amounts of time. This finding does deviate from Roundtree's (2016) white paper report that prioritizes personal connection in recruitment strategies like personal emails, phone calls, campus visits, etc. but it may be that today's students

prefer more robust content than personal connection in its recruitment efforts.

The other successful recruitment effort discussed in my data was having a strong relationship with career services, registrar department, and academic advisors. While this topic by no means was talked about as much as websites and flyers, a few people discussed positive relationships with these key campus stakeholders that actually garnered more students. Though a follow-up study would need to be conducted for me to actually make a definite conclusion about this topic, it is interesting that faculty taking the time to explain their program to select individuals on campus—especially people who help students choose their majors and minors—has a great effect on the numbers in TPC programs. This small finding also pairs well with the reality that many current TPC majors found the program once they arrived at the university, and not before.

Assessment Discussion

My assessment section largely reiterates similar points from Kelli Cargile Cook's (2003) article "How much is enough? The assessment of student work in technical communication courses." While her study surveys assessment practices of ATTW members at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, there are several overlapping findings between my study and hers: (1) diversity of curriculum assessment, (2) diversity of assessment practices and activities, (3) burden of assessment, and (4) frustrations pertaining to class sizes and course loads. It seems that the problems that TPC program directors faced in 2003 are still the same problems that TPC program directors face in small institutions today.

One of the biggest drawbacks to a TPC program in a small institution is class size. It frankly is not motivating to complete an assessment checklist for the few students that tell the program director little to nothing about the success or effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching. Several participants talked about going through the motions on assessment because of this reason—filling out the assessment paperwork for eight students in the program does not seem like meaningful data. Unfortunately, further exacerbating the problem, small class sizes could potentially disrupt the course rotations because administration only allows classes to run if they have a minimum number of students, possibly canceling the class due to low enrollment. This reality makes the assessment issue worse because not only do programs not have enough students, but they also do not run classes on a regular basis—making assessment tools frustrating and meaningless. In a field where TPC professionals care about quantitative assessment, it feels meaningless to even get mere qualitative assessments complete. Stacy by far was the most excited participant to talk about assessment (she has over 100 students in her program), so she has a lot of trends and data to analyze while other TPC program directors do not.

For my participants, assessment metrics worked if they could find meaning in their assessment practices. Even if there are only eight students in the program, assessing their skills against academic and industry standards was meaningful assessment for Theodore. If the assessment requirements from administration are being met but TPC professors find them lacking like in the case of Doug's

department, then the TPC professors need to figure out better assessment metrics that actually help them know what their students are learning like creating a capstone course. Finding meaning in assessment—believing that the assessment was worth conducting and produced valuable results—seemed to be the first step in successful assessment methods.

But of course, just because a faculty member finds meaning in assessment does not equal good assessment practices. Some participants talked about never reading or experiencing good assessment practices which could obviously affects the effectiveness of their own assessments. I wonder if this reality is because directors are not reading great scholarship on assessment, graduate schools are failing to address assessment in their curriculum, or just the reality of small schools that do not have access to a lot of recourses or time to spend on bettering assessment. I am not sure that some of my participants had considered the vast array of assessment practices available to them or the types of assessment that could be used in a TPC program like indirect assessment such as alumni surveys, employer surveys, and student exit surveys. While most programs had some sort of programmatic outcomes, many participants were unenthused about the process. Since many times programmatic outcomes are required by the administration, maybe the administration could put more time and effort into explaining assessment practices and strategies that benefit the program and not just check the box for different accrediting bodies.

And while several participants mentioned how much they enjoyed reflecting on their practices rather than filling out paperwork, I think we need to be careful as TPC scholars to solely rely on anecdotal information from classes. Yes, the stories from classrooms are important but they only show a small picture of the program. For example, how would Stacy be able to assess instructor bias from just hearing stories from her instructors? By no means should TPC program directors throw out wonderful qualitative data in assessment practices, but directors should acknowledge that they can also use their reflective skills to reflect on quantitative data in addition to personal anecdotes. If TPC professionals have the skills to user-test and research the quality of their work, then so do TPC professors.

While a few of my participants had wonderful success with their assessments like Bert who goes above and beyond in their assessments for ABET, many still felt that assessments were a massive time suck and largely unproductive. Many professors in small institutions would benefit greatly from Schreiber and Melonçon's GRAM method and Brady et al.'s participatory approach to assessment. I believe the struggles with assessment might be particularly acerbated in small institutions with TPC programs, but these resources from scholars could provide a helpful framework and model so that small schools are not starting from scratch on building their own metrics with time that they might not have.

Reflective Questions

In this section, I provide some reflective questions to help TPC program directors and faculty think about their local contexts and how they can work towards sustainability. One aspect of conducting interviews that was particularly interesting

to me was the amount of reflection done during the interview itself. I was only asking questions about what was going on in these individual programs, and yet many of my interview sessions turned into reflective sessions where participants were metacognitively thinking about their programs; for example, one participant mentioned that he now has several new ideas for his program based on my set of questions. In education settings regardless of size, it is easy to get into a mindset of survive-or-die where there is no room for reflective thinking about one's programmatic vision. The interview space ended up being a place where participants were not just thinking about how much grading they had to do or what class time was going to look like tomorrow; rather, the interview space was a time to put on a programmatic lens to understand purposes and actions of their programs. In some of my interviews, some participants even wrote down things that they wanted to change about their programs based on my questions. For example, my question about assessment (How do you assess your program?) is not particularly implying the need for improvement, yet some participants left the interview with new ideas for their program—and I did not give them any new ideas.

Questions can move a program towards sustainability which is why I have decided to present a list of questions that any TPC program director can ask themselves in order to work towards sustainability. The questions that I pose are based on my participants' answers, so I am directly pulling from the voices of my study. While the following questions come from voices at small institutions, there is nothing preventing medium or larger TPC programs from also reading these questions and reflecting on their own unique educational spaces:

Category	Questions
Recruitment	How are your recruitment efforts navigating the different audiences of administrators, parents, and students?
	What is your relationship to your institution's Admissions Department? Do they know and advertise for your program? Would a stronger relationship help bolster your program?
	What are ways that you can target strong writing students who took dual enrollment classes before college and might have never heard about the TPC program or interacted with TPC professors?
	Is there a way for students to be exposed to the TPC program in general education courses? What kinds of TPC service courses could provide more visibility to the program?
	Is it possible to receive a list of undeclared/undecided majors to email them with information about the TPC program? Are there digital flyers that can be sent to these students?
	Is the institutional website updated with the latest TPC programmatic information? Is the information robust and inviting?
	Do key stakeholders on campus know about the TPC program? (non-English departments, career services, registrar's office, academic advisors, etc.)
	Would flyers be a good medium for getting the word out about TPC courses and programs?
Assessment	What are the different goals and audiences of assessment and how can assessment practices navigate those expectations?
	Is the TPC program too reliant on conversations, anecdotes, and/or qualitative data? Would embedding quantitative metrics help support the program?
	Is there enough regularity of courses and/or specific assignments so that TPC program directors can track trends over multiple years?
	Are there opportunities to interact with administration to ensure that departmental assessments as useful and not just checking the box for accreditation purposes?
	On the spectrum of under-assessing to over-assessing, where does your TPC program lean more towards? Are there places where you can create more robust assessments or cut down on unnecessary redundancies?
	Are there ways to ensure that assessment metrics increase the ethos of the program?
	Are there culminating projects and/or portfolios in at least one of the required TPC courses to aid in assessment metrics?
	How does assessment metrics not only assess students but also instructors? Could assessing for implicit bias in instructors be implemented into assessments?
	What are the different direct and indirect assessment metrics that can be used to assess the program effectively? (alumni surveys, employer surveys, student exit surveys, TPC professors directly assessing students' assignments, capstone classes, portfolios, etc.)

Table 1: List of Reflective Questions

Conclusion

This article has summarized results concerning recruitment and assessment practices from twenty-six small institutions in the US, revealing frustrations and successes of trying to get students into one's program and evaluating that program. My study's participants voiced their disappointments with failed recruitment efforts that required significant labor contributions with little return, but they also explained some successes where the labor that went into creating websites and physical flyers did impact the number of students in their program. And my study's participants also voiced their disappointments with meaningless redundant assessments that seemed to produce no benefit to the actual program, but they also explained some successes where software and multiple stakeholders could provide meaningful assessment that betters the program and reveals what students are (or not) learning.

There are several limitations to the results that this article provides. I was not able to interview the whole population that I was studying, nor did I provide a comprehensive critique of all data that I gathered. Additionally, readers might wonder why I did not compare my study to recruitment and assessment practices in small institutions to recruitment and assessment practices in large institutions to figure out it there are insights that are specific to small schools. While I believe this comparison could be interesting, I also believe that it goes outside of the scope of my research question; but if I did decide to address this comparison, I believe it would be better addressed in its own research article where a literature review could adequately summarize all of the recruitment and assessment practices in larger institutions—possibly even conducting an additional study where I interviewed TPC program directors at large institutions about their recruitment and assessment practices. For me, I believe the sole focus on recruitment and assessment practices in small institutions required its own focus and provides valuable insight without needing to compare them to large institutions. I am aware that many of the frustrations and successes presented in this article are probably realized at larger institutions; but for the sake of scope, I wanted my main focus to be on small institutions only.

Even with these limitations, the body of knowledge and reflective questions in this article still provides valuable information about current TPC program directors' practices about recruitment and assessment, both the good and the bad. As we continue to ask questions about the field's sustainability in the current educational climate, it is important that we gather this data so that we can learn from our failures and successes—and sometimes this valuable data comes from the smallest of institutions.

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