The recent pedagogical “boom” in English studies and the seeming omnipresence of the term pedagogy have not been matched by a correspondingly radical shift in how we prepare professors of English. Instead, Shari J. Stenberg argues, “professing” remains primarily defined by conceptions of research.

Stenberg insists that pedagogy will not be rightfully valued until we confront the disciplinary model that diminishes it. She offers a compelling historical account of how teacher preparation has been shaped by entrenched notions of the research professor and then examines and critiques four major contemporary metaphors for the professor in training and the teacher-preparation methods that result: the teacher as scholar, the teacher as trainee, the teacher as owner, and the teacher as learner.

To promote a shift from teacher training to true pedagogical development, Stenberg provides conceptual revisions and suggests specific pedagogical changes designed to influence how we understand and practice disciplinarity at each point in pedagogical development. Offering rich examples that illustrate the praxis of teacher development, Stenberg argues for and enact pedagogical inquiry as disciplinary work by drawing from her experience as student, teacher, and writing program administrator.
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Mandi, a graduate school–bound senior English major, is facilitating discussion in our composition theory class. The topic is teaching, now vitally important to her as she struggles to imagine herself as an instructor of record in the fall. She offers the following prompt for our writing: “Describe a teacher. Don’t think too much, just jot down what first comes to mind.”

I begin to scrawl in my notebook, deliberately trying not to censor or overthink my response. I picture Mrs. Carlson, my fourth-grade teacher. I jot down “maternal” and “disciplinary.” She (definitely a she) is someone who is caring and nurturing, but who makes sure the students remain “in line.” Susan Miller’s metaphor of nurse-mother pops into my head: the teacher is responsible for passing along accepted knowledge and behaviors, and yet she is not adequately valued in the culture that depends on the very knowledge she supplies (1991, 137).

This person is not a professor, I write, and underline it. I stop and think: I’ve now been working for nearly seven years on a project that aims to disrupt the teacher/professor binary. And yet the distinction remains deeply ingrained in my mind.

Mandi asks us to stop writing, and invites volunteers to share their responses. After a brief silence, Mandi shares her own. “I pictured someone male,” she says. “He is very authoritative about the knowledge in his field. He wears a suit, maybe a bow tie.” We chuckle; she is describing a professor in our department.

Kristie goes next. “Mine is different,” she points out. “When you said ‘who is a teacher,’ I pictured my K–12 instructors. I don’t consider my professors teachers. I don’t refer to them as teachers. I call them professors.” For Kristie, the teacher is a woman. She’s creative, and she wears bright-colored sweaters. Glasses hang from a chain around her neck.
“Yes, and she always has nice handwriting,” Nancy adds. And she’s good at the “teacher grip,” Philip interjects. He’s met with blank looks. Didn’t any of you ever get the teacher grip when you were in trouble?” The rest of the class, all women, laugh and shake our heads.

Other students agree that professors are an altogether different species. They are masters of their subject matter. They stand at the front of the room, facing students lined in neat rows. They lecture. Their authority stems from their knowledge, not their potential to discipline. “It’s funny that I picture this,” Mandi contends, “because none of my professors is really like this. And certainly I’m not going to teach like this.”

As we discuss the differences we’ve learned (if not experienced) between the teacher and the professor, Mandi realizes that she, too, has learned them as entirely different categories. “I think one reason I don’t see my professors as teachers,” she reasons, “is that they aren’t trained as teachers. They’re trained as scholars.”

And now that she faces teaching at the college level, she wonders how she will learn to teach. She is especially anxious because her careful research of graduate programs has produced very little evidence of resources for teacher learning. In fact, she leans toward accepting the offer made by the institution that seems to provide the most support for new teachers.

After class, I think about how Mandi’s interest in the teacher-development process puts her far ahead of where I was at that stage. Like Mandi, I applied for graduate school my senior year of college, and had no experience teaching. The committee who reviewed my application and awarded me with an assistantship had seen only my personal statement of intended study, three writing samples, transcripts, and letters of recommendation. My perceived potential as a scholar, it seemed, qualified me to teach. And since teaching is what I was certain I wanted to do, I was only too glad to accept this presumption.

It was my mom, a middle school teacher of thirty-five years, who questioned the logic of this system, asking, “How can they ask you to teach without providing any methods courses?” The only way I knew how to answer this was that a professor (or even a professor-to-be) was a scholar, something different from a
teacher. I had learned—without its ever being spoken explicitly—that the preparation to be a professor was distinct from the training to be a teacher. I gave my mother the answer I thought to be true: graduate school fosters one’s enrichment as a scholar, an intellectual, a professor, and the teaching part naturally falls into place.

This exchange with my mother—which stayed with me long after we hung up the phone—became an initial catalyst for this book. My mother’s question invited me to wonder along with her: How do we learn to be professors of English? But it did more than that; it also invited me to look with different eyes at the deep division between teachers and scholars. In fact, my response to her made abundantly clear that I had not only learned the professor’s work to be privileged above that of the teacher’s, but that I understood the process of learning to profess—mastery of scholarship—to be sufficient preparation for teaching. Teaching, as I saw it, was the by-product of scholarly knowledge, not a means of making knowledge.

While I soon discovered that my response represented the normative assumptions about professing—and professorial preparation—in the field, I also learned that this model has not gone unchallenged. I did not, in fact, have to look far to see revisionary work in progress: the doctoral program I attended, SUNY–Albany’s Teaching, Writing, and Criticism, certainly defied traditional assumptions about professing. Formerly a D.A. program, the curriculum sought to make pedagogy an activity deserving of inquiry, a praxis one studied in dialogue with composition, literature, creative writing, or theory. This is not a new idea for those of us in composition, where questions of how we teach cannot be severed from what we teach. But it departs significantly from the dominant tendency to split doctoral education into two categories: scholarly work (i.e., seminars, exams, dissertation) and the work that supports it, teaching. As a teaching assistant, one teaches to “pay” for one’s study. Thus, support for teaching is usually inextricably linked to the first-year writing program, and sponsored by a single writing program administrator, who works under pressure to train new teachers as quickly and efficiently as possible to teach within an already established program.
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Here, too, my experience was somewhat unusual. My first teaching experiences did not take place in a first-year writing classroom; we had no such program. Nor did we have the “teacher-training” program that usually accompanies it. Instead, I spent most of my graduate teaching as one of about eight TAs, adjuncts, and faculty members working within our new Writing Sequence, a concentration in rhetoric and poetics for English majors. While I go into detail about this experience in Chapter 4, I will sketch some of its characteristics here. We teachers—who ranged from full professors to adjuncts to graduate TAs—met on a biweekly basis not only to discuss pedagogical issues, but also to examine and rethink our shared curriculum. We found ways to include students in our discussion of the curriculum; they helped us understand the connections among our courses and to consider ways of fostering writing development over a sequence of courses. Those of us who were graduate students found that our teaching became a regular text in our seminars, a site we often wrote about, reflected on, and theorized. Here, teacher learning was ongoing, and everyone who sat around the table was (at least theoretically) positioned as at once a learner and a knower. Instead, then, of being trained, I was invited to participate in a process of pedagogical study and development.

To those of us in composition, these ideas are likely not altogether new or unique. After all, we work within a scholarly tradition that, as Sharon Crowley puts it, focuses on the “processes of learning rather than on the acquisition of knowledge” and a pedagogical tradition that emphasizes “change and development in students” rather than “transmission of a heritage” (1998, 3). It makes sense, then, that we have been prepared—and prepare graduate students—to participate in an ongoing process of teacher learning. But the notion of promoting teacher development as a central part of professorial preparation is still an anomaly in the larger discipline of English studies. Consequently, I write this book with those of us in composition—particularly graduate students like Mandi and those who teach them—in mind. I offer ways to reimagine our work with new teachers, as well as with full- and part-time colleagues, so as to promote pedagogical development and ongoing inquiry into what it means to profess English.
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The Prominence of Pedagogy

Because of the prominence of “pedagogy” in and beyond our discipline, now seems like a particularly appropriate time to weigh in on how new conceptions of pedagogy might inform the way we prepare teachers of English. During the last decade, a growing body of work—largely informed by the language of radical pedagogy—has insisted that pedagogy not only be deemed as relevant an object of study as great authors or periods, but a subject with potential for social transformation. As a result, we now have a journal devoted to (and entitled) *Pedagogy* (from the prestigious Duke University Press), backed by an editorial board of pedagogy “scholars,” and the *MLA International Bibliography* has expanded its scope to include “publications about the teaching of language, writing, and literature at the college level” (“Mellon Grant”). Though scholars disagree on the reasons for this “boom”—for instance, Gerald Graff (1994) contends that it results from an imperative to spell out critical theory’s implications for teaching, while Lynn Worsham (1998) argues that it is driven by a recognition of the failures of theory to evoke social change—it has without question given a historically devalued subject new scholarly legitimacy.

But pedagogy has moved into the spotlight for more practical reasons, as well. More specifically, current job conditions create a renewed interest in “teacher training” and “professional preparation.” An overproduction of Ph.D.s paired with a shortage of tenure-track positions means, according to the 2000 *MLA Newsletter* article “Job Market Remains Competitive,” that 75 percent of job candidates will find positions at institutions that require them to spend most of their time teaching. This, of course, is an activity for which most Ph.D. recipients are ill prepared. Consequently, the MLA Committee on Professional Employment has recently urged graduate programs to revise doctoral education to better prepare graduate students for the realities of their future careers at teaching-centered institutions. So long as the research university devalues the teaching of lower-division courses, the committee warns, “graduate training will not adequately prepare students for the realities of the academic workplace” (40).
These trends might be read to suggest that teaching has gained the value and attention it has long deserved, and for which compositionists have long argued. However, the two primary ways in which these new pedagogical conversations take shape—scholarly, on one hand, and practical, on the other—suggest that it is not this simple. While making pedagogy a scholarly subject matter is indeed crucial, it does not necessarily alter the way in which pedagogy is engaged with students or the way doctoral candidates are prepared to teach. As I argue in Chapter 2, this scholarship on pedagogy tends to place its greatest emphasis on the theoretical tradition informing it (Marxism, feminism, poststructuralism, and so on), at the expense of attention both to specific instructional acts and to the particular students and teachers engaging them. As a result, questions of how we enact English studies with students in our classrooms, or how we learn to be professors of English, still often fall by the wayside as “practical”—not scholarly—concerns.

Alternatively, efforts that seek to institute “improved” teacher training practices—conversations which, in English studies, are found predominantly in composition—tend toward the “what works” or skills-based approaches (Latterell 1996; Haring-Smith 1985; Stenberg and Lee 2002) with a focus on teaching as a masterable craft rather than a site of critical inquiry. Considering the pressure WPAs are under to fill first-year composition classrooms, this should not be surprising.

More often than not, however, efforts toward “teaching improvement” are found outside the discipline in centers for excellence in teaching, programs such as Preparing Future Faculty, the Consortium on the Preparation of Graduate Students as College Teachers, and national TA conferences (Chism 1998). New methods of teacher preparation are also emerging, which include graduate student internships in community colleges and faculty-in-training programs (see, for example, Cowan, Traver, and Riddle 2001; Buck and Frank 2001; Murphy 2001). While these developments are important, they continue to relegate the job of teacher preparation to someplace outside of the doctoral curriculum, and thus to separate it from “real” scholarly work. Here reform is driven by the job market or the need for undergraduate teaching,
not by a reconception of pedagogy as an important mode of knowledge production.

The problem, then, is that pedagogy is conceptualized either as a “subject matter” or a mere “practice.” Either way, the result is the same: teaching is understood as a set of skills, not as an epistemic activity central to professorial work. I contend, then, that even as “pedagogy” has gained scholarly legitimacy and practical urgency, our conceptions of professing have not been sufficiently revised. Professing remains tied, primarily, to the production of research. Consequently, we have not seen a radical shift in how we facilitate pedagogical development for future professors of English.

Enacting Disciplinary (Re)visions: Rethinking Professing and Pedagogy

The central contention of Professing and Pedagogy is that efforts to improve the status of teaching or teacher development do little good when they do not also challenge deeply entrenched conceptions of the research professor and the discipline, which contribute to utilitarian conceptions of teaching. In Chapter 1, I argue that despite the field’s recent lip service to pedagogy and the “teaching professor,” we continue to abide by a model of the research professor imported from the German university around the turn of the last century. This professor was, in James Morgan Hart’s words, “not a teacher” but a “specialist” committed, above all, to producing knowledge (quoted in Crowley 1998, 55). Though Hart’s model has not gone unchallenged, it has also never been dismantled: research remains the professorial work that “counts,” with teaching understood, although most often tacitly, as its by-product. This conception of the research professor is entangled with related notions of the discipline, conceived as a body of knowledge, with professors in charge of building and protecting it.

Ultimately, Professing and Pedagogy seeks to challenge the way we understand the role of the professor and the discipline in which he or she works. My method of revision reaches beyond
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providing new scholarly visions for pedagogy or improved “training” practices. Instead, I argue for a more holistic reform: to make pedagogy a central disciplined activity of English studies.

As I’ve suggested, pedagogy is an increasingly pervasive term in English studies. How it is used, however, varies tremendously; thus, it requires some unpacking here. Often, pedagogy is conflated with “teaching”—understood as the set of practices by which we transmit our knowledge. Other times, it is understood as the “theory” that informs teaching. Although I will define (and redefine) the term in each chapter, I want to foreground several key characteristics that shape my conception of pedagogy: (1) Pedagogy is a knowledge-making activity that involves the interplay of visions and practices, both of which require reflection; (2) pedagogy is dependent on learners and is remade with each encounter, as the students and the teacher change; (3) pedagogy cannot be finished; we cannot “finally” learn to teach. Rather, it requires an ongoing commit to learning and reflexivity (Lee 2000; Qualley 1997; Gallagher 2002; Kameen 2000).

If pedagogy is a collaborative activity that has to be remade every time a group of learners comes together, then the very notion that teachers can be trained unravels. Training, of course, implies the acquisition of an attainable skill. It assumes that a master will guide an apprentice down the path he or she determines most appropriate. It assumes learning will be one-way. Pedagogy, however, requires ongoing learning, study, and development. It is not something one can “pick up” in an orientation or even a single seminar. It is not something one can learn by observing an experienced pedagogue, or by reading.

Throughout this book, then, I will argue that instead of training teachers, those of us who locate ourselves in composition and rhetoric might take two actions: (1) teach new teachers to participate in a learning-centered discipline, and (2) invite our colleagues to engage in ongoing teacher-development opportunities. In this way, we can work to form collectives around pedagogy that help to alter our professorial work and foster disciplinary revision. After all, promoting pedagogy as intellectual work cannot, indeed should not, rest only on the shoulders of those of us in composition.
Some might ask (indeed, some readers of this manuscript have asked), “Why target compositionists? Isn’t that just preaching to the choir? And don’t we have enough work to do?” Maybe so, but I would contend that because it is compositionists who currently handle the pedagogical dimension of English studies, we are uniquely positioned to shape the people who will become (and teach) the next generation of English professors. Furthermore, as the field of composition becomes increasingly “disciplinary,” we need to be aware of our own tendencies to abide by the familiar research model, ensuring that we are not complicit in maintaining the low status of teaching in English.

Professing and Pedagogy seeks to promote this reconception of professing by offering both conceptual and instructional revisions. The book begins by providing a historical account of how entrenched notions of the discipline and the research professor have shaped the way we prepare teachers. Each subsequent chapter examines and critiques a root metaphor for the professor in training and the teacher-preparation methods that result, answering this material with both conceptual revisions and with specific institutional and pedagogical changes designed to influence how we understand and practice disciplinarity. This material does not come in the form of prescriptive or “how-to” advice, but offers illustrative examples of teachers and learners working together to engage pedagogical inquiry in specific contexts.

A Word about Form

In composing this book, I hope to avoid a tendency that afflicts much scholarship on pedagogy: favoring abstract social visions over inquiry into how students and teachers enact pedagogy. I take my cue from teacher-scholars Jennifer Gore, Elizabeth Ellsworth, Carmen Luke, and Mimi Orner, who have drawn from the ideas of critical pedagogy discourse but pushed for closer attention to the local, to the engagement of critical pedagogy with students. Luke and Gore, in their introduction to Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy, describe their work as a “political and social endeavor” to “distinguish this ongoing work in and through
pedagogy from a generalized critical pedagogy” (1992, 1–2). Committed to feminist poststructuralist analysis, they argue that our work must foreground and attend to local contexts, so as to avoid the “‘master’s position’ of formulating a totalizing discourse” (Orner 1992, 81). I hope to follow suit, showing the specific practices and processes through which professing and professorial development take place—rather than simply prescribing a “new” vision—in order to open possibilities for reflection and revision.

At the same time, however, I do not intend for my examples to serve as prescriptions or models. While new teachers who wonder, as I did, “How will I learn to teach?” and teacher “trainers” who want to know “How can I prepare TAs to teach?” may find ideas and strategies in this book, they will not find easy answers. Providing methods or “how to’s” would only further reinforce the idea that teaching is a skill, not something that must be continually studied, reflected on, and revised within specific contexts. It would, in fact, run counter to my conception of pedagogy.

Instead of models, I offer both conceptual and instructional revisions. In so doing, I rely on a combination of theoretical and historical research, classroom narratives, and descriptions of specific programmatic and pedagogical practices. Just as I argue for teaching as a knowledge-producing site of inquiry, I hope to demonstrate that so, too, are classroom stories. As omnipresent as teacher narratives have become—particularly in the fields of composition and critical pedagogy—I am aware that, like teaching itself, they are often deemed intellectually suspect, considered merely anecdotal or illustrative. While they may be considered an acceptable way to demonstrate the application of theory, they tend not to be regarded as theory-generating. With Chris Gallagher, however, I approach teaching narratives not as “places for the ‘practical’ application, execution, and measurement of external, a priori theories,” but as “sites of knowledge-production, where theory happens” (2002, 21). My hope, then, is that the dramatizations of teacher learning in each chapter will be read as sites of knowledge making, integral to the work of the chapter.

Of course, narratives can function in problematic ways. It becomes all too easy, I discovered in my composing process, to
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wrap these stories neatly and tightly so as to provide a “lesson,” to tell the tale of moving from darkness into the light, to turn myself as narrator either into hero or antihero. But teacher learning is not linear or simple. Teacher learning has no ending. And so my goal is to represent this dynamic interchange of action and reflection, to show the ongoing process of the pedagogical inquiry I promote. I have worked to portray these stories as dynamic, fluid, and partial. I hope they serve not as answers, but as ongoing sites for reflection—to be made and remade, particularly as they work in dialogue with readers’ own stories and insights.

A Look Ahead: Chapter Overview

So as to provide a fuller context for our contemporary “pedagogical boom” and its implications for professorial preparation, I spend the first two chapters examining the historical and current developments that shape this exigency. Chapter 1 examines three moments in the discipline’s history when pedagogy emerged as a “boom” topic; consequently, scholars challenged the divide between teaching and professing and recommended reform of professorial preparation. My goal here is not to offer a comprehensive history of pedagogy in composition or English studies, but rather to focus on several “pedagogical turns” in the hope that they will offer insight into how efforts to value teaching have been disciplined, as well as to shed light on why particular metaphors for the teacher have so stubbornly endured in our institutional imaginations and practices.

Chapter 2 takes us from the historical to a closer look at the current scene, focusing on the metaphor of the “teacher as scholar.” Here I consider the way two movements, critical pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching (Boyer 1990), have sought to legitimize pedagogy as a site of inquiry. I contend that despite the possibilities of each movement, they both tend to rewrite the teacher in the scholar’s image and to reify the distinction between pedagogy (the subject) and teaching (the practice). While I argue that pedagogical scholarship is one important site for teacher learning, I suggest changes in the way we represent our teach-
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—focusing less on prescriptive visions or practical “how-to” approaches, and more on the local, specific engagement of pedagogical inquiry with students, so that we see a different kind of “teacher” in our scholarship.

In Chapter 3 I examine the “teacher-as-trainee” metaphor, whereby new teachers are positioned as blank slates whose pedagogical decisions follow from a single intellectual view provided by teacher-training programs. Instead, I seek to reconceive the teacher as a complex subject who brings a complicated pedagogical history to the classroom that is itself deserving of inquiry. New and experienced teachers alike, I contend, benefit from ongoing dialogue between the pedagogies from which we’ve learned and the pedagogies we aim to enact. To enact this argument, I narrate a complex moment in my history as a student, which is placed in dialogue with my responses as a teacher.

Chapter 4 explores the “teacher-as-owner” metaphor, whereby the classroom becomes the property of the teacher. Here professors are thought to develop in isolation, or in relationship to the scholarship they engage, rather than as a result of collaboration with other teachers. This chapter aims to challenge teaching as a privatized practice, and to promote a model of teacher learning that is equally dependent upon community and curriculum. I contend that if the work of developing teaching communities and curricula is understood as dialectical in relationship, the benefits reach not only the classrooms of individual teachers, but also the curriculum as a whole. Here I narrate the process of one teaching group, as we struggled to build and create community, and to negotiate our individual pedagogies in relation to a curriculum we worked to compose together. My intention is not to offer a prescription for teaching communities, but to dramatize the process of community building so that it might be studied and reflected upon. I also hope to show that while community must be negotiated, nurtured, and continually revised, it is indeed possible.

Finally, Chapter 5 puts together the revisionary ideas and behaviors offered in the previous chapters to argue for the “teacher as learner”—the professor who is committed to ongoing inquiry into his or her visions and practices with students and colleagues. Here I return to the discussion of discipline initiated in Chapter

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1, this time examining and offering examples of how the discipline and our professorial practice would look with pedagogy at its center. Drawing from Richard Haswell’s (1991) notion of writing development, I argue that true teacher development results in the change of the experienced teacher, the new teacher, and the field. Changing ourselves, then, means changing the discipline. Part of that change, however, must move beyond the conceptual and the pedagogical to alter the material realities we work within. In this chapter, I point to some of the material changes necessary if pedagogical development is to be given its due.

Ultimately, Professing and Pedagogy is not about critical answers but about critical processes: teaching, learning, questioning, collaborating, reflecting, revising. None of these are acts that can be finished. That is not the nature of pedagogy. It changes every moment, as students raise new questions, as a text causes discomfort, as silences or eruptions occur, as a learning moment fails (or succeeds) and we have to ask why, as a new group of student arrives and challenges what we thought we knew. This, to me, is also what makes professing such a rich, rewarding, exciting task: engaging and making knowledge with students, learning with and from them about what it means to profess English studies.
The recent pedagogical “boom” in English studies and the seeming omnipresence of the term pedagogy have not been matched by a correspondingly radical shift in how we prepare professors of English. Instead, Shari J. Stenberg argues, “professing” remains primarily defined by conceptions of research.

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