

## DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH MINUTES

May 5, 1980

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Mr. Moldenhauer presiding. The meeting was interrupted for lunch at 12:00 noon and deliberations were resumed at 1:15 p.m.

The purpose of the special day-long meeting was to study and analyze the proposals submitted to the department Thursday, May 1 by the Task Force on Composition.

Mr. Moldenhauer reviewed the history of the task force. Early in the Spring semester of 1980 he proposed departmental study leading to action on what everyone in the department recognized as a major problem of at least four or five years' duration: the collision between sharply increasing demands upon departmental resources in the area of the required composition courses and the orderly functioning of the department with regard to administration and governance, faculty workload, and effective pedagogy. The problem is most obviously a logistical one, but it has pedagogical aspects as well. No one maintains that present required courses and sequences are educationally perfect; the project was to see what could be done to relieve the intolerable burden of numbers while at the same time not damaging, and hopefully improving, the required English courses.

The department met in plenary session on January 25 and February 1 to attempt to separate the subject into categories which would lend themselves to purposive study with a view to logistical and pedagogical improvement. At these first meetings the members of the department interested in the subject had ample opportunity to express their preliminary views as to what sorts of changes might be desirable. One meeting was devoted quite specifically to matters of content and curriculum. Prompt preparation of minutes of these and subsequent department meetings permitted department members who missed a meeting to inform themselves of the department's deliberations.

"Study Teams" were made up of volunteers. Fifty or sixty members of the department were attached to eight teams: Admissions and Registration, Degree Requirements, Exemptions, Format (I and II), Staffing, Administrative Reorganization, and Content. Each team chose its own chairman, and received and investigated proposals from every member of the department who wished to communicate with the team on its area of study. Mr. Moldenhauer met once with six of the eight teams, or with their chairmen, to help insure that pertinent questions were being asked and pertinent information was being sought concerning those questions. The teams worked up to spring vacation or a bit beyond, and were ready to report in the latter half of March.

The Study Teams reported to the department in two plenary sessions after spring vacation; at these meetings the teams amplified on written reports submitted to the department and heard the department's response to the proposals generated

by the teams working separately. At these two department meetings, which (like the first two) were well attended, every member of the department interested in the findings and preliminary recommendations of the teams had opportunity to question, challenge, support, and generally to express his or her opinion on the recommendations.

In early April Mr. Moldenhauer solicited recommendations from the study team chairs for members of the task force whose job would be to coordinate the team proposals into a coherent and workable whole. Each team was represented on the task force. The formulation of the task force from these recommendations was made with a view to representation of tenured and tenure-seeking regular faculty, temporary faculty and graduate-student teachers; male and female; composition-oriented and literature-oriented; idealists and pragmatists; etc.: a delicate balancing act. Members of the task force were: Jane Archer, Lance Bertelsen, Evan Carton, James Duban, Carlota Dwyer, Lester Faigley, John Farrell, James Garrison, William Goetz, Don Graham, Alan Gribben, Maxine Hairston, Janice Haney-Peritz, James Kinneavy, Joseph Kruppa, Thomas Miller, Joseph Moldenhauer, and Roger Renwick.

The task force met every Tuesday and Thursday between April 8 and May 1 (eight meetings), usually for 1-1/2 hours. Meetings were confined to 90 minutes, as a rule, because one member had to leave after that time and because the task force wanted maximum clarity and freshness of thought on the important business at hand. The meetings were excellently attended; all proceedings were taped so that a member who had to miss a sitting could review that meeting before the next one. Mr. Moldenhauer served as chair at the wish of the task force, performing the function of traffic-manager and moderator, not advocate; he did not vote.

This process of departmental action on a subject that touches the whole department was characterized by maximum opportunities for participation, for information gathering, for expression of views, and for acceptance of responsibility. Mr. Moldenhauer felt it had been as open a process as was consistent with the aim of producing any positive result at all - a process responsive to the spirit of democratic institutions.

Everyone who took part, at every level, has a large investment in the semester's work. For the sake of that investment of time, intelligence, and good will by so many, Mr. Moldenhauer earnestly hoped that the process could be brought to conclusion. Mr. Moldenhauer stated that this effort had been the subject of wagering around campus ("Will they do it? Two to one they don't..."). He hoped that those colleagues in other departments who have had enough faith in the English Department to lay bets will have their trust repaid and that the English Department will manifest faith in itself, in its own participatory and representative procedures. Mr. Moldenhauer stressed that strong departmental support for a coherent line of action will obviously add greatly to the chances for approval at other levels of decision-making.

Mr. Moldenhauer then called attention to the four-page proposal distributed by the task force late Thursday evening. The proposal has the support of 16 of the 17 voting members of the task force: one could not support it because it was his conviction that students ought to be able to take two composition courses in the freshman year. The proposal represented the best plan the task force could develop. It was a result of compromise, both at the task force stage and earlier at the study team stage. Not every part of the plan satisfies every member. But the whole has earned, as a set of compromises, very solid support from a highly representative and well-informed body. The task force was not infallible, however; and the plan was not necessarily perfect or final. This meeting was intended to give an opportunity for interested faculty to give their views on the plan, to ask questions, and to hear explanations. The meeting had been scheduled for this date two weeks ago, and it falls on a day when in theory every member of the department can attend (another provision, which could luckily be made because of the reading-period day, for maximum participation in work on this major subject).

Mr. Moldenhauer said that the proposal is a complex one with intricate relation of parts. It does not lend itself to hasty or piecemeal modification. The task force is entirely prepared for good ideas to come from the floor of the department but asks the faculty to recognize that it's impossible as a practical matter for the task force to judge instantly what all the effects of a suggested change of one part would be on the other parts. Therefore, the task force intends, after conclusion of debate on the proposal, to meet once again and to submit a plan as a motion by mail for mail ballot. The plan will incorporate any suggestions as may arise in departmental discussion which are seen as good alterations, consistent with the pedagogical and logistical objectives of the semester's work.

The task force foresees that on matters of as great magnitude and as wide-ranging effects as those addressed in the plan, the department should protect itself against the nullification of its recommendations by some higher authority (e.g., General Faculty, President's Office) on the score of irregularities in the franchise. At the same time, the task force recognizes that a large number of teachers besides those officially defined as voting members have a lively and legitimate interest in a composition and requirements plan and should be heard. Therefore, the task force wishes to poll by mail those teachers who are not officially voting members at the same time as a mail vote is taken among the voting members; this will involve ballots of two different colors, one for voting members and one for non-voting members of the English Department teaching staff.

Voting membership in the department is defined by the Handbook of Operating Procedures, Ch. 1, VI, B, paragraphs 1.a and 1.b, pp. 27-28, revised as of February 1, 1976:

A faculty member shall have voting status in a department on departmental matters if: (a) He holds a full-time appointment in that department as detailed in the budget and holds the rank of Professor, Visiting Professor, Associate Professor, Visiting Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor or Lecturer; or (b) He holds joint appointments in two or more departments, the sum of which corresponds to full-time appointment in the University, and holds any of the ranks listed in subsection a., above.

The poll ballots and voting ballots will be issued after the task force meets once again after this departmental discussion. The plan, as revised, and the ancillary proposals, as revised, will be distributed with the ballots. Each member would be asked to vote "yes" or "no" on the basic plan and "yes" or "no" on each of the ancillary proposals separately. The deadline for return of ballots will be printed on the ballots, and the interval will be sufficient for final reflections by the voters.

Those voting "no" on the basic plan will be invited to state their objections and, if they wish, to propose improvements which would win their assent to the plan, on a sheet of paper accompanying the completed ballot. If the basic plan is voted down by a majority of those voting, the task force will meet again to consider what sort of plan might win majority assent.

Mr. Moldenhauer extended his personal thanks and those of the department to the members of the task force, who were willing to devote their energies at this level as well as the study panel level and who worked with intelligence and often with passion on the large and complex issues of the plan. The members of the task force who were present at the meeting stood and were applauded by the department for their thoughtful and conscientious work. Mr. Moldenhauer then opened the floor to discussion of the proposal.

#### I. Elimination of certain lower-division courses.

Ms. Hairston noted that a large number of business students enroll in E310; would the Business School be allowed to devise its own Expository Writing course? Mr. Moldenhauer said that any school could unilaterally develop and institute its own writing courses, but such courses would not satisfy the English requirements as set forth in this proposal.

#### II. Degree Requirements

Mr. Kinnoavy explained that there is presently a drive underway to reinstitute the single University-wide English requirement. The Faculty Senate is seeking a 12-hour requirement, while this proposal only seeks to require 9 hours. Individual colleges are more likely to support the English Department's proposal.

Mr. Wadlington was personally assured that President Flawn would give strong support to a University-wide requirement even if the professional schools balked at an increase in the English requirement.

### III. Admissions and Enrollment

In response to a question by Mr. Twombly, Mr. Duhan said that the April 22 deadline for admission to UT was a suggested date and could be changed to a later date (for example, May 1). The intent of the date was to give the department enough lead time to prepare staffing for freshman composition classes.

### IV. Reduction of general prerequisites for upper-division English courses from 9 to 6 hours of English.

Several faculty members worried about the consequences this might have on upper-division writing courses. E325M (Advanced Expository Writing) presently assumes writing experience gained in E306 and E310. Mr. Trimble urged the task force to make the new upper-division writing course ("Writing in Different Disciplines") a prerequisite to E325M. Mr. Renwick expressed the task force's concern that the quality of E325M be maintained; the task force would reconsider changing the prerequisites for this course to include the upper-division writing course.

### V. Courses and Sequence

Mr. Megaw suggested that the second semester of the freshman year would be well utilized if, for example, remedial students took E306 in the Fall and a version of E307 in the Spring. Mr. Moldenhauer said that the standards of E306 for remedial students would have to be the same as for regular students; if these students don't measure up to the standards, they will fail the course and be required to repeat it. However, he pointed out that the task force proposed writing labs of one-to-two hours per week to help remedial students attain the necessary writing proficiency. Mr. Megaw thought students who placed out of E306 might be encouraged to consider taking E314L as an elective (not satisfying degree requirements); Mr. Moldenhauer felt this was probably a good idea.

Mr. Farrell urged that panel-grading in E306 be investigated further; normally, E306 sections lack students who are very good writers (these students have placed out of the course), and the result is a class of mediocre writers. It is difficult for the instructor to grade differentially in such situations, and the tendency is to grade high.

Mr. Byerman questioned the need for Black sections of E306. Mr. Kinneavy projected that sections for Blacks would be as successful as current sections for Chicanos. In fact, these sections are one of the few positive things the University does for its minority students, Mr. Kinneavy said. Ms. Dwyer suggested that this was one area that allowed growth at a later date; currently, the department could implement such courses with the help of the African and Afro-American Studies Center.

Mr. Rebhorn said that the SAT Verbal score was not an accurate basis for exemptions because the skills taught in English courses could not be evaluated by machine-graded tests. Mr. Wadlington believed that the present exemption test (ECT) for E306 is also an inaccurate measure of the skills emphasized in the course: the ECT tests reading comprehension while E306 is oriented toward writing. Mr. Moldenhauer agreed that there was a disparity between the specific items being tested and the intent of the course, but this disparity has been built into composition placement at UT for a long time. Mr. Moldenhauer directed the department's attention to Ancillary Proposal G which seeks to refine placement criteria for the required composition courses. There were suggestions that a writing sample submitted with the SAT score would enable the department to better place students according to writing ability. Ms. Hairston said that writing samples were required 15 years ago; these were graded by TAs and AIs who were not paid for their work - the grading of the samples was haphazard and very bad. Mr. Moldenhauer reminded the group that if writing samples were required as part of the E306 placement test, then the department would have to find the time and the money to grade and rank 6,000 writing samples between May 1 and September 1; such a situation was inconceivable to him. Mr. Wadlington suggested that writing samples be required only of those students in the "fringe area" to ensure that those who place out of E306 have a minimum standard of writing ability.

Mr. Lesser believed that there should be no exemptions from E306, that instead the course should be mandatory. A student exempted from E306 would have no English at all during the freshman year. In fact, if the sophomore Masterworks course is oriented toward literature, then such a student would not be exposed to composition at all until his junior year ("Writing in Different Disciplines"). Such a situation was unacceptable to Mr. Lesser, and he believed it robbed the student of the opportunity to improve his writing skills which, as has been suggested, aren't even guaranteed to be of a certain quality by the current placement tests. Ms. Hairston agreed with him that E306 should be mandatory, but this just is not practical at the present time; the cost would be prohibitive. Ms. MacKay suggested that if E306 were taught both Fall and Spring, all freshmen would be able to enroll without unduly taxing the department's resources. Ms. Haney-Peritz said that the task force would reconsider the question of exemptions, but the department must accept that some exemptions are necessary logistically. Mr. Moldenhauer noted that the department is obliged to provide an opportunity for exemption. Mr. Carver urged the task force to raise the cutting scores to allow fewer exemptions than proposed in the draft plan.

There was general discussion about whether the department should allow freshmen to take the second required course, E31\_ ("Masterworks"), during the freshman year. Mr. Moldenhauer suggested that this would only compound the problem the task force was attempting to solve: to space out the student demand for required courses. Not only did this spacing alleviate unpredictable enrollments and, thus, staffing problems, but it also forced the student to take one English course per year for the first three years of college work. Mr. Lesser and Ms. MacKay wondered if students would have the opportunity to enroll in additional writing or literature courses at the lower-division level. Mr. Moldenhauer said that no additional lower-division writing courses could be taken under the proposed plan: E307, E308, E310 and E317 would all be abolished, together with E312L/M and E314K. E314L and E318M would still be available to students after E306, but neither of these courses would satisfy the English requirement. Mr. Gribben suggested that there is nothing to prevent a student from enrolling in E306, even if he places out of it. Mr. Faigley agreed and cited current examples where students who exempt E306 with a grade of B enroll in the course with hopes of getting an A.

Mr. Rebhorn asked if this proposal would require the analysis of literature for all students in all colleges. Mr. Moldenhauer explained that students presently have the option of satisfying the English requirement without taking a single literature course (e.g., a sequence of E306, E308, and E310, E317, or E318M). The task force's proposal would eliminate this option and require students to be exposed to literature in at least one course ("Masterworks").

Ms. MacKay was concerned that the class maximum for the Masterworks course was so high; could a class of 40 be taught effectively? Mr. Bertelsen said that the Masterworks course could be a lecture class, almost an introduction to culture, and he explained that E314K (which the new course will replace) is currently set up for 40 students and doing well. The figure of 40 is a compromise between a large lecture class of 250 and the smaller composition-class size of 25 (essential for the thoughtful grading of themes). Mr. Carton further explained that the course could be effectively taught at such a size because its emphasis was on literature and not composition. Ms. MacKay urged that the maximum size of the sophomore course be reduced to increase student contact with faculty.

Mr. Hilfer favored the upper-division writing requirement; the Hereford Report of 1975 (Sledd study) clearly showed student support for the deferment of one writing course to a time of greater student maturity and motivation.

Mr. Underwood asked what control the department would have over the courses alternative to "Writing in Different Disciplines" devised by other colleges. Mr. Moldenhauer said that the Colleges of Communication and Business Administration might devise writing courses of their own staffed by their own instructors; the English Department welcomed this activity but would expect the colleges to submit their proposals to the English Department for approval before implementing the courses. The English Department would certify that a course in another department satisfied the English requirement.

Mr. Bowden wondered why the task force had not proposed a special section of "Writing in Different Disciplines" for business-oriented students. Mr. Moldenhauer replied that the task force had deemed that such a proposal was controversial and that it might jeopardize the approval of the basic plan. Instead, the task force presented it as Ancillary Proposal F.

Mr. Walter differentiated between "Writing in Different Disciplines - Science and Technology" and E317 ("Technical Writing"). If the two courses are equivalent, how does the department plan to resolve the conflict between the emphasis on reading technical material in "Writing in Different Disciplines" and the emphasis on writing technical reports in "Technical Writing"? Mr. Moldenhauer believed that the conflict was not apparent and that the "Writing in Different Disciplines" course would strongly stress writing, not reading, and he observed that we have other technical writing courses at the upper-division level.

Mr. Heinzelman asked if the upper-division writing requirement would hurt enrollment in other upper-division courses; would students be willing to take two upper-division English courses? In Mr. Moldenhauer's opinion, there was no solid ground for conjecturing whether other upper-division registrations would be helped (by the reduction of prerequisites to six hours) or hurt (by the factor mentioned in the question). Mr. Heinzelman noted the irrationality with which students regard a course's number, and he suggested that the "Writing in Different Disciplines" course be renumbered from E32 to E37; students might be inclined to take other English courses before attempting a course in the 370s.

Mr. Reed asked if the task force could project how the proposal might alleviate staffing problems. Mr. Moldenhauer estimated that there would be a reduction in staffing demands of roughly 20-25%.

Mr. Gribben urged the department to take strong measures to promote the proposal. The department shouldn't fear the reception forthcoming from other Colleges; equivocation by the department is puzzling to them, and they would welcome the clear-cut policies this proposal represents.

Mr. Reborn suggested that the proposal may temporarily solve logistical problems but that eventually the problem of numbers would recur; he didn't think the English Department should decide English requirements on a logistical basis. Mr. Kruppa said that this may be true but that to remain the same would be worse; the situation is not going to improve. Mr. Garrison announced that the Admissions Office projected an enrollment of 50,000 at UT by the end of the decade. Ms. Haney-Peritz argued that the proposal gives the English Department some elasticity; although it's not perfect, the proposal is pedagogically sound and it gives the department the flexibility it presently needs.

If the proposal is approved by the department, just what are the chances that the proposal will be approved by the UT Administration, Mr. Witte asked. Mr. Kinneavy replied that some of the changes (e.g., the changes in E306 and in the Masterworks course) could be implemented with departmental approval alone. Changes relating to uniform requirements and the junior-level "Writing in Different Disciplines" would need University approval. The different levels of approval would be: College of Liberal Arts, University Council, General Faculty, Board of Regents, Coordinating Board. Such a process would take at least one academic year. Then the new requirements and courses would have to be put into catalogue and final announcement copy for the following year. The earliest the basic plan could be implemented would probably be Fall 1982.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

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