

# Council to review Sledd plan

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A Monday meeting of the University Council may be Professor James Sledd's last chance to give students more flexibility in fulfilling their English requirements.

Sledd, professor of English, is opposed to a plan already approved by the University Council and President Peter Flawn that eliminates the second-semester freshman composition course, E307, and replaces it with E346K, an upper-division composition course.

Sledd has proposed to the council that E307 not be abolished but instead be retained as an option for students who want to take more composition at the freshman level beyond E306. Under Sledd's proposal, which was tabled at the council's Dec. 6 meeting, students could take either E307 or E346K to fulfill their composition course requirement, or they could take both.

The composition course sequence, to be adopted "in spirit" by the different colleges, was developed by the Department of English to meet recommendations of the council's Committee on Basic Education Requirements chaired by James Vick, assistant dean of the College of Natural Sciences.

It requires students to take E306, E316, a sophomore literature course, and E346K. The Vick Committee also will require students to take two additional courses "with a substantial writing component." At least one of the latter two courses must be upper-division.

Opponents to Sledd's proposal say it would force the Department of English to hire more temporary faculty. They also argue that students who want more writing experience can take other English courses, such as E325M, Advanced Expository Writing, or they can attend the department's writing lab.

But Sharon Wevill, a lecturer in English, said she supports Sledd's proposal. "I think the students ought to have an option," she said. "I don't see what problem it poses for the University or the department ... It seems like such a little thing to ask."

John Denson, fourth year law/public affairs student, said he is in favor of Sledd's proposal because it is important for students to have a writing background early in their education.

However, other administrators and faculty members point to studies that indicate students write better with the composition requirements spread across the curriculum.

Wevill said she thinks that when members of the English department came up with the new requirements they hoped the new sequence would help solve "the lecturer problem" — the department's need to contract temporary staff every semester to teach extra sections of several English courses.

However, Robert King, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said: "That's wrong. What conclusively proves that is that we began planning this long before we had a lecturer problem. I couldn't have had more than about 20 lecturers (on the staff) at that time."

But Wevill disagrees. "In the English department even 20 lecturers is too much for them ... I do very much think the English department problem with lecturers is that they're desperate to control the need to hire lecturers because we've caused them so much pain," she said.

Wevill also said she does not believe the new English program was well-planned.

James Kinneavy, a former director of the freshman English program, has predicted that some students taking E307 will also take E346K as one of their two additional courses with a substantial writing component "because other departments don't want to offer those (additional) courses."

Wevill asked: "If we abolish 307 and other courses, will that force other departments to create their own courses? ... Even if some departments create those courses, who's going to teach them? Are they going to come back and hire lecturers who've been fired from the English department?"

King said the Department of English will offer its assistance and expertise to other colleges developing the upper-division courses with substantial writing components.