

TO: Faculty of the Department of English

DATE: Jan. 31, 1980

FROM: John Trimble

Subject: Synopsis of past proposals affecting the logistics of
Freshman Composition

Background:

In October 1979, Professor Moldenhauer, on behalf of the EC, asked me to chair a small three-person committee "to review & summarize in writing all departmental, committee, & even formal individual proposals of the last 10 or so years bearing on freshman comp. requirements, staffing, curriculum patterns, sequence (e.g., 2nd required course after sophomore year), etc., etc. The review would include some major matters which go back more than 10 years, e.g., large section arrangements."

The Archival Committee (as it came to be known) was supposed to have gotten underway promptly so that its report would be ready by Christmas break. Other commitments of mine kept taking precedence, though, so that when mid-December came and I had still not even convened the committee, I guiltily offered to do its work single-handed. This explains why an individual is reporting to you instead of a committee.

Having done the research alone, I'm sure I overlooked a good many proposals that deserved inclusion here, but I trust you will point them out to me in the weeks ahead. For the record, I relied chiefly on the following sources: Minutes of the Freshman English Policy Committee (1976-80), Minutes of the Department of English (1960-79), Minutes of the General Faculty and its Sagic Committee (1971-73), personal files (Professor Moldenhauer's and Professor Kinneavy's), and memos to me from interested colleagues. One major source which I just now realize I overlooked is the set of three departmental memos from Professor Moldenhauer entitled "Considerations Bearing on Recruitment Policy" (issued Sept. 18, Sept. 19, and Sept. 24, 1979). Not having copies at hand, I can't correct that oversight; I can only apologize for it and suggest that copies be appended to this report.

The Proposals

I. Staffing

- A. Hire a permanent core staff of instructors who would handle 30-40 sections per semester, to be augmented by a stabilized TA staff of 50 or more. These instructors would be second-level faculty members. (See FEPC Minutes for 2/23/77, 4/6/77, 4/26/77, & 3/2/79; also see Minutes of the T.A. Study Committee (TASC), chaired by Professors Sutherland and Kruppa.)
- B. Use regular faculty from other departments to teach sections of 306, 307, & 308. (See FEPC Minutes for 2/23/77.)

- C. Boost post-doctoral appointments. Create a formal Post-Doctoral Lectureship in Composition and Rhetoric. (See FEPC Minutes, 2/23/77, 3/23/77, & 4/6/77.)
- D. Increase the number of AI's from outside the department to about 30 more. This will raise the number of AI's to about 120 (up from 80 now), involve more of the university at large in teaching composition, cut the present pool in half, and prepare people for the differentiated 325M courses proposed below under the section entitled "Sequence." (See Professor Kinneavy's memo, "Some Suggestions to the Department, the College, and the University for Solving Some Major Problems of the English Department at the Present Time," filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79. Also see FEPC Minutes for 3/23/77 & 4/6/77. Also see the report of the TA Study Committee, Spring 1977.)
- E. Increase size of pool. (See FEPC Minutes for 3/23/77 & 4/6/77.)
- F. Hire wives and husbands of UT faculty members, either on a part- or full-time basis, if they have advanced degrees in English (or other appropriate disciplines) and if they have teaching experience. (See Professor Rebhorn's proposal of 3/28/77 included with FEPC Minutes for 4/6/77.)
- G. Hire more assistant professors, giving special emphasis to those who have an interest and special competency in rhetoric/composition. (See FEPC Minutes for 3/2/79.)
- H. Offer some big lecture sections of Freshman Composition. (See T.A. Study Committee Report of 4/25/77 filed with FEPC Minutes for 4/26/77. Also see the section below entitled "Format.")
- I. Retain the UT graduates of the present pool but cut back their load to 3 courses per semester. This year almost exactly half of the pool is made up of UT graduates (19 out of 39), and most of these have full loads. With the UT post-graduates and the increased AI's and only 3-4 more faculty, we could handle the stabilized registrations for upper- and lower-division English courses. (See Professor Kinneavy's memo, "Some Suggestions to the Department . . . ," filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79.)
- J. Reward faculty who contribute significantly to the freshman program with some time off so they can pursue their research interests. Suggested formula: one course off for every three sections of Plan I freshmen taught. Additionally, reward faculty directly, when making promotion decisions, by considering contribution to the freshman program a valuable service to the department. (See recommendation #2j of the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Composition, 4/24/75.)

II. Format

- A. Offer a few big "lecture section" versions of 306 along with our regular small sections. (See Report of T.A. Study Comm., cited above; also see FEPC Minutes for 2/23/77 & 3/2/77.)

(1) This option was tried experimentally for three successive Fall semesters back in 1963-65. Professor David DeLaura, then Director of Freshman English, asked three regular faculty members--Professors Abrahams, Moldenhauer, & Slate--to coordinate special "lecture sections" of E601a (the prototype of today's E306). Each of the three lecture sections was comprised of 288 students who convened once a week in Batts Auditorium either for an hour-long lecture on rhetoric or for one of the five in-class themes. During the other two class hours each week, the students broke into 18 small 16-student "seminar sections" (discussion groups) taught by the 6 TA's assigned to each coordinator. Lecturing responsibilities were shared: the coordinator himself gave five lectures, and each of his six "seminar instructors" gave one. Here are several other points of possible antiquarian interest:

Course texts were: Martin & Ohmann, The Logic of Rhetoric and Exposition; Gorrell & Laird, Modern English Handbook; and H. Guth, Essay.

Any student who scored below 344 on the ECT was not eligible to take 601a. He either had to raise his score or pass E.O.B., a non-credit extension course referred to as "basic English."

601a required 10 papers, each of 500-700 words, five of them in-class.

The final exam was a departmental one given in the evening. It consisted of a theme of 500 words, graded by two instructors, neither of whom could be the student's own teacher. A student who failed the final exam failed the course.

As for grades, the syllabus said: "Although it is true that between 15% and 20% of the freshmen most proficient in reading and composition bypass E601a, it is not true that there are no good students left. No test [like the ECT] is that accurate. You should, however, expect that the bulk of your grades will probably be C or below."

During the final semester of this experiment (Fall 1965), the number of large lecture sections was raised from three to four. Each semester, incidentally, the coordinators were rotated so that no one had the job more than once. (See Professor Moldenhauer's folder on the course.)

(2) In Fall 1979, Michael Adams conflated three regular 306 sections of 306 into one lecture section on Mondays, and then broke them back up into regular sections on Wednesdays and Fridays. He team-taught these discussion classes with the two TA's assigned him. (See FEPC Minutes for 4/11/79 & accompanying proposal; also see FEPC Minutes for 4/25/79, 5/2/79, 10/17/79, and 10/24/79.)

(3) On 11/21/79, Professor Ruszkiewicz proposed to the FEPC that we consider running next fall two experimental 306 sections of 100 students apiece. Each would be staffed by a comp/rhetoric faculty member and 4 TA's, and each would use the lecture/discussion group format employed in the DeLaura experiment of 1963. The faculty member would be solely responsible for the lectures and demonstrations presented each Monday to the full section, however; he would also supervise

all grading, coordinate contact between TA's, hold office hours, and meet with the discussion groups on a rotating basis. The TA's, meanwhile, would hold discussion sessions and grade all papers from designated groups of 25 students. The regular E306 syllabus would be followed. The FEPC has not yet voted on this proposal. (See FEPC Minutes for 11/21/79, plus accompanying proposal.)

(4) Professors Kinneavy and Heinzelman will soon propose a new year-long Freshman English course, 501A & B, to be taught in 1981-2. It would involve 100 students and use a lecture/discussion format. Professors Kinneavy and Heinzelman would be the primary lecturers; the four discussion sections would be headed by TA's or AI's. The curriculum would be modeled on the classical trivium and quadrivium.

- B. Run some large experimental lecture sections at the sophomore and upper-division level. According to this proposal, such large sections would be pedagogical experiments and testaments of faith that Freshman English is not the only area forced into large sections. Sections of 80-100 students might be tried in 314K, 314L, and 348. Each could be taught by a regular faculty member assisted by 1 or 2 Apprentices. (See T.A. Study Committee [TASC] memo filed with FEPC Minutes for 4/26/77.)
- C. Offer a writing lab course open only to students scoring below 450 on the ECT.

(1) Professor Wittig made such a proposal to the FEPC in 1977. She suggested using 250 students (10 sections), one regular faculty member (herself) teaching 2 sections, 4 TA's (with 2 sections each), and 20 proctors. The students would attend 1-hour weekly slide lectures with the regular faculty member, two 45-minute weekly testing sessions with proctors and computer, and 1 1/2-hour biweekly workshops with a TA (or AI). (See FEPC Minutes, with accompanying correspondence, for March & April 1977. For more on the lab, see Tom Cameron's report in FEPC Minutes for 2/13/79, 2/21/79, and 5/2/79.)

- D. Use a TV system. (FEPC Minutes, 2/13/77.)

III. Sequence

- A. To help poorly prepared freshmen improve their skill in grammar, punctuation, and spelling, add a 2-hour laboratory course (E206) to E306. Students scoring below 450 on the ECT would be required to take the lab on a no-credit basis; students scoring between 460-540 would take 306 and get 2 hours credit for 206. (See FEPC Minutes for 9/20/77, plus accompanying conference notes.)
- B. Shift our present 314K to freshman year, where it would replace 307 & 308, provide intensive training in three literary genres as well as in composition, and enjoy a class size of 25 (not 40, as it now has). Invent literary options to replace our present 314K. One possibility is three tracks: American, English, & Continental. (Proposed by Professor Graham on 1/22/80 in a memo to Professor Trimble.)

- C. Allow students to defer taking the second semester of the University composition requirement until their junior year. The second-semester course might be 307 or 308 or a junior-level version of 325M (Advanced Expository Writing). Either might be offered in the following versions:

Writing for Scientists
Writing for Engineers
Writing for Humanists (Philosophy, History, Gov't)
Writing for Social Science Majors
Writing about Literature (English, For. Lang.)
Writing about Art (Fine Arts)

(See Professor Kinneavy's memo, "Some Suggestions to the Department, the College, and the University for Solving Some Major Problems of the English Department at the Present Time," filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79.)

(1) Professor Sledd distributed a campus-wide questionnaire in Spring '75 to determine faculty and student opinions on the relationship between student success and the ability to write effectively. One question asked for response to a hypothetical question: Suppose one of the lower-division courses in English composition could, at the student's option, be replaced by one of several upper-division courses adapted to meet the needs of students pursuing different majors. Roughly 78% of the faculty approved this option. As for the students' reaction, roughly 34% of all freshmen and sophomores responding felt they would be "much more" motivated were they to study composition as upperclassmen rather than as freshmen; roughly 39% of all juniors and seniors responding felt they would be "much more" motivated. Roughly another 48% of the freshmen and sophomores said they would be "somewhat" more motivated, while another 44% of all juniors and seniors responding felt that would be "somewhat" more motivated. It would seem, then, that there is considerable support among both faculty and students alike for this option. (These and other findings are available in Susan Hereford's Measurement & Evaluation Center report of February 1976, "Academic Success and Writing Ability: A Survey of Faculty and Student Opinion." For a copy, see M&E, Professor Moldenhauer, or Professor Sledd.)

IV. Content

- A. Establish a systematic, continuous program encouraging experimentation with different approaches to teaching freshman composition, and devise procedures for on-going evaluation of experimental sections so that successful approaches can be adopted more widely. (See recommendation #1a of the Ad Hoc Committee on Composition Report of 4/24/75. See Professor Trimble for a copy.)
- B. Develop a competency-based English 306 course stating exact levels of student achievement and requiring students to reach those levels. (See FEPC Minutes for 2/23/77; also see T.A. Study Committee Minutes and Professor Sutherland.)
- C. Require a proficiency exam in 306, in lieu of a final exam, testing the student's knowledge of mechanics. Make credit for 306 dependent

on his passing the exam with a fairly high grade (say, "B" or better). Students who have placed out of 306 and transfer students would also be obliged to pass the test. Each student might be allowed several chances to take it. This requirement would ensure that students leaving Freshman English have at least mastered certain fundamentals of grammar and mechanics. (See Professor Rebhorn's proposal accompanying FEPC Minutes for March & April 1977.)

- D. Reduce by one the number of themes required in 306, 307, and 308. (See memo from Professor Moldenhauer accompanying FEPC Minutes for 10/8/79.)
- E. In Spring of 1976, the FEPC's Subcommittee on Evaluation, chaired by Professor Carver, conducted evaluations of 23 sections of Freshman English involving 487 students. Each student was given pre- and post-semester grammar, usage, and spelling tests identical to the screening tests administered by the Journalism Department; each was also given a pre- and post-semester essay test. The average score on the pre-grammar/usage/spelling test was 65; on the post-test, 67. (The Journalism School sets passing at 70, and nearly 30% of their students initially flunk it--i.e., are not allowed to go on to take the basic sophomore course in journalism. Well over 50% of our freshmen flunked.) As for the essays, each was read by at least 3 people who assigned a grade of A through F. The average grade on the pre-test was C+; on the post-test, C-. The subcommittee pointed out several factors that may well have skewed the accuracy of these results. (For their complete report, see FEPC Minutes for 11/30/76.)
- F. Professors Kinneavy and Witte, along with A.I. Tom Cameron, are conducting another major evaluation of the Freshman Composition program which they expect to complete by mid-March 1980. This study seeks to determine whether the 306 regular and 306 lab courses are achieving their goals. The two key elements of the lab course, tutorial instruction and Christensen-based material, are being compared with the corresponding elements of regular 306, traditional classroom instruction and Kinneavy-based material. Five hundred students (20 sections) have completed pre and post standardized reading and writing tests and two pre and post writing samples. (See FEPC Minutes for 10/16/78.)
- G. For a one-page listing of other such Freshman Composition evaluations at U.T., see Professor Kinneavy's compilation of 1/31/80, "A Brief Survey of Recent Attempts to Evaluate UT-Composition Materials and Programs Empirically." (Filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79.)
- H. On December 18, 1976 Professor Sledd proposed to the FEPC that we consider adopting a program devised by Professor Mina Shaughnessy at CUNY. There, comp teachers are assigned (and paid) to take certain big lower-division courses, especially courses which have high failure rates, so as to get a direct understanding of the kinds and amounts of reading and writing that lower-division students really have to do. Apparently both sets of courses profit from the program. (See FEPC Minutes for 5/3/77 with accompanying course proposals.)
- I. In October 1979, a new first-semester Freshman English course, "Composition and Humanities," was proposed to the FEPC by Professors Sutherland, Carver, Rossman, and Reed. "In this course," their proposal reads,

"students will learn to write not by focusing on formal rhetorical or logical concerns but by reading about complex, significant works drawn from literature, history, philosophy as well as from the visual arts." This course would have four units: "Defining a Self"; "Human Beings in Society"; "Discovering a Philosophy"; and "Love and Death." (See FEPC Minutes for 10/23/79 and 10/31/79, plus accompanying proposal.)

V. Administration

- A. Abolish undergraduate sections (other than Honors sections) that enroll fewer than 15 students. Cancel after pre-registration any undergraduate section, except freshman, with fewer than 10. (See T.A. Study Committee Report of 4/25/77 filed with FEPC Minutes for 4/26/77.)
- B. Freeze admissions at 45,000 and roll back admissions in 1981 to March (instead of August). If more than 6,000 students request admission, take the better students (making provision for minorities). This will have the effect of raising admission standards without legally doing so. (See Professor Kinneavy's memo, "Some Suggestions to the Department, etc.," filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79.)
- C. Since this is the first year in which the Teaching Load Credits (TLC) formula is being massively applied, and since the Coordinating Board is open to suggestions (we convinced them this year that they should fund some remedial courses in college work), we should examine its feasibility carefully and make recommendations. Here are two:
 - (1) Certain types of research assignments are not covered by the formula--indeed, the TLC formula could have the effect of upgrading community college instruction and downgrading university instruction to meet the level (for all) of the four-year college. Therefore: differentiate by type of institution.
 - (2) Because of the massive conferences involved, count a composition course as a para-tutorial course. This would have two effects: (a) give it a 4.5 count in TLCredits; (b) change the funding formula for composition courses.

(See Professor Kinneavy's memo, "Some Suggestions to the Department, etc.," filed with FEPC Minutes for 10/10/79.)

VI. Exemption

- A. Discontinue use of the ECT as the placement test for 306 and substitute for it scores on the SAT. The SAT is already required for admission to UT anyway, whereas the ECT is not. And because roughly 1,000 students (one-fifth of those enrolling in Freshman Composition) fail to submit ECT scores before arriving here for Fall Registration and thus must take the ECT at that time, they create major administrative (scheduling) problems for the department.

An alternative solution: set a deadline for submission of ECT scores, and require those students who miss the deadline to defer enrollment in

the Freshman English sequence until the Spring Semester. (See FEPC Minutes for 9/20/77, plus accompanying conference notes, and FEPC Minutes for 9/30/77.)

- B. Re-examine the exemption policy for E307-308. As of 1976-77, partly for financial reasons, only about 30 students tried the exemption exam each semester. Perhaps the administration can find a way of financing this exam. (See "Position Paper" of T.A. Study Committee, chaired by Professors Sutherland & Kruppa, Spring 1977.)
- C. Raise entrance requirements. Specifically, make a 600 Verbal score an admission requirement. Approximately two-thirds of each freshman class now score below 550 on the ECT and thus are obliged to take 306. Even worse, about 83% of those students taking the ECT on campus during the summer or fall score below 550. (See FEPC Minutes for 10/23/78, 2/14/79, 10/30/78, & 9/19/79.)

VII. Degree Requirements

- A. "One solution to the present situation in Freshman English would be to drop the uniform requirement for the course. . . . This would not mean an end to freshman composition, as evidence from schools where the requirement has been dropped indicates that many students enroll in the courses because they feel they need them. But without the requirement, the numbers would probably drop to a more manageable level, and the general motivation level of the students would probably be much higher." (Excerpt from George Nash, "Who's Minding Freshman English at U.T. Austin" [College English, October 1976].)
- B. In spring 1971, several English Department faculty presented proposals for the lower-division English requirement, which at the time included 6 hours of composition and 6 hours of sophomore literature. These proposals, each accompanied by a list of pros and cons, included:
 - (1) zero-course option (no required courses in English)
 - (2) 6-hour option (with several possibilities: 2 semesters of comp; 1 semester of comp, 1 of literature; 2 semesters of comp/literature combined)
 - (3) 7-hour option (4 hours of Rhetoric & Comp, 3 hours of 314K)
 - (4) 6/3 option (6 hours of comp, 3 hours of literature)
 - (5) 3/6 option (3 hours of comp, 6 hours of literature)
 - (6) 9-hour combination option (3 hours of 306, 3 hours of 307, 3 hours of 314K)
 - (7) 3/3/3 option (3 hours of comp, 3 hours of literature, 3 hours of comparative literature of Sophomore English)
 - (8) 9-hour option with advanced composition (3 hours of Freshman Composition, 3 hours of literature, 3 hours of advanced comp deferred until junior year)
 - (9) 3/6/3 option (3 hours of Freshman Composition, 6 hours of literature, 3 hours of upper-division composition)

Proposal #6, modified to include 308 as an alternative to 307, was adopted by the General Faculty in 1973.