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THE UNIVERSITY'S "COMPOSITION PROBLEM":
REPRESENTATIONS, SOLUTIONS, STRATEGIES

S. Witte's Fourth Working Draft

Since the announcement of the University's decision to suspend, beginning in the Fall of 1985, English 346K, a large number of news stories and opinion pieces have appeared in *The Daily Texan* and other newspapers. If these stories suggest anything at all, it is that the "composition problem," to use former English Department Chairman Joseph Moldenhauer's term, is indeed more real than imagined, threatening the very core of the University's educational mission and the basis of its integrity as a state-supported institution dedicated to developing and transferring both declarative and procedural knowledge. Yet regardless of the reality and gravity of the "problem" for students, faculty, and administrators, the opinions and events depicted in recent issues of *The Texan* rather clearly indicate that the "problem" remains at best an ill-defined one and that the recently implemented solution looms large as an ill-considered one. Collectively, the pieces which have appeared in *The Texan* suggest that the nature of the "problem" is elusive and that it lends itself to multiple and sometimes contradictory representations. The writers of the various pieces and the contributors to the administrative decision to cancel English 346K appear to have either represented to themselves very different problems or to have represented to themselves a plethora of subsidiary problems, the relationships among which are difficult to understand and easy to misunderstand.

The present document proposes an ameliorative and comprehensive solution to the "composition problem." The document is predicated on three assumptions: (1) that institutional communities and individual members of them cannot solve problems that they are unable to represent adequately to themselves, (2) that misrepresented or poorly represented problems lead to unworkable or ill-conceived solutions, and (3) that conscientious and well intentioned professional educators and administrators will in good faith take action to solve serious problems that are adequately represented to them. Based on these three assumptions, the present document contains three major sections. The first defines conceptually and operationally the "composition problem" that the University must solve. The second identifies and evaluates, in light of the problem representation articulated in the first section, several possible solutions to the "problem." The third section argues on theoretical and pragmatic grounds for the implementation of the only comprehensive solution possible and suggests strategies for its implementation.

Section I

THE "COMPOSITION PROBLEM"

The assumptions implied, the positions articulated, and the events depicted in recent issues of *The Daily Texan* provide an adequate starting point for defining the nature of the "composition problem," even though the pieces recently printed in typically represent the "problem" divorced from its moorings in a larger situational context.

RECENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "PROBLEM" AND CRITIQUES OF THEM

Since the middle of February, a number of different and sometimes conflicting representations of the "composition problem" in general and the "English 346K problem" in particular have been published. Although there is some overlap among the categories, these representations fall fairly well into three groups. The first group includes those representations that depict the problem as one of, primarily, logistics. The second category includes representations that see the problem as one of, primarily, competing self-interests. The third class of representations contains those that depict the problem as involving philosophical disagreements over matters of curriculum and the nature of English departments. In the paragraphs that follow, each of these classes of representations is outlined and, in turn, critiqued.

E346K AS A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM. This representation of the problem is best seen in Sutherland's statements to the press and in his February 15 letter to the English faculty. Some of Sutherland's major points are reiterated in Rebhorn's February 25 column in *The Texan*, a statement that was apparently signed by 13 other members of the English faculty.

Sutherland (a): Approximately "7,500" students would enroll in E346K during the 1985-1986 academic year (Feb. 15 letter to the English faculty). "There is no way we can be assured of enough qualified staff to teach this course in our expanding university" (Feb. 15 letter). "If the course were fully implemented, UT would have to hire about 90 lecturers, or 40 more than currently employed, to handle the student load" (*Austin American-Statesman* story).

Sutherland (b): "The concept of the course ... has been undermined by the logistics of registration" (Feb. 15 letter). "'Instead of registering for the variant that was appropriate for their major, many students registered for the variant appropriate to their schedule'" (*Austin American-Statesman* story).

Sutherland (c): E346K is "a course whose

standards we do not understand or are not willing to enforce" (Feb. 15 letter).

Sutherland (d): "We were given to understand when the Department approved the course in 1978 that the new requirement would call for less staff than the old" (Feb. 15 letter).

Rebhorn (a): "The English department simply does not have personnel qualified to teach writing courses in all the different disciplines studied here at the University, and it is highly unlikely that it could ever assemble such a staff" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Rebhorn (b): E346K is "a logistical nightmare. Students sign up for sections of the course to suit their schedules rather than their fields of study, so that a humanities variant of the course, for example, may well be filled with majors in business, the natural sciences and the social sciences" (The Texan, Feb 25.)

CRITIQUE OF REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "PROBLEM" AS A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM. The logistical representation of the problem centers on, primarily, five concerns--the number of students the course would have to serve, the number of teachers required to teach the courses, the qualifications of the teachers, registration practices, and grading standards.

1. The number of students. The estimated 7,500 students that would enroll in E346K during 1985-1986 is just that, an estimate. The actual number may be smaller or larger; one cannot tell because no bases for the estimate have ever been made public and because enrollment patterns have not been established. In any event, the estimated 7,500 students translates into 300 sections of E346K, at 25 students per section, for 1985-1986.

If 7,500 is a fairly accurate estimate, the number is quite large to be sure. And it is a frightening number for the English Department, as it would be for any department on campus. However, on at least three occasions, Sutherland was advised that exemption procedures should be implemented in order to make the course workable. Two of the documents coming out of the *ad hoc* committees set up by Associate Dean Weinstock over two years ago made those recommendations. Sutherland read those documents for he has discussed them with several faculty members; and he has stated his unwillingness to implement their recommendations. As late as October of 1984, Ruszkiewicz, Director of Freshman English, met with Sutherland and informed him of the necessity of implementing exemption procedures. The E346K Committee, headed by Malof, did take up the issue of exemptions, but not until November of 1984, three years later than the Department should have taken up the matter. Even though under existing rules credit for E346K cannot be transferred in if the credit is not earned in upperdivision courses, the existing rules do not preclude developing exemption procedures. The development and im-

plementation of adequate exemption procedures could very well have eliminated the E346K requirement for at least 20%--and the percentage could actually be larger--of the projected 7,500 students. That is to say, 1,500 students (the equivalent 60 sections of E346K) could have been exempted for 1985-1986.

2. The Number of Lecturers. According to Sutherland, 40 additional lecturers would have to be hired for 1985-1986 to staff the 300 E346K sections for the estimated 7,500 students. (With an adequate exemption policy and an adequate exemption procedure, the projected number of sections would have been 240.) The projected 300 sections could have been distributed over the academic year in the following way: 135 sections in each of the two regular semesters and 15 sections in each of the two summer sessions. (Note that with an adequate exemption program, the distribution could have been as follows: 105 in each of the regular semesters and 15 in each of the summer sessions.)

To understand the implications of these numbers for staffing, they need to be placed in the context of previous composition course offerings in the Department, before the new composition sequence or requirement went into effect. That would be Fall, 1983; enrollment figures, and the corresponding figures for the number of lecturers for 1984-1985, are largely irrelevant because the current academic year is a transition year--and was all along conceived of as such--between the old requirement and the new requirement. That is to say, the current academic year is an anomaly.

That the current year is, in fact, anomalous with respect to the amount of composition taught in the English Department becomes obvious if one compares the number of sections taught in Fall, 1984, with the number of sections taught in Fall, 1983, the last Fall semester under the old requirement. In Fall, 1984, the Department taught, according to its own summaries, 176 sections of composition, 82 fewer than it taught in Fall, 1983. In terms of staff, this comparison means that the Department needed approximately 20 fewer FTE's to staff its writing courses in the Fall of 1984 than it needed in the Fall of 1983.

Thus for the purpose of determining major changes in staffing needs of the Department, the projections for 1985-1986 need to be compared to the number of sections of composition the Department taught in 1983-1984. In the Fall of 1983, the Department taught, again according to summaries prepared by the English Department, 258 sections of courses for which students received composition credit under the old requirement. Included among these 258 sections are E306-equivalent courses (121 sections), English 603A (10 sections), E307 (35 sections), E 308 (35 sections), E310 (22 sections), E317 (30 sections), E325M (5 sections). Now if we assume that the total number of E306-equivalent sections and E603A sections does not increase over the Fall, 1983, level--and there is no reason to expect that it would--and that E325M remains at its current level of two sections per semester, we can see that 125 sections of composition offered

under the old requirement (i.e., all sections of E307, E308, E310, and E317) would have no longer been taught during the Fall of 1985; and if we assume that no exemption procedures for E346K could have been implemented, then it becomes apparent that the Department would have had to offer and staff 10 more sections of composition during each of the two regular semesters of 1985-1986 (i.e., 135 sections minus the 125 sections no longer taught under the new program) than it offered during the regular semesters of 1983-1984. (With adequate placement procedures, 20 fewer sections of composition would have had to be offered during each of the regular semesters of 1985-1986 than were taught during the two regular semesters of 1983-1984.)

With only 10 additional sections of composition needed during each regular semester of 1985-1986, the equivalent of 2 1/2 additional lecturers would have had to be hired to staff them, not the 40 Sutherland claims. And it should be pointed out that even if Sutherland's claim were based on hirings above the anomalous 1984-1984 year, his number of projected hirings is inflated by a factor of 2. With adequate exemption procedures, the number of lecturers would have been reduced below the 1983-1984 level by a minimum of 6.

3. The Qualifications of E346K Teachers. Both Sutherland and Rebhorn state that the Department neither has nor can acquire, to quote Rebhorn, "the personnel qualified to teach writing courses in all the different disciplines studied here at the University." This claim, of course, has logistical and staffing implications so it is treated here; but its roots lie in a philosophical argument over the nature of English departments and their curricula, arguments that are addressed in a subsequent section. For the present, it is sufficient to point to number of facts. First, it was never assumed that E346K would attempt to teach writing "in all the different disciplines"; the limited number of variants indicates that. These variants were set up to address common denominators across comparable disciplines, although, it must be admitted, more than 6 variants of E346K may eventually have to be created. Second, for over 40 years persons with traditional Ph.D.'s in literature have been teaching technical, scientific, and business writing. The 30 sections of E317 offered in the Fall of 1983 strongly suggests a measure of success in those areas in the English department, as does the growth--in English departments throughout the country--of programs in these fields of writing. It is, of course, true that one needs to make some effort to understand the written discourse of different disciplines and to develop an appreciation for the knowledge paradigms and analytic methods of other disciplines to teach writing in those areas successfully. The question is thus primarily one of whether English faculty want to prepare themselves to do so. Sutherland's and Rebhorn's statements suggest that at least some of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the English Department do not. There is, however, no evidence that the challenge of teaching E346K is not welcomed by the Department's current lecturers, additional lecturers the Department might have to hire, all tenured and tenure-track faculty now in

the Department, or tenured and tenure-track faculty the Department could hire in the future.

It needs also to be pointed out in this connection that there is no evidence that recruitment or hiring of regular faculty in the English department over the past two years has done more than pay lip-service to the specialized training that Sutherland and Rebhorn claim is necessary for teaching E346K. And it needs to be pointed out that the Department has expended very little energy in finding out what new understandings of written discourse would be required for the Department faculty to teach E346K courses successfully. No training of faculty has occurred in the Department; the syllabi that were developed three years ago for the E346K variants have not been given to the teaching faculty, have not been used by them, and have not been revised.

4. Registration Practices. The "logistical nightmare" to which Rebhorn refers and Sutherland alludes was actually created by the English Department, not the students who enrolled in E346K. In the Spring of 1985--the current semester--approximately 21% of the UT undergraduate population is enrolled in either the College of Fine Arts or the College of Liberal Arts. However, 39% of the 89 available E346K sections are designated "Arts and Humanities" sections. Furthermore, 27% of the undergraduate population is currently enrolled in the College of Business; but the English Department has never offered the legislated E346K "business" variant. In addition, of all undergraduates, 41% are enrolled in science and engineering programs, but only 19% of the current E346K sections are designated for those students. Clearly, there exists a disjunction between the number and types of E346K sections offered this semester and the needs of the undergraduate population the course was set up to serve. Is it any wonder that Rebhorn and others find in their "Arts and Humanities" sections of E346K students "with majors in business, the natural sciences and the social sciences"? Those students did not enroll according to their majors for the simple reason that the English department did not offer the E346K sections that would allow those students to do so.

5. E346K Standards. Sutherland's statement about E346K standards is quite ambiguous: "...standards we do not understand or are not willing to enforce." If the standards are "not understood," it is because they have never been explored by the Department and hence never articulated to the faculty. If the department is "not willing to enforce" standards that do exist, the fault lies with the administration--or lack thereof--of the English E346K sections. To administer any successful composition program is to, if not articulate standards a priori, to develop them. The administration of E346K in the Department allowed for neither.

E346K AS A PROBLEM OF COMPETING SELF-INTERESTS. This representation of the problem takes various forms, depending on the particular self-interest being served, charged, or defended.

"Composition Problem," p. 7

Statements from Carver, Gribben, Kinneavy, Skaggs, Sutherland, and undergraduate students illustrate this representation of the problem.

Carver (a): "... if the course [E346K] uses one of his [Kinneavy's] textbooks, so much the better" (The Texan, Feb. 25)

Carver (b): "... I direct the Humanities Program under whose auspices it [HMN303/E306] is taught." "I believe this course [HMN303/E306] ... should become a model for freshman English. Kinneavy claims that a 'small segment of entering freshmen take E 303 instead of E 306.' This semester the 'small segment' is 26 percent" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Carver (c): "But rhetoricians, it seems, from the days of Socrates on down have not been much concerned with truth" (The Texan, Feb. 25). (In context, the statement invites the inference that Kinneavy is a liar.)

Gribben (a): "...most of our regular faculty is enormously relieved that we have the opportunity to reassess the premises of 346K" (Austin American-Statesman story).

Gribben (b): "Our rhetoric and composition faculty members have a financial interest in 346K because their potentially lucrative textbooks might be adopted on a mass scale" (The Texan, Feb. 22).

Gribben (c): "There is self-interest everywhere with 346K, even in my case--as English graduate studies chair, I want to see my department cease the public bickering ... and regain its momentum toward overtaking the 10 top-ranked departments in the nation" (The Texan, Feb. 22).

Kinneavy (a): "... there is a serious effort on the part of a small but influential group to do away with the essential nature of the course [i.e., E346K] and either to get rid of the course entirely or substitute for it a course about literature" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Kinneavy (b): "The alleged objections to the course actually mask some real objections to it. The suspension of the course [i.e., E346K] really achieves the following objectives:

*It gets rid of the lecturers and the 'lecturer problem' immediately;

*It takes away from some English teachers what

they view as the distasteful job of working in business and technical writing;

*It bolsters enrollment in the literature courses;

*It severely de-emphasizes composition in the Department of English" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Skaggs (a): "There is little doubt that the primary aim underlying the decision to axe E 346K is two-fold: first, to dismiss a large group of faculty, the lecturers, who, because of their willingness to teach despite adverse circumstances, pose some vague sort of threat to the overpaid, underworked senior faculty; second, to 'discipline' a rapidly growing composition-rhetoric program that, because of its popularity and effectiveness, again poses a threat, possibly real this time, to the unpopular established literature domination of the department" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Skaggs (b): "From the comfort of his [i.e., Gribben's] tenure in the Ivory Tower, he [i.e., Gribben] has the gall to attack colleagues who are trying to continue their careers in higher education, despite the continuous undermining of their efforts by their own colleagues, and then he pretends that such an attack is really a service to the University" (The Texan, Feb. 26).

Students: As of this writing, every one of the student-authored letters appearing in The Texan argue for the reinstatement of E346K, as do the editorials written by The Texan editor, primarily because students seem to believe that they need the kind of instruction offered by E346K.

Sutherland: "Most of us had looked for a new departmental structure next year; indeed, the Dean had recommended a Division of Composition which would have separated E.346K and the temporary staff from the more traditional courses and the regular staff. That new structure would have solved the internal strains within the department" (Feb. 15 letter).

CRITIQUE OF REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "PROBLEM" AS A PROBLEM OF COMPETING SELF-INTERESTS. Some of the above quotations, of course, display tactics that can do nothing but embarrass the true professional. Like the City Collesium wrestler who, lacking the skills necessary to pin an opponent to the mat, Carver and Gribben, lacking all semblance of skill in dialectic, resort to inuendo, slander, and personal insult, none of which has any basis in fact, to support their cases. These displays should be dismissed, even condemned.

[Add text here.]

E346K AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM.

Rebhorn (a): E346K is "a course too narrowly conceived and technocratic and which should not properly be considered the exclusive property of the English department" (*The Texan*, Feb. 25).

Rebhorn (b): "None [of the E346K variants] is truly discipline-specific. Nor could they be, since a course aimed at students in chemistry, physics, biology and so on, for instance, could not possibly allow the students in one of those disciplines to write in its specific language. Instead, such a course, lacking in real content, could at best offer students training in general, belle-lettristic [sic] writing about (not in) science, a laudable goal perhaps, but certainly not what the course was intended to be" (*The Texan*, Feb. 25).

[Add other quotations here.]

CRITIQUE OF REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "PROBLEM" AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM.

[Add text here.]

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT ON REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "PROBLEM"

[May have to change first paragraph.]

Obvious misrepresentations or omissions of relevant facts can account for some of the differences in the ways the "composition problem" in general and the English 346K problem in particular have been represented. But not completely. Some of the differences can be explained only with reference to differing perceptions of and ideas about the larger situational context in which the course was to have existed. This context has greatly influenced extant representations of the "problem" and contributed mightily to some misrepresentations of it.

Reflective of the influence of the situational context is the unfortunate fact that until the Faculty Senate meeting of March 4, *The Daily Texan* has provided the only forum for the free exchange of ideas about the suspension of English 346K, and that only after the suspension was a fait accompli. Deans of most Colleges were apparently not consulted; neither were department heads nor students consulted. Certainly, the faculty of the English Department was neither consulted, given the opportunity to discuss the suspension in advance of its announcement, nor afforded the opportunity to propose alternative solutions to the "problem." In fact, some English Department faculty learned of the decision by talking with colleagues in other Colleges who had attended meetings in their own departments on the effects of the

suspension, but most learned of the decision by reading an account in *The Texan*. Neither was the Executive Committee of the English Department consulted prior to the decision, although one member of the Executive Committee pleaded, without success, for the passage of a motion to approve Chairman Sutherland's handling of the matter. It is also interesting to note that a subsequent scheduled meeting of the Department's Executive Committee in which the suspension could have been discussed was cancelled. And perhaps most important, the University's Faculty Senate/University Council (check on this) meeting scheduled for the week during which the announcement was made through the press was also cancelled, even though the decision to suspend E346K ignored several years of work by the Vick Committee and committees in the English Department, work that led to the English 346K requirement in the first place.

What this chain of recent events suggests is that the principles by which professional bureaucracies, such as universities, have traditionally operated have now ceased to operate at the University of Texas. A major and far-reaching curricular decision (such decisions have long been the responsibility of the professoriate) was made by administrators. That such a decision-making procedure represents a departure from tradition is one implication of English Department Chairman Sutherland's February 15 letter offering an apology and an excuse for not informing the English faculty sooner of the *fait accompli*. What reason Sutherland had for not seeking the support of at least the Department's elected Executive Committee until the solution had already been decided remains, of course, uncertain. However, what is certain is that Sutherland--again without consulting either the faculty or the Executive Committee he chairs--proposed the solution to higher-level administrators.

At the heart of the issues raised by not only the recent administrative solution to the "composition problem" but also the means by which that solution was decided on is the denial of two related principles fundamental to the concept of a university, particularly "a university of the first class." The first of these principles is the principle of faculty expertise. This principle underlies President Flawn's attempts to establish endowed chairs to attract the best available faculty in the world. It is also the principle that informs, ideally, committee structures at the departmental, college, and university levels. And it is the principle by which tenure and promotion presumably are decided. The second is the principle of adjustment, whereby the expertise of the faculty is called upon to accommodate curriculum and instruction to the demands of a larger and ever-changing social and cultural context. It is this second principle that has led to diversity in degree programs (e.g., B.S. degrees in nursing and computer science) and fields of study (e.g., nuclear fusion). It is also this second principle that has led to changes in the structure and goals of colleges (e.g., the splitting of the old College of Arts and Sciences into the College of Natural Science and the College of Liberal Arts) and departments (e.g., the shift in focus from behavioral to cognitive psy-

chology).

In the carefully deliberative and extended debate that led to the adoption of the Vick Committee recommendations and those of the English Department, both of these principles operated, more or less. (There were actually some obstructions to the operation of these principles; these are detailed below.) Recognizing the importance of the principle of expertise, the Vick Committee consistently solicited input from faculty in various departments and colleges on campus, and it conscientiously tried to accommodate that input in its recommendations. If "departmental views" represented to the Vick Committee were in some cases skewed or biased, that is probably the responsibility of particular departmental representatives or chairpersons. But in any case, there is no reason to believe that either the Vick Committee or the English Department Committee deliberately eschewed faculty expertise in either their attempts to represent the needs of students in various disciplines to develop writing skills or in their recommendations for changing existing degree requirements to meet those needs. (It is, of course, possible to argue that none of the committees allowed for enough formal instruction in writing.)

In contrast, neither of these two principles is in any way evidenced in the administrative decision to suspend English 346K. In fact, the suspension ignores--indeed makes light of--the enormous, deliberative efforts of countless faculty members over a period of several years. Extrapolated beyond the suspension of English 346K itself, the administrative decision also makes a mockery of the concepts of faculty expertise, of endowed chairs, of the relationships of the university to its public constituency, and--indeed--of the university itself. Any university, any administrator, any faculty member that denies, either tacitly or deliberately, the free and open operation of these two principles undermines the concept of a university.

If the recent administrative decision to suspend English 346K demonstrates a lack of respect for the principles of expertise and adjustment so vital to the idea and the vitality of a university, administrative impediments to the implementation of the new composition program demonstrate outright contempt for them. These impediments, which are critical components of the situational context that informs the various pieces that have appeared in *The Texan*, have been either erected, sanctioned, or tacitly agreed to at a number of administrative levels. As many as five years ago Joseph Moldenhauer, then English Department Chairman, declared the "composition problem" to be a "logistical problem"; and in the first departmental meeting he called to consider the "composition problem," he ruled Professors Sledd and Witte out of order for raising "educational questions." Subsequent to that meeting, various members of the English Department were asked to meet privately with either Dean King or Associate Dean Weinstock on the matter of the "composition problem." Several advised that substantive solutions were not likely, given the existing structure and faculty makeup of the English Depart-

ment; and these people were led to believe that that structure would be altered in some way such that the "composition problem" could be addressed thoroughly and substantively. At a later date, members of the Department's Rhetoric Interest Group were invited to meet with Associate Dean Weinstock. During that meeting Weinstock informed the group of 8 or 10 faculty members that he had spoken with Stephen Monte and xxxx Tollo and could assure the group seated before him that President Flawn had committed "substantial" funds for developing courses in the writing of different disciplines, for training people to teach the writing of different disciplines, and for hiring new tenured faculty members to administer the complex program that was clearly evolving through deliberations both within the English Department Committee and within the Vick Committee. Those attending such meetings with Weinstock had no reason to believe that he was not speaking for Dean King or that, in speaking for Dean King, was not representing the intentions and commitments of the upper administration. In addition, on several occasions, different faculty advised both King and Weinstock that implementing a multidisciplinary writing program would expose the program to questions about its integrity, unless tenured and tenurable faculty were hired to teach in it, unless a strong supportive graduate programs were maintained, and unless equally supportive programs in basic research were implemented.

Reflecting the tenor/climate of such meetings, several members of the Rhetoric Interest Group, as well as other members of the Department, committed themselves to the idea of conceptualizing a workable alternative to the old sequence of English 306, 307 and 308, 310, and 317. Two outcomes of this informal conceptualization were the ideas of writing in particular disciplines and of spreading writing instruction over the all the years of undergraduate study rather than locating instruction in principally the first and second years. These ideas were carried to various committees and subsequently became part of the new composition program. But the funds "promised" for training faculty to teach the writing of different disciplines and for hiring composition experts to assist in administering the new program were never made available. Neither was a new structure for administering the new program ever implemented, although Sutherland's letter of February 15 indicates that Dean King had given some thought to a new Division of Composition, the details of which have never been made available to the English faculty or to faculty in other disciplines.

Thus another crucial part of the situational context out of which the letters to *The Texan* grew is the inaction of the University's administration at critical junctures in the process of implementing English 346K and its failure to provide the necessary monetary support for administering and developing the course.

As a consequence of such situational constraints and confusions, implementing the new course fell to the English Department. Thus in the fall of 1983, the Department not only acquired

a new Chairman but it also acquired a new "composition problem" that, for a variety of reasons, it was not prepared to handle. The English Department's dual and simultaneous acquisition in the Fall of 1983 has not been a happy one for those who support English 346K, the teaching of writing, or the study of nonfiction, nonbelletristic writing. Neither has it been a happy one for those who support the educational premises on which the new composition requirement is based. Nor has it been a happy one for those who support the theoretical framework that the new requirement instantiates.

Given the Department's current leadership, the dual acquisition has made uneasy bedfellows out of a program whose conceptualization resulted from the divergent, or inductive, thinking that characterizes the cross-disciplinary work of the Vick Committee and the English Department Committee, on the one hand, and a man whose own thinking can best be characterized as convergent, or deductive, on the other hand. And his is a rigidly inflexible way of thinking about complex problems, such that the problems become defined exclusively in terms of a preexistent and unchanging view of the world. Accordingly, if a problem appears that admits no solution within the framework of the preexisting world view, the problem is either redefined until it matches the pre-existent world view or recreated through direct action until it lends itself to solution by invoking the old paradigm. Perhaps more important, and even more disastrous for English 346K, Sutherland has surrounded himself with a group of confidants who not only share his views of education and English departments, but also work to subvert and discredit competing world views.

An examination of Sutherland's actions with respect to the new composition program reveals systematic attempts to undermine both the new program and any support it might have had in the English Department and, more importantly, to undermine the teaching of writing generally in the Department. A few examples will illustrate this important aspect of the situational context out of which letters that appeared in *The Texan* grew. [Add text here.]

Notes: refusal to give support necessary for implementation
refusal to consult resident expertise
revision of graduate program in rhetoric
appointment of Gribben as GSC chair
appointment of Lesser as graduate advisor
etc.

The recent chain of events--together with the attendant issues and questions regarding the power of administrators to, in effect, redecide curricular matters that were previously agreed to by faculty at departmental, college, and university levels--are reflections of the situational context that underlies most of the opinion pieces that have appeared in *The Texan*. But this context colors the pieces in different ways, for the different writers have variously responded to the situational context according to their own personal views of the efficacy and philosophical integrity of English 346K. [Add text here.]

This recapitulation of events is important to an understanding of several of the opinions recently expressed in the pages of *The Texan*, for it helps establish the context which necessitated dealing with a problem in a way ill-suited to solving it. To many--to both English and non-English faculty, to both tenure-track and nontenure-track English faculty, to both letter writers and non-writers, to both student and non-student--it appeared that certain administrators--including Chairman Sutherland of the English Department--either considered the suspension of English 346K to be a matter of no great consequence or acted on the assumption that neither faculty nor students could offer anything useful to the decision-making process. The decision to suspend English 346K is both a matter of great consequence for students and a decision which could have benefitted from student and faculty input. If faculty and students had been allowed to contribute to the decision to suspend English 346K, the energies that the likes of Skaggs (*The Texan*, Feb. 20), Gribben (*The Texan*, Feb. 22) and Carver (*The Texan*, Feb. 25) put into counter-productive invective and personal attack might have been more usefully and productively channelled. Surely, administrators, like the rest of us mortals, see the benefits of hindsight.

NOTES TOWARD AN ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF THE "PROBLEM"

[Add text here.]

Section II

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE "PROBLEM"

[Add text here.]

Section III

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO THE "PROBLEM"

[Add text here.]