

Selling Points for Division of Writing Proposal

1. The proposal for a division of writing within the English department is a simple and workable plan that would meet the needs of the students and of other colleges, and it would do so without temporary faculty and with no additional money.

2. The program proposed by the writing division should significantly ease the tension between the literature and composition faculty in the department because all courses would be elective, and students could have a variety of courses to choose from. Literature faculty who want to teach writing would be able to do so, and those who want to teach literature-based writing courses could do so in the Plan II freshman courses or in a limited number of humanities-based sections of 306 that students could elect. This would allow every faculty member to teach writing as he or she sees fit. Moreover, under the plan freshman English would be retained in the department and help to fund upper division courses, but those faculty whose professional interest is primarily working in literature would be free to pursue their specialties without having to become involved in the writing program.

Although the faculty of the writing division would still retain their academic base in the English department and decisions about tenure, promotion, and salary would have to be negotiated in the way that they are in the Division of American Studies, the division would be autonomous in matters of staffing and curriculum and could be allotted budget by the dean according

to its needs. Such an arrangement would defuse the current power struggle.

3. The plan will improve the quality of writing courses because most of the lower division courses will be taught by graduate students who are required to have training in the teaching of writing and who are supervised, and the upper division courses will be taught by faculty who are especially committed to the teaching of writing and have worked to develop high quality courses.

4. The plan offers all segments of the University a set of integrated, practical writing courses that will meet students' needs at all levels. A rhetorically-based 306 course, taught mainly by well-trained and supervised graduate students, forms the base of the program. A limited number of sophomore level courses allow students who have placed out of 306 to take a writing course early in their college careers and a limited number of sections of 346, taught by regular faculty, allows motivated junior and senior students to take writing in their specific fields. Thus the Division of Writing provides a strong writing program that addresses the concerns about students' writing that have been expressed by the faculty senate and the administration. And it should be emphasized that although the Substantial Writing Component courses certainly support and supplement a strong university writing program, they are not courses in which students are taught to write; they are only courses in which students have a chance to write.

5. Since all courses will be electives, the director of writing can limit the number of writing courses to those that he or she

can staff with graduate students and faculty. Since students can take other English courses to meet the English requirement, those who opt for writing courses are likely to be the motivated and better prepared students, particularly at the freshman level, who will not drop out.

6. The kind of 306 we propose to offer--a rhetorically-based, expository writing course that emphasizes writing for different audiences and different purposes and requires students to develop research skills--is the kind of beginning writing course that helps students to develop the critical thinking and clear writing skills they need to succeed in college. This kind of course is now the norm for most major universities in the nation. The course at U.T., developed by composition specialists and evaluated in several studies, is considered the model freshman course in the nation right now.

7. The kind of writing program we propose will also meet the demands of a business and technological community who expects students who graduate from the University to have good communication and thinking abilities, and it will satisfy those taxpayers and legislators who expect University graduates to be able to write well in a variety of situations.

8. The freshman and sophomore writing courses within the Division of Writing can be taught by graduate students, students whose training in this program will definitely enhance their job opportunities on graduation.

9. The graduate program in rhetoric depends on the department's having a strong lower-division writing program in which graduate

students can teach. That's crucial for two reasons: 1) to provide support for our graduate students; 2) to give graduate students in rhetoric opportunities to use and evaluate what they are learning in their graduate courses and provide those who wish to do research in composition a laboratory for their work.

10. The program of writing courses proposed would also support the work of the graduate faculty in rhetoric and composition, providing them with the opportunities to develop and test new knowledge in the field.

11. Right now the graduate rhetoric program at Texas is the best known and strongest in the country. If we lose our lower-division writing courses and the opportunity to use our professional expertise in the teaching of writing to develop and support those courses, our stature will quickly decline. We will be unable to attract distinguished faculty in the field or to retain the faculty we now have. If the rhetoric and composition group lose control of the writing program in our department, the department will soon lose one of the programs that gives it national and international stature.