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SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE E 346K COMMITTEE

Before endorsing these recommendations, the members of the department ought to give serious consideration to some of the problems which the report raises. Some of the issues relate to the interests of the students, some to the concerns of the faculty, and some to the administration of the courses recommended.

ABSTRACT

In summary form these are the major points which will be considered in detail below:

1. The report dismisses 4000 freshmen to the extension division. There is no quality control over the course. It also costs three times as much.
2. The new sophomore offerings do not meet the needs and interests of 61% of the undergraduate population of the university--those interested in technical and business areas.
3. The program penalizes our graduate students who need to teach freshman English and sophomore literature to get jobs.
4. The program establishes a large group of temporary teachers for freshman English--it farms out the lecturer problem.
5. The temporary teachers in extension have no say in the content and conduct of the courses they teach--this is in direct violation of the principle of academic freedom.
6. The program jeopardizes the graduate rhetoric program.
7. An alternative recommendation is offered.

STUDENT INTERESTS.

The report discusses three levels in the writing program, but the third level involves only a few select sections. The core of the program is to be found in the courses of the first two levels.

Level One: Freshmen Are Not the Concern of
the English Department

The freshman course sends approximately 4000 students to the Division of Continuing Education. This is the number of students who do not exempt the course, transfer it, or take it during the summer. Although E 306 is an English course, no member of the English department will ordinarily teach the course. Freshmen are not worth the time of the department, the report implies.

The quality of the present E 306 has been carefully supervised. It will be impossible to supervise 30 to 50 isolated teachers (see below, under Administrative Concerns).

Level Two: Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors

1. The four additional writing courses (E 311,313,315,346K) rule out the interests of 61% of the undergraduate population of the university--those in technical and business areas (Engineering--15%, Sciences--15%, Business--27%, Pharmacy--2%, Architecture--1%, Nursing--1%). The four courses beyond the freshman level are restricted to humanities and social sciences topics. The elimination of the courses in technical communication is in direct opposition to the trend across the country. A study just completed by the Modern Language Association shows that in departments of English offering the Ph. D. there has been in recent years an increase of 83.3% in the number of courses in this area.

Recognizing the importance of technical writing, the committee tried to get the College of Communication to take it over. Failing in this move, the committee simply dropped the concern and the interests and needs of the students in these areas--almost two-thirds of the undergraduate students.

2. None of these four writing courses has been tried, except E 346K. In my opinion, the process course and the topics course are impractical for the university community at large. Most of the English department cannot teach the process course.

3. The 316K course is not feasible as a writing course. Given the number of students enrolled in the large classes and the number of TA's and AI's helping, this course can not really be run as a composition course. The AI's and TA's are desperately needed to run discussion sections.

Graduate Students in English

1. Our graduate students who get jobs are usually hired to do two things routinely: teach freshman composition and sophomore literature courses. The current program assures that they will not teacher either. This is a serious obstacle in the hiring of our students who already have severe problems--there has been 1 hiring of a literature major in the last 6 years (as far as I can determine).

2. Destruction of the Graduate Rhetoric Program. The graduate rhetoric program has consistently placed its graduates in good tenure positions. The graduate students in rhetoric know that these recommendations strike at the heart of the graduate rhetoric program, possibly the best in the country. The graduate rhetoric program is one of the strongest suits of the English

department. No graduate rhetoric student can take seriously a department which says that the freshman course is important, then farms it out to extension, and also eliminates technical and business writing. We have already lost graduate students to Purdue, Carnegie Mellon, and other institutions offering graduate rhetoric programs.

3. Our graduate students who teach these freshman and sophomore courses are seriously concerned with the loss of input into the governance of these courses and into the graduate program--last year 86 of them signed a petition protesting this move.

4. For these reasons the proposed writing program is not in the interests of the graduate students in English.

FACULTY CONCERNS.

1. The transfer of the course to Extension and the resultant hiring will create a staff of instructors that will almost necessarily number from 30 full time (three courses a semester) to 45 or 50 part-time (1 1/2 courses per teacher a semester). This is in direct violation of the first principle of the statement of the committee (no hiring of additional temporary faculty).

2. The Issue of Academic Freedom.

The staff which will handle the 4000 students will not have any say in the conduct of the course. These teachers will not be members of any faculty at all; as teachers in the division of extension they are only isolated "consultants," as they are called. Such a system seems a direct violation of the principle of academic freedom which give the teachers of a course the determination of the content and conduct of the course. It seems that the teachers of a one-tenth of the undergraduate student body ought to have some say about the course.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

1. LOSS OF QUALITY CONTROL.

The transfer turns the course over, administratively, to an agency which has no professional preparation to handle such a course: no one in the agency has a degree in English. There can not be the careful policy preparation, systematic review of textbooks, training of teachers, preparation of classroom materials, orientation of teachers, ongoing evaluative research, consideration of complaints, and counseling that have character-

ized the course in the past. Introductory courses in most of the large departments of this university (history, government, foreign languages, sciences, psychology, etc., etc.) have traditionally been placed in the hands of professionals trained in the particular discipline.

This penalizes the students, forcing them to take a course which is taught by temporary faculty and administered by non-professionals.

2. This year E 306 costs \$108 taken in extension, compared to \$24 taken as part of a regular load in the regular session. Next year, the course will still cost three times as much as it does in the regular session.

AN ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION

This spring Dean Robert King asked some of the members of the rhetoric interest group to prepare a comprehensive composition plan which they felt would meet the needs of the university community and which would not require the hiring of large numbers of temporary faculty. We sent him a copy in the latter part of May. We feel that it is preferable to the report of the E 346K committee for several serious reasons:

1. It creates a university body devoted to the writing concerns of the entire university community. This is simply an extension of the principle followed by the E 346K committee in recognizing the inability of the English department to handle all of the writing problems of the entire university. Dean King himself had suggested this solution before.

- a. It involves a faculty with the freshman program.
- b. It meets the needs of the technical and business students as well as those in the humanities.

2. It maintains a close working relationship of that body with the Department of English.

3. It answers the objections raised above in this report to the recommendations of the E 346K committee.

4. The cost is almost negligible; in fact, it costs considerably less than the expense the freshmen would have to meet for the extension course.

5. We hope that the department will give it serious consideration.

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