

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

October 30, 1978 11:00 - 12:00

Parlin 8-B

Members present: Kinneavy, Trimble, Ruskiewicz, Witte, Newcomb, Cameron, Creel, Byars, Hart

Agenda:

Burns request  
Approval of minutes  
Update on exemption figures  
398T  
Graduate rhetoric program

1. Before answering questions, Mr. Burns briefly outlined his dissertation project: he has written computer programs based on three heuristic systems--Aristotle's topics, Young, Becker, and Pike's tagmemic matrix, and Burke's pentad--to stimulate student writers to discover more material during the invention phase of essay assignments.

Inquiries by Dr. Witte and Dr. Newcomb revealed that the project might provide answers to two questions--which of the three heuristic models best aids in invention and whether computer instruction produces more successful invention than does traditional instruction--but that Mr. Burns intends only to compare the three models. Dr. Witte pointed out that such a comparison should have four controls ideally (one for each invention strategy and one for no invention strategy) and need not involve computers. He also suggested that the project would be more useful if it tested the computer variable, too.

After examining the printout of a sample student-computer transaction, Dr. Kinneavy and Dr. Witte both expressed concern about another key problem: because the computer accepts student responses at face value, the extent to which it truly interacts with students and generates information about a topic is questionable. To illustrate his point, Dr. Kinneavy posed a hypothetical transaction in which a student named Bill Williams gave a totally nonsensical answer to a computer query for more details but was still rewarded with a "Terrific, Bill Williams" from the computer. Mr. Burns responded that he could sophisticate his programs somewhat but appeared to admit that a computer program could not anticipate all possible responses. The computer interacts only motivationally with students, he said.

Discussion continued after Mr. Burns left. Dr. Ruskiewicz asked whether the experiment would disrupt our courses. Dr. Kinneavy replied that it would run only three weeks and would likely be much more helpful than disruptive. Some discussion of the project's experimental controls followed, at the end of which Dr. Witte agreed to forward our questions and recommendations to Dr. Kline and ask him to have Mr. Burns supply further responses. Dr. Trimble asked whether we might be accused of usurping some functions of Mr. Burns's dissertation committee. Dr. Newcomb countered that we should make recommendations if we think the project has merit and that he, at least, would be unwilling to vote on the request until our questions are answered. Dr. Kinneavy added that since Mr. Burns is seeking to use some of our instructors and students, we are entitled to inquire and advise.

2. The minutes of October 23 were corrected and approved.

3. Dr. Kinneavy provided some welcome news from Paul Kelley of Measurement and Evaluation about exemption rates for Freshman English. At a recent University Council Meeting, President Rogers had given the following ECT-score figures:

for June, July, August, '78,  
on campus:

2193 students failed ECT  
2650 students took ECT (83% failed)

during fall, '78, registration:	859 failed <u>1042</u> took	(82% failed)
total:	3052 failed <u>3692</u> took	(83% failed)

These figures did not, however, consider the students who took the test earlier at their high schools--more of whom pass. Thus, the usual distribution (1/3 above 550, 1/3 below 450, 1/3 between 450 and 550) probably prevailed again this year. Actually, President Rogers' figures closely resemble last year's on-campus tally:

June, July, August, '77	1853 failed <u>2221</u> took	(83% failed)
during fall, '77, registration	762 failed <u>910</u> took	(84% failed)
total:	2615 failed <u>3131</u> took	(83.5% failed)

In short, our concern about lower exemptions is unwarranted.

After the presentation of these figures (during which one committee member was silently reminded that a fact is a "made thing"), Dr. Kinneavy reiterated his suggestion from the previous meeting that we push for a 600-SAT Verbal admission requirement. Mr. Creel inquired about the students who would be cut at this number, and Dr. Kinneavy promised to supply data at the next meeting.

Dr. Kinneavy then proposed considering alternative entering scores for all but minority students. A brief discussion ensued about the extent to which we could set admissions policy, and Dr. Kinneavy indicated that the English Department is free to establish its own requirements but that the University Council, the President, and technically even the Regents (who pass on catalogue changes) also have to approve.

4. Ms. Byars reminded the committee that this being pre-registration week, if we do not act quickly to solve the 398T problems, we will have decided, in effect, to postpone our decisions until next fall. Several throats were cleared, and the 398T subcommittee offered to meet post haste.

5. Dr. Kinneavy passed out copies of the proposed new graduate rhetoric program.

The University of Texas at Austin  
 College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test  
 And Achievement Tests in English Composition and Mathematics Level I  
 Percentile Norms Based on Fall 1977 Freshmen Entering U.T. Austin Directly from High School

X-ile	WOMEN			MEN			WOMEN AND MEN COMBINED					
	S.A.T. (N=2279)	E.C.T. (N=1929)	MATH I (N=850)	S.A.T. (N=2510)	E.C.T. (N=2124)	MATH I (N=1228)	S.A.T. (N=4789)	E.C.T. (N=4053)	MATH I (N=2078)			
	V	M	Total	V	M	Total	V	M	Total			
99	705	715	1355	725	715	715	705	745	1365	715	755	99
95	648	661	1263	667	668	668	644	696	1295	658	656	95
90	606	618	1201	629	646	646	608	661	1232	621	667	90
85	579	596	1156	604	626	626	583	633	1192	593	647	85
80	562	583	1122	585	607	607	553	614	1155	571	631	80
75	545	567	1092	564	590	590	546	599	1120	588	619	75
70	531	554	1055	550	578	578	531	586	1100	569	602	70
65	516	541	1046	528	566	566	517	571	1077	527	590	65
60	502	520	1025	528	555	555	503	552	1056	511	572	60
55	492	520	1007	510	545	545	483	540	1023	492	548	55
50	480	510	990	497	533	533	481	534	1018	483	535	50
45	469	497	970	492	520	520	469	523	998	472	524	45
40	450	466	950	471	509	509	459	513	976	456	521	40
35	449	475	938	485	499	499	447	499	955	443	517	35
30	437	464	910	463	487	487	436	486	934	434	505	30
25	426	433	889	434	472	472	424	473	911	421	494	25
20	414	439	867	423	459	459	410	459	887	408	478	20
15	399	425	846	408	447	447	395	443	860	394	460	15
10	380	405	825	390	430	430	376	424	834	375	442	10
5	354	382	795	364	401	401	350	394	803	346	416	5
1	305	345	715	315	355	355	305	355	725	315	375	1

*Handwritten notes:*  
 481 (481) 1018  
 483 (483) 1018  
 483 (483) 1018  
 483 (483) 1018