

UT council to hear English Department plan for division

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Composition proposal could ease faculty tensions, professor says

One University of Texas English faculty member says a newly created writing division in the College of Liberal Arts would improve the quality of composition and rhetoric courses in the English Department, and quell years of infighting about the department's freshman writing classes.

Other English faculty members attending a Friday department meeting said the plan to create the Division of Rhetoric and Composi-

tion stands to diminish the department's academic structure, threatens academic freedom, and hurts recruiting efforts of graduate English students.

"We don't see it as something that would improve the quality of composition," said English professor James Kinneavy of the plan that would establish a writing division in the English Department by next summer.

Under the proposal, the English

Department's composition and rhetoric courses would be concentrated in the new division. Though still a part of the English Department, the division would function with the power to hire its own faculty or appoint graduate teaching assistants.

University officials and faculty plan to discuss the proposal at today's University Council meeting.

On Friday, many said they opposed the plan because it is too

vague and would further divide the troubled department, which has been fighting over multiculturalism courses and the direction of the English Department.

Among the concerns faculty members expressed Friday were whether the new division would:

- Hurt the Graduate School's recruiting efforts by usurping its authority to make teaching appointments in the new division.

- Undermine academic freedom

because it doesn't make provisions for the standard governing body, such as a budget council or executive council.

Many questioned how decisions about tenure, promotions and merit pay raises would be made under the new plan.

But one English professor, John Ruskiewicz, who supports the proposal, said the new writing division would significantly improve classes for students because "it would bring a focus to the writing program that UT never had."