

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

October 13, 1982

The Fall meeting of the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts was held on Wednesday, October 13, 1982, at 4:00 p.m. in Garrison Hall 1. Dean Robert D. King Presided.

Dean King commented briefly on the availability and use of "soft" or temporary faculty salary funds, made available through release of salaries of faculty on leaves of absence. Before the marked enrollment increases beginning in 1978, departments had reasonably free use of these funds to bring in visiting faculty, but due to enrollment pressures, these funds now need to be used to pay the salaries of temporary faculty hired specifically to teach required lower-division courses in several departments. Freed-up funds are returned to the Dean and the Administration to distribute where needed.

Dean King reminded those present of the deadlines for submission of requests for leaves of absence and stated that the Vice-President, not the Dean, has the final say on the granting of leaves. Departments can set their own deadlines for submission of leave requests.

A discussion then followed on the implementation of the recommendations of the Vick Committee on Basic Education Requirements. The College of Liberal Arts faculty, by written ballot, voted overwhelmingly to adopt the recommendations in October, 1981, and implementation of the recommendations in the various colleges is being made through their individual catalogs. Since the copy

either ignored or criticized. In fact, his study said just nothing of a required shift of one semester of composition from the freshman year to the junior or senior year, but asked the faculty for its opinion of a possible shift "at the student's option." Was the statement by the English Department's representatives true?

5. If that statement was true, why did Dean Robert King of the College of Liberal Arts write as follows, on June 8, 1981, to Joseph Moldenhauer (Chairman of the English Department) and to James Kinneavy (Director of Freshman English)?

I do not believe that any mandate for the English revision can or should be derived from that earlier report. I urge you not to speak of that report as a "mandate," nor indeed to regard it as a "mandate" for the revision. Further, I urge you to convey to others who in future serve as spokesmen for the English revision that they should not speak of or regard the earlier report as a "mandate."

6. In Sledd's 1975 study, <sup>2,381</sup> ~~2,385~~ students replied to the question, "At what point in a student's undergraduate career do you think systematic instruction in English Composition would be most helpful?" Of those students, 30 favored the senior year, 128 the junior year, 399 the sophomore year, and 1,823 the freshman year. This fact was perfectly familiar to the representatives of the English Department, whom Sledd allowed to examine all his data thoroughly. Why have the English Department, the University Council, and the UT administration ignored the students' overwhelming preference? Should not that preference prompt a reconsideration of the new requirements in English?

7. In current legislation, a good deal is said about allowing any upper-division course with "a substantial writing component" to count as a course in composition. One document reads as follows: "These upper-division courses will not necessarily be courses designed to teach writing, but they will require substantial writing by students, and the written work will be evaluated on form as well as content. . . . it is essential that the courses satisfying this writing requirement be taught in small classes" (H. Paul Kelley, Secretary of the University Council, February 16, 1981). Has any firm and enforceable definition of substantial writing component been offered? What is there to prevent teachers of odd courses which attract few students from enticing enrollees, avoiding contact with despised freshmen, yet still claiming to teach composition--all by the simple device of announcing that their pet courses include "a substantial writing component"?

8. During the past fifteen years, the English Department and what is now the College of Liberal Arts have repeatedly tried to reduce

what is considered the "burden" of teaching freshmen to write. "Composition stinks," said one eminent full professor. The new requirements promise to cut the "burden" by about one-half, and enrollment in freshman English could be still further reduced just by lowering the test score which is required for exemption from English 306. The present exemption score is 550 (the minimum which has been required at the University of California in Berkeley to keep the testee out of the bonehead course, and 100 points lower than was required, some dozen years ago, at Ball State in Muncie, Indiana). In 1969, James Sledd (then Director of Freshman English) had to prevent the planned lowering of our score from 550 to 450. If one director can keep the score from being lowered, what is to prevent another director from lowering it? Should not the determination of the exemption score require the approval of the University Council?

9. Just as a very few people have been able to control exemption scores, so the nature of English 306 (the freshman course in composition) and of English 346K (the junior-senior course) can at present be determined or changed by relatively small groups within the English Department, who are also the primary judges of the effectiveness of the courses. Should there not be a University-wide Committee on Composition or Composition Board (as at the University of Michigan, allegedly one of UT's models) to supervise courses which faculty and administration repeatedly say are highly important?

10. How will the new requirements apply to students who transfer to UT Austin after one term or several elsewhere? Is UT required by law to give credit for composition courses which transfer students have taken at the State's junior colleges? Could and would a transfer student be required to take English 346K as well? If so, would not that requirement automatically devalue the second semester of freshman composition at other state institutions? If, on the other hand, a transfer student with two semesters of freshman composition were exempt from English 346K, could not students frustrate the whole new scheme simply by taking their two semesters of composition at a community college?

11. When the present requirements in composition were set, there was extensive debate by the faculty at large, and the legislation included provision for a committee to review the working of the requirements within three years. Should there not be a similar provision in the new legislation?



James Sledd

10/9/82

