

May 6, 1994

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Dear Bob,

I was sorry you couldn't attend Wednesday's award luncheon of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition. It was a wonderful occasion, and, of course, I was delighted to see that a plan I've championed for so long has finally become a reality. And they've done such a fine job--a writing center, a student guidebook, computer networked classrooms, a writing center, and a mentor system for new teachers. It's amazing. And a graduate program. I've always believed that any writing division has to have a graduate component if it is to maintain the scholarship and connection with other programs that are necessary for it to be a respected discipline in the university. We (I still feel a little proprietary about it) have some distinguished faculty and have done some fine recruiting. We also seem to have an excellent group of loyal graduate students who take great pride in their work and are going to reflect well on the University when they join faculties elsewhere.

I think the Division will become a model for many other universities who are tired of the bickering in their English departments and of having their writing courses neglected. I understand there have already been many outside visitors.

It's really remarkable that the faculty has come together and worked so hard and so harmoniously after the years of rancor and angry recriminations. I admire how well they've done and how they've put the best interests of the students and the division ahead of their own egos and pet ideologies. Maybe some of them just needed some useful work to move beyond their political posturing. John tells me that Lester is a good chairman and that John Slatin has done fine things with the computer labs.

But most of all I want to thank you for having had the courage and determination to push the reorganization through against some vehement opposition and for having given it the funding and administrative support that were essential if it was to succeed. Without you, the Division would never have happened--the English department would have kept it bottled up forever. And the students would have been the losers, as they have been for all those years of infighting. I'm glad you believed in our concept and had the fortitude to fight for it. It's a major achievement and you deserve a great deal of credit.

I also have to laud John for being gracious enough to step aside and let someone assume the leadership of an organization of which he was the chief architect and champion. After all he had invested, his actions were remarkable. A lesser person would have sacrificed the common good to his own ego, but John is better than that. I disagree with his politics, but I admire his commitment and integrity immensely.

Thank you for what you've done.