

MINUTES OF THE DEPARTMENTAL MEETING OF APRIL 24, 1975

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Mr. Abrahams called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

He announced that Mr. Walter, Mrs. Fontanolla and he were beginning to prepare the annual report for 1974-75. He explained that the annual report would serve two purposes: as a report to the Dean and administration, and as a report on the state of the Department for faculty. Mr. Abrahams encouraged all faculty to cooperate in its preparation and stated that a method would be found to disseminate the report to all faculty members. He concluded by stating that he would use the CORODO Report as a point of departure for this year's annual report.

The first item on the agenda was the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Composition. Mr. Abrahams stated that there was a minor procedural problem concerning whether or not TA's and AI's have a vote in such matters, and he noted that in the past, the Department has given TA's the right to vote with regard to matters that directly concerned them. Mr. Sutherland commented that AI's were allowed to vote and Mr. Abrahams agreed but explained that there was a different departmental structure in operation when AI's were given a vote. Mrs. Hairston cited the Rights and Responsibilities document as evidence that AI's and TA's had the right to vote under particular circumstances. Mrs. Dorman noted that TA's had voted in the Fall in a crucial vote. Mr. Abrahams stated that the Department certainly has the power to give TA's and AI's a vote. Mr. Sledd suggested giving TA's the right to vote in matters that would concern them. Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Wood spoke on the issue. Mrs. Hairston then moved that TA's be allowed to vote on matters of this document at this meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

In introducing Mr. Trimble, Mr. Abrahams expressed his thanks to him, to his co-chairman Jim Kinneavy, and his committee for their time, interest and dedication to the task. Mr. Abrahams then turned the presentation of this report over to Mr. Trimble.

Mr. Trimble thanked Mr. Abrahams for his kind words and stated that all his committee members deserved equal praise and had performed heroically. As chairman of the Committee, Mr. Trimble moved the acceptance of his committee's report for departmental discussion. The motion was seconded and passed.

Mr. Trimble began his presentation with prefatory comments. (See Appendix One). On behalf of his committee he thanked the department for giving serious attention to the issue, thanked those who responded to the questionnaire and thanked the TA who shared essays from his E. 308 class. He stated that the committee's task was to develop proposals that were both workable and capable of satisfying a majority of the faculty. The Megaw-Sledd proposal was a statement of principle and one possible formula for putting the principle into operation. He stressed that the committee was committed to the principle but that it did not agree with the method of implementation because it was coercive. The committee preferred to try an alternative solution depending on voluntary members of the faculty.

Mr. Trimble cited the following steps in the recommendations: 1) Develop and improve freshman composition courses; 2) Improve quality of the Teaching Assistants; 3) Recruit faculty so as to enrich Freshman and other composition courses; 4) Reward faculty and TA's who teach composition; and 5) Provide contingency plans to accommodate more faculty in lower division as the upper division enrollment diminishes so as not to deprive TA's of the experience of teaching sophomore courses.

Mr. Trimble then corrected errors in the document. Corrections included the following:

- p. 3, A.2., line 4 - change E. 306M to E. 360M
- p. 3, A.3.a., line 1 - change to read: "A number of persons each semester are not for one reason or another in the position to teach lower-division courses."
- p. 3, a.3.b., line 1 - delete "unpalatable"
- p. 4, A.6.d. - change to read: "Of the 67 TA's who are in or beyond their third year, all but 23 have taught SL. Of these 23, 13 have chosen to be freshman counselors or teach 317 or . . ."
- p. 5, E.4.b.(1), line 4 - delete "(the same as Ball State)"

Mr. Sledd commented unfavorably on the recommendations of the ad hoc committee and called the document weak because of its specious arguments and obvious contempt for lower-division teaching. Mr. Kinneavy responded to Mr. Sledd's arguments, underscoring the ultimately serious nature of the document, and the wide-ranging changes actually called for.

Discussion then centered around the statement of principle of the committee's report. Mr. Velz moved to add "and rhetoric" to the statement so that it would read "composition and rhetoric courses at all levels." Mr. Hilfer moved to amend the motion so as to add "and rhetoric" in the first and third lines and make "element" plural. The ad hoc committee agreed with the recommended changes and the motion passed as amended.

Mr. Nash moved to add "equally important to any elements" in the second line. Mr. Sledd seconded the motion. The motion failed.

Mr. Keast suggested that the wording of the second line be changed to read: ". . .of instruction and research, of equal status with other components in the program, and therefore commits itself. . .". Mr. Twombly seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Trimble moved for the acceptance of the statement of principle as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. (See Appendix Two for complete revision of the statement of principle and recommendations.)

Mr. Trimble then moved for the acceptance of Recommendation 1(a). The ad hoc committee, as in all motions for acceptance of the various recommendations, seconded the motion. The motion of acceptance for Recommendation 1(a) was passed unanimously. Likewise, Recommendation 1(b) was passed unanimously.

Mr. Trimble moved for the acceptance of Recommendations 1(c) through 1(f). Mr. Rogers asked if there was not an economic problem in implementing 1(e). Mr. Abrahams responded that there was. Mr. Velz questioned 1(f) on the grounds that the peer system for counseling was working. Mr. Landon stated that voluntary faculty participation would be valuable. Mrs. Dorman called for more faculty to participate in the counseling program. Mr. Kinneavy noted that since the University President and Provost object to the peer counselor system, the program should be supplemented with faculty members. Mrs. Hairston noted that the recommendation would only strengthen the counseling program and not change it significantly. Mrs. Dorman stated that the Freshman English Policy Committee endorsed the recommendation. Mr. Velz asked that the intention of the recommendation as stated by Mrs. Hairston be noted in the minutes. After further discussion, the motion to accept Recommendations 1(c) through 1(f) passed.

Mr. Trimble moved for the acceptance of Recommendations 2(a) through 2(f). Mr. Friedman suggested that a reduction in the required nine-hour course load for TA's be added to the recommendation 2(a). Mr. Kinneavy said there was a movement to do away with the ruling and called for supporting the movement in the Graduate Assembly to reduce the requirement in the number of hours TA's take.

Mr. Wood questioned the logic of Recommendation 2(b). Mr. Abrahams stated that the E.C. favors the recommendation and that Dean Werbow wants a formal recommendation from the E.C. Recommendations 2(a) through 2(f) passed unanimously.

The acceptance of Recommendations 2(g) through 2(l) was then moved by Mr. Trimble. Mr. Twombly objected to 2(i) because of its lack of clarity and suggested a change in wording so as to read: "Allow the Chairman to offer to any faculty. . . ." Mr. Kinneavy seconded the motion to change the wording. Mrs. Hairston noted that this was within the Chairman's power anyway. The motion to accept 2(g) through 2(l), including the change in wording of 2(i) passed.

Mr. Trimble moved for the acceptance of Recommendation 3(a). The motion passed unanimously.

Recommendation 3(b) was moved for acceptance by Mr. Trimble. Mr. Abrahams suggested that the wording be changed so as to read: "of composition classes." instead of "of freshman classes." It was also suggested that the recommendation be stated in a more positive fashion so that it would read: "Initiate and encourage any administrative efforts to reduce the maximum size of composition classes." Recommendation 3(b) passed as amended.

There was no discussion on the acceptance of Recommendation 3(c). It passed unanimously and Recommendation 3(d) passed.

Mr. Friedman noted that there is no clear definition of what is meant by Freshman Composition.

Mr. Sledd moved the addition of the following recommendation:

That the C.I.C. be instructed to arrange a meeting,

if it is legally possible, with the Travis County Delegation to the Legislature in order to present to them material in this and other reports.

Mr. Velz questioned the legality of such a meeting in view of the Regents' Rules. Mr. Megaw suggested changing the recommendation so as to permit the Chairman to select a committee and have Mr. Sledd be a member. Mr. Sledd accepted the change in his recommendation. Mr. Kinneavy suggested that the committee should get an invitation to speak with Representative Sarah Weddington. Mr. Moldenhauer suggested that all departmental members direct ideas of political strategy to the Chairman. Mr. Sledd's motion to accept this additional recommendation passed as amended.

Mr. Moldenhauer then moved that the Chairman instruct the Freshman English Policy Committee, or other appropriate committee, to encourage the establishment or expansion of composition requirements in academic courses throughout the University, to the end that students at all levels in all departments, colleges, and divisions will have opportunities to practice written expression (essay examinations, papers, reports) pertinent to their subject of study, and to receive from the faculty in these subjects instructive comments and grades on the quality of their written expression. After a brief discussion, the motion passed.

Mr. Abrahams adjourned the meeting shortly after 6:00 p.m.

attached: Appendix One - Mr. Trimble's prefatory remarks
Appendix Two - Statement of Principle and Recommendations
and Gloss on the Recommendations as revised.

The Committee would first like to express its thanks to the entire Dept for giving serious attention to a serious issue. We would also like to thank those many individuals who took the trouble to respond to our lengthy questionnaire. We want to assure you that we pored over your responses and learned significantly from them. They provided us with many valuable suggestions and perspectives, and--collectively--they served to remind us of the rich diversity of the Dept. In our proposals we tried our hardest to respect that diversity.

The Committee would also like to express its thanks to the TA who shared with us the essays from his 308sp class. These, too, we found very informative, and we thank the students for allowing us to quote some of their remarks.

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Our task, as we pointed out in the report, was a challenging one: to develop proposals that seemed both actually workable to ourselves & capable of satisfying the majority of our colleagues. We know we met the first of those challenges, since this report has been unanimously ~~been~~ approved by our committee. As for the second of the two challenges--satisfying the majority of you, our colleagues--we will ~~give~~ get the answer to that today, I suspect.

Our Committee began by trying to get a clear fix on the various realities of our departmental life. It made little sense, we decided, to develop proposals at great length without really knowing the directions in which our Dept was moving and the limits within which we had to operate.

Once we had a clearer idea of the full context, we began evaluating the Megaw-Sledd proposal. We discovered what few people seem to have noticed, namely, that the Megaw-Sledd proposal is, at bottom, two things, not one.

- (1) Implicitly, it is a statement of principle: namely, that our composition courses are a high-priority, integral element in the Dept's overall program.
- (2) It is one possible formula for implementing this principle.

The principle itself struck ~~us~~ us as very sound indeed, for if the English Dept isn't in the business of teaching U.T. students expressive skills, who is? We further reasoned that reading and writing are demonstrably two sides of one coin--in other words, there is a natural, authentic, mutually enriching relation between the two activities. Students learn about writing from reading and about reading from writing; and surely written communication depends on knowledge of both sets of skills.

So the principle itself we liked; indeed, we ourselves became deeply committed to it. The Megaw-Sledd formula for implementing it, however, struck us as possessing some serious shortcomings. These we have enumerated in our report. Two of them perhaps bear recapitulating here. First, the policy is a coercive one; second, even if implemented quite ruthlessly, it would not appreciably increase the number of sections of FC, for example, taught by the regular faculty. That, to our way of thinking, was a rather decisive reason in itself for ruling the formula out.

Getting back for a moment to the coerciveness of the proposal, the Committee recognizes, of course, that coercion has its uses, and that to some extent equity--even morality--can be legislated. Consider, for example, where our black citizens would be today were it not for the Civil Rights Act and the various Supreme Court rulings of the past 20 years.

Our feeling, however, is this: Coercion is a fail-safe device--a last resort. We would prefer to at least try various alternative solutions--a whole network of them--and depend on a voluntary corps of FC instructors. Any Director of Freshman English is going to want people in the program who themselves want to be in the program. After all, the success of these courses depends in great part on the enthusiasm and genuine commitment of the personnel staffing them.

Our position, then, might be summed up as follows: We want to proceed evolutionarily, not revolutionarily. We fundamentally agree with the ends of the Megaw-Sledd proposal, but we're proposing less radical means. Granted, it will take longer, but the ~~end~~ results, we believe, will be more stable and will justify our patience. It doesn't pay to win changes on paper only to lose them in performance.

In all, we are offering 22 specific recommendations. They fall into roughly 5 groups of so-called "solutions." I'd like to conclude these remarks by reviewing the groups for you.

Step #1, we feel, is to improve the FC courses themselves--make them less standardized, more flexible, more attractive, more hospitable to our faculty. ~~That's~~ That's the natural starting point. The principle here is: You can't radically change people's interests, but you can change courses to make them more intrinsically congenial. So this is Step #1.

Step #2 also involves upgrading the program itself, though indirectly. Since TA's staff the majority of FC sections, and since they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, we propose that the Dept upgrade their competence by significantly improving their basic training--with a solid summer orientation course, with a required course in the teaching of English, and with an improved counseling program. This will benefit the freshmen, and it will also benefit the TA's themselves. Surely a solid Ph.D. program ought to do what it claims to do, namely, prepare its graduates for effective college teaching. This our proposals will do.

Step #3 is to start recruiting people who can materially enrich our total composition program. We want more people ~~on~~ on our staff who know how to teach composition and who want to teach composition--and not only FC, but upper-level composition courses as well--e.g., 310 & 325M. The Univ. of Iowa is known nationally for the excellence of its writing program. There is no reason why U.T. can't achieve equal distinction in this area. We have a distinguished group of Renaissance specialists, a distinguished group of linguists, a distinguished group of modernists, and so on. We propose adding to the staff a distinguished group of specialists in composition & rhetoric.

Step #4 is to reward those professors already in the Freshman program, or those considering re-entering the program, so that they will not be indirectly penalized for the major commitment of time and energy that FC involves. It's really a question of equity. At present, many professors keep their distance from FC because they believe any time spent there will go unrecognized. Since

people tend to work hardest at what they're rewarded for, we propose that the EC begin rewarding FC personnel--and that includes TA's--in a number of tangible ways. These ways we spell out in our recommendations.

Step #5, finally, might be called "contingency planning." The Dept's future is uncertain. Our economic situation looks precarious: graduate enrollment and upper-division enrollment both have declined approximately 35% just in the last 4 years. More and more of our course offerings are thus having to be scrapped. Between 20-25% of them, in fact, have met this fate over the same 4-year period. If present trends continue, increasing numbers of our regular staff will find themselves depending on lower-division courses to complete their work load. What will happen then? Will the regular faculty take over the Sophomore program? If they do, all the veteran TAAs now manning half of the Sophomore sections will be displaced. To thus deprive our TA's of this crucial part of their apprenticeship would be, we feel, highly inequitable and self-interested on our part. We thus propose that a contingency policy be adopted now--namely, that on the average of every other time that a regular faculty member would be scheduled to teach a lower-division course as part of his normal load, that course would be in FC. This policy, as we state it in our Recommendations, would be a flexible guideline, not a rigid formula. It would recognize--and even underscore--the Chairman's discretionary power when making staffing assignments, for as we pointed out on p. 4 of our report, the Chairman is already hamstrung by a number of program & staffing requirements, and it would be unrealistic to straitjacket him even more.

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In the consideration of the Statement of Principle and the various Recommendations, our Committee wants to address each individually, beginning with the Statement of Principle. The acceptance or rejection of any one of the recommendations or principles does not entail acceptance or rejection of any of the others. The recommendations are, however, arranged in a logical order, and we would appreciate your adhering to the order in which they have been presented.

Therefore, I first move the acceptance of the Statement of Principle (etc.)

Part III: STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE:

The department recognizes composition and rhetoric as important, integral elements in its total program of instruction and research, of equal status with other components in the program, and therefore commits itself to strengthening its composition and rhetoric courses at all levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The department encourages the efforts of the Freshman English Policy Committee to develop a more flexible freshman program and to improve the quality of the freshman composition courses (306, 307, 308). Specifically, regarding the courses themselves, the department instructs the FEPC to:
 - (a) Establish a systematic, continuous program encouraging experimentation with different approaches to teaching freshman composition, and devise procedures for on-going evaluation of experimental sections so that successful approaches can be adopted more widely. (See gloss)
 - (b) Invite regular faculty participation in planning the freshman program by holding well-publicized open meetings each year at which time new directions and possibilities for experimentation would be discussed.
 - (c) Through the CIC, periodically circulate reports of experimental courses, results of earlier experiments, and suggestions for further innovations to keep the faculty abreast of what is happening in the freshman program.
 - (d) Consider the establishment of a referral lab for remedial students who require special help in addition to what they are already receiving in their regular freshman English course.

Regarding supervision of teaching assistants, the department instructs the FEPC to:

- (e) Accelerate efforts to establish a summer orientation program to be required of inexperienced TA's. (See gloss)
 - (f) Expand the existing peer TA counseling program to include counseling of TA's by a few volunteers from the regular faculty. (See gloss)
2. The department asks the Executive Committee to establish policies with regard to recruitment and promotion that will recognize excellence in teaching composition and research related to composition. Specifically, in the area of staffing, the EC is urged to:
 - (a) Request that the administration allow us to employ TA's beyond the present 7-semester term of service (See gloss)
 - (b) Support the movement in the Graduate Assembly to reduce the requirement in the number of course hours required of TA's.
 - (c) Offer a limited number of one-year appointments as Assistant Professors to new Texas Ph.D.'s to teach two sections of FC per semester. (These could be 2/3 time appointments or, adding a sophomore course to the load, full time.)
 - (d) Hire new Assistant Professors who, in addition to other qualifications, can demonstrate willingness and ability to teach composition. (See gloss)

- (e) Hire some faculty trained as composition/rhetoric specialists.
(See gloss)
- (f) Cooperate with the GSC in giving full support to the experimental in-service training program for junior college teachers, most of whom will teach freshman composition courses while they are here.
- (g) Require inexperienced TA's to take graduate work in teaching English.
(See gloss)

In the area of promotion and reward, the EC is urged to:

- (h) Weigh excellence in teaching composition equally with excellence in teaching literature when making promotion decisions involving junior faculty and merit pay increases involving all regular faculty.
 - (i) Give some priority to the requests for summer employment to those who have participated in the freshman program.
 - (j) Reward faculty who contribute significantly to the freshman program with some time off so they can pursue their research interests.
(Suggested formula: one course off for every three sections of Plan I freshmen taught.) Additionally, reward faculty directly, when making promotion decisions, by considering contribution to the freshman program a valuable service to the department.
 - (k) Reward TA's who have contributed significantly to the freshman program with a course off during the semester in which they take their orals. (See gloss)
 - (l) Continue to press efforts to increase TA salaries.
3. The department encourages the Chairman to use his authority to assist -- in any way he can -- those who volunteer to teach composition courses, and to keep these courses adequately staffed as student need requires. Specifically the department urges the Chairman to:
- (a) Provide more secretarial assistance to composition teachers, perhaps by hiring two clerk-typists to be used exclusively by them.
 - (b) Initiate and encourage any administration efforts to reduce the maximum size of composition classes.
 - (c) Set up a committee to coordinate and improve composition courses at all levels, the membership to be composed of representatives of the FEPC and the other composition course committees. (See gloss)
 - (d) Allow the Chairman to offer to any faculty member who volunteers to teach a composition course beyond the freshman level a one-course load reduction during the first semester that he teaches the course.
 - (e) Should the decline in our upper-division and graduate enrollment continue, the Chairman is urged to use his discretion in assigning regular faculty to all composition courses, relying -- insofar as possible -- on the following guideline: at least every other time a regular faculty member is scheduled to teach a lower-division course as part of his normal load, that course shall be in freshman composition. (See gloss)
 - (f) Appoint a committee to arrange a meeting, if it is legally possible, with the Travis County Delegation to the Legislature in order to present to them material in this and other reports.
 - (g) Instruct the FEPC, or other appropriate committee, to encourage the establishment or expansion of composition requirements in academic courses throughout the University, to the end that students at all levels in all departments, colleges, and divisions will have opportunities to practice written expression (essay examinations, papers, reports) pertinent to their subjects of study, and to receive from the faculty in these subjects instructive comments and grades on the quality of their written expression. (See gloss)

Part IV: GLOSS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1a In a recent document forwarded to the Chairman, the EC, and the Dean, the FEPC has already committed itself to pluralism both in texts and approaches. It intends to encourage continual innovation and experimentation. For the fall semester, for example, the FEPC will depart from the traditional practice of using only one basic composition text in all sections of 306 and, instead, will use four different texts. In addition this fall, alternative approaches will be tried in E.306 (Susan Wittig's individualized instructional techniques -- 10 sections), E.307 (Wilma Ebbitt's syllabus -- 1/2 the total number of sections), E.308 (Tony Hilfer's popular culture variant -- 1/3 of the total number of sections). One Full Professor, responding to the questionnaire, happened to state the FEPC's philosophy succinctly: "The course should be organized but not dictated. Principles of reason and writing and grammar may be prescribed; but the individual teacher must have a margin in methods and materials. Approval of an individual's plan, especially the beginner's, should be required."
- 1e This recommendation presupposes that, insofar as possible, TA's will be hired during the spring and early summer. Indeed, we also hope that in the future regular staff will receive their lower division assignments early enough to allow for adequate preparation. As one Full Professor complained: "I find most troublesome not knowing just what I'm supposed to teach until the day or weekend before. Give us at least a month's notice of the kind of course."
- 1f The FEPC is currently considering the adoption of various sections of E.398T to parallel the experimental approaches being developed in the FC program. Each section would be taught by a volunteer member of the regular faculty, who would also supervise and counsel the TA's in his section.
- 2a This request has already been made and granted for next year. We would, nevertheless, like to have some assurance from the administration that extended service for TA's will be possible on a regular basis.
- 2d All other qualifications being equal, the EC should give preference to applicants who can enrich the Freshman English program. This policy presupposes that such participation is regarded as a significant contribution counting toward promotion. Hiring under this new guideline and then subsequently penalizing participation in the FC program would be morally reprehensible.
- 2e This suggestion had its genesis in the discovery that every application of mechanical formulae (like the Megaw-Sledd proposal) resulted in only 4 to 7 additional sections, staffed under coercion. An equivalent number of sections could be obtained by hiring two composition/rhetoric specialists, who would be voluntarily committed to teaching composition.
- 2g At least four courses in English presently exist for this purpose (E.381L, E.383L, E.393M, E.398T).
- 2k This is not mere lipservice; similar alleviations are granted at some other institutions.
- 3c This committee is not intended to preempt the coordinating function of the CIC, nor the autonomy of individual course committees, nor the final responsibility of the department to determine the nature of each of its

courses. Its general purpose, rather, is to develop and coordinate a unified departmental composition program, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

- 3e Such discretionary power is, of course, already the prerogative of the Chairman. However, this committee feels that what it has learned in studying the staffing, enrollment, economic, and educational realities of the current situation, makes the exercise of such a discretionary power mandatory. These realities make equally mandatory the establishment of a continuing policy, derivative of the department and independent of any individual chairman, a policy which will obviate for the future both departmental and administrative caprice. The adoption of this guideline should provide a basis for the hard staffing decisions which will face us in the future should current enrollment and economic trends continue.
- 3g The FEPC (or CIC, or an ad hoc committee) should consider various means to advance the aims of this clause. Its author (Mr. Moldenhauer) suggests that the committee begin by convening meetings with the department chairmen, undergraduate and graduate advisors, and interested faculty of separate colleges (e.g. Engineering, Business Administration, Education) or of departmental groups within colleges (e.g., modern foreign languages). More formal but perhaps less promising avenues of approach include proposals to the University Council (these would be considered by the Academic Policy Committee) and recommendations to the Provost and President.