

VIEWPOINT

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Rhetoric division will restore UT writing standards

When William and Mary returned in 1688, England under the Commonwealth was in shambles. Similar events in the Department of English precipitated the University's own Glorious Revolution, namely the formation of an autonomous Division of Rhetoric and Composition.

Outgoing President William Cunningham left students this boon, which will only enhance writing standards University-wide and end the internal feuding that has set many faculty to flight and drawn criticism from national media. The beleaguered department and the University have only to gain from the restoration period such changes will provide.

The department in the past two years has been troubled by divisive curricular and governance debates. Parlin Hall's principal claim to

fame — English 306 — placed it in the center ring when a committee decided to steer freshmen composition away from writing instruction to solely left-wing views on race and gender relations in America.

The fight finally subsided, but only after Machiavellian attempts to "repackage" the course to deceive concerned faculty and administrators and after the public learned the nefarious intent of its proponents.

Similar problems came forth when English faculty fought amongst themselves over the issue of departmental governance. Faculty involved lambasted one another and provided ample submissions to local media. Such departmental tumult exacerbates communication problems with other colleges, as well as the College of Liberal Arts, and precludes Parlin

Hall from setting University-wide standards for world-class writing. The new division will eradicate such obstacles.

As Chairman Frank Bean of the committee recommending the changes said, "Having something devoted expressly to instruction on writing skills would also get away from some of the tension between the English Department and the College of Liberal Arts on who should assume the responsibility of writing instruction." The new division will ameliorate such problems by placing resources into one smaller, more manageable department free from current departmental infighting. Employing its own faculty, presumably, it will revamp instruction to include technical writing and expand studies in rhetoric. Rhetoric, one of the original humanities, has become almost forgotten, as literary

criticism has become more fashionable.

Joe Kruppa, chairman of the Department of English, who this summer voiced some opposition to change, should embrace it. Sizing down his own department, one of the largest on campus, will make effective governance at Parlin Hall at least conceivable.

Perhaps the only person who could complain would be Jim Kinneavy, chairman of lower division English, because many of these predominantly composition courses would go to the new division. Kinneavy's protestations, though, would fly in the face of his own utterances. In 1985, he headed a committee supporting it.

With such virtual unanimity, the University should rejoice next June when composition is divorced from criticism.