

Department of English  
University of Texas at Austin

May 16, 1985

Dr. Robert D. King, Dean  
College of Liberal Arts  
West Mall Building 201

Dear Dean King:

At your request, we have formulated a comprehensive--and, we think, workable--solution to many of the problems facing the English Department.

Our proposal rests on the assumption that the Department of English will have, must have, some kind of writing program. But what kind will it be? Will it be an assemblage of random classes offered on the side by faculty members primarily interested in other kinds of teaching and research? Or will it be a genuine program--one that's well-integrated, carefully administered, and responsive to the needs of our students, not to mention one that will help UT maintain its nationally recognized graduate program in rhetoric? We propose the latter. And we firmly believe our plan can achieve it, even within current resources.

We also believe our plan can significantly reduce the current disharmony within the department. Many members of the department would like us to get out of the composition business entirely. Such a radical solution, we think you'll grant, is neither practical nor desirable. But we can employ an administrative structure that places writing courses off in a semi-autonomous wing of the English Department, much like American Studies, and we can offer our colleagues far greater choice in the writing courses asking their services, and we can reduce the sheer number of composition students passing through Parlin Hall. We can do two other things as well: by going to an all-elective system, we can ensure that the students in our composition classes are there voluntarily, and--mirabile dictu--we can nearly eliminate the need for temporary lecturers.

Our recommendations:

1. Change the undergraduate English requirement in all colleges to 9 unspecified hours of English.
2. Reduce the Substantial Writing Component requirement from two courses to one course.
3. Give credit for E.346K, with a grade of A, to all students who've scored 650 or better on the ECT and who've also earned credit for two other college-level English courses.
4. Retain the present version of E.306 as the introductory Freshman Composition course.

5. Reinstate English 310, 317, and 346K so as to offer students a decent range of writing courses, but offer only as many sections of each as the department can staff with minimal reliance on lecturers.
6. Create a new administrative entity, called the Writing Committee, to oversee all undergraduate writing courses in the Department of English. This body would consist of a Director of Writing (appointed by, and reporting to, the Dean of Liberal Arts), a Coordinator of Upper-Division Writing, and a Coordinator of Lower-Division Writing. The writing program office would be staffed by one senior secretary and one secretary--the same staff as required by the pre-1984 Freshman English office--and would be housed in the same offices as those currently used by the Freshman English Office and duplicating room (Parlin 14, 16, 18, and 19).

Advantages of this plan:

- It entails absolutely no increase in administrative costs.
- It requires few if any lecturers beyond the five line lecturers.
- It meets the two most fundamental composition needs of UT students:
  - (a) writing courses available at every level (freshman, sophomore, upper-division);
  - (b) a decent variety of courses to choose from (303, 306, 310, 317, 325M, 346K, 379C).
- It meets the needs of all our undergraduate colleges for both a freshman and an advanced composition course. (The Sledd survey in 1977 indicated strong faculty and student support for such courses, and the faculty vote of 1981 also overwhelmingly endorsed such a program.)
- It is administratively efficient. Currently, authority for our writing program is dispersed among three course committees (FEPC, E.346K, and Advanced Composition), each of which operates independently. Under our plan, that authority is consolidated in a single, three-member body, The Writing Committee. In fact, the plan extends to all our writing courses a version of the structure used successfully for more than a decade in Freshman English. (The Freshman Office, you'll recall, administered a variety of courses: 306, 306Q, 306MA, 307, 308, 307sp, 308sp, and 308pc.) The Writing Director can readily coordinate such matters as teacher training, testing and placement, course evaluation, textbook selection, and so on--matters now handled autonomously by various individuals and committees working toward no common goals.
- It relieves literature specialists of the responsibility of tending courses peripheral to their scholarly interests.

- It accommodates humanities-based sections of E.306 as well as rhetorically based sections, thus allowing staffmembers to teach Freshman Composition in the context most congenial to them.
- It allows us to keep our offerings within our staffing capabilities. With all English courses being elective, we're free to limit the number of sections we offer of any given course. By the same token, we have new flexibility to concentrate our staff in courses that generate heavy demand.
- It helps preserve our eligibility for a major Ford Foundation grant. In three years, the foundation plans to fund several graduate programs for teachers of writing; indeed, it is already investigating possible sites. Unless we keep our nationally recognized program, we won't be eligible for consideration.

Why it's important to retain E.306 as the introductory freshman English course:

UCLA, Iowa, Yale, Brown, Harvard--these and other major universities have committed themselves to offering an introductory writing course that trains freshmen in the basic competencies required for writing in college and after graduation. We believe that UT should do no less. The rest of the University and the general public expect students to write competently, and complain loudly when they can't. Since students are required to take English courses, we are held responsible for their being able to write. We can't shift that responsibility back to beleaguered high school teachers. Nor can we realistically expect Austin Community College, which is already straining its resources, to absorb the thousands of students who will need to take freshman English if the University abandons E.306.

We therefore recommend that E.306 be retained as the introductory (but nonrequired) freshman English course, and that it be taught on campus. Here are our particular reasons for endorsing it:

1. Unlike a literature-based composition course, it goes well beyond imparting an appreciation of literature. And unlike its remedial counterparts, it goes well beyond imparting rudimentary mechanical skills. Because of its emphasis on teaching students to write for different purposes, to adapt their writing to different audiences, to think critically about the writing of others, and to learn to do research and report it, it does an excellent job of preparing freshmen for the intellectual demands of writing in college.
2. It has been evaluated and validated, on-site, by nine separate major studies from 1972-1983, and is considered a model in the nation. In fact, this type of composition course--a rhetorically based course stressing expository writing and an introduction to library research--is now the norm at major universities.

3. It undergirds our entire graduate English program. Most dependent on it, obviously, are those students in our graduate rhetoric program. As future writing teachers and administrators, they look to it for professional training and experience, and use it as a place to test the knowledge they get in their rhetoric courses. But graduate students in literature also depend on teaching 306--not only to earn their stipends but to prepare them for the rhetorically based composition courses they'll be expected to move right into upon taking their first appointment. Were E.306 eliminated, it would be hard to see how the graduate program in English could continue.
4. It helps ensure quality control over the writing instruction given our students, since the many graduate students teaching E.306 do so only after receiving careful training and supervision.

Why we recommend reinstating a limited number of sections of 310, 317, and 346K:

We contend that every student at UT should have the opportunity to take an expository writing class every year if he or she wishes to do so. Currently, our students cannot. Incredible as it seems, they are limited to just three--the first-semester Freshman course, E.306, and two upper-division seminars, E.325M and E.379C, both of which are so advanced that they're hardly an option for most students. Our plan repairs that deficiency. It also restores some balance to a department that offers no less than 60 literature courses.

E.310, Intermediate Expository Writing, would meet the needs of many students who have completed E.306 or who have placed out of it. Historically, two groups of students have heavily demanded this popular course: pre-law students and Business majors. Both groups know that they will need to write a great deal in their profession and view the course as part of their career preparation. As in the past, E.310 could be primarily taught by advanced graduate students.

E.317, Technical Writing, would fill the degree requirements for students in Nursing, Home Economics, Engineering, etc., unless those schools established their own equivalent course. E.317, like E.310, could be taught primarily by advanced graduate students. In fact, many of them would welcome the chance to teach it since it would provide valuable training and enhance their job opportunities.

E.346K, Writing in the Different Disciplines, would provide a junior-level writing course for students eager to write in their major field. The number of sections would be limited because the course could not be taught by graduate students. Were we to rely on interested faculty and a few highly qualified lecturers, we could probably offer roughly 30 sections per semester.

Why we recommend giving course credit for E.346K to any students who've scored 650 or above on the ECT and who've also taken two college-level English courses:

Such students fall into the top 10% of UT's students and in all likelihood don't need 346K. Approximately 500 students each year fit this category. That's 500 fewer students we'd need to worry about.

Why we recommend reducing the Substantial Writing Component requirement from two courses to one course:

The original plan for the SWC courses, modeled on that of the University of Michigan, envisaged one TA to be used for each 20 students in a class. These TA's were to be trained in a course lasting a full semester. Since no moneys are allocated for TA support the next two years, and since the training of the TA's was limited to just 2 hours for 30 TA's this year, it's clear that the University cannot support two SWC courses. It seems better to try to do a good job with one.

Why we recommend changing the undergraduate English requirement in all colleges to 9 unspecified hours of English:

If students are to be required to take 9 hours of English, they should at least be given the chance to choose the courses most appealing to them. Our recommendation would give them that chance. And over a period of time, it would ensure that only those courses that proved genuinely useful and interesting would survive, be they composition or literature courses. That is as it should be, surely.

Some people might wonder, "But wouldn't E.306 wither away?" Initially, we predict, 306 would suffer an enrollment drop, but if the pattern at other universities holds true at UT, after two or three years enrollment would start swelling again as students recognized the course's practical value. Despite popular belief, college students are quite capable of realizing when they have a writing deficiency--and acting on that realization. The success of E.310 proved it. At one time we were running 30 sections a semester.

Summary of the administrative structure of our proposed Undergraduate Writing Program:

A Director of Writing, appointed by the Dean of Liberal Arts, would administer all undergraduate writing courses in the Department of English. The Director would be assisted by (a) a Coordinator of Lower-Division Writing and (b) a Coordinator of Upper-Division Writing. These three individuals would make up the Writing Committee, which would be

responsible for course content and policy in undergraduate writing classes.

The Director of Writing, in cooperation with the Associate Chair of the English Department, would schedule and staff writing courses and supervise the hiring of writing instructors. When appropriate, the Director would make hiring recommendations to the Dean of Liberal Arts and the Executive Committee of the English Department. The Director and the Writing Committee would coordinate writing courses, approve syllabi and course variants, select course texts, maintain TA/AI orientation and supervision programs, train faculty, and coordinate testing, placement, and evaluation in the writing courses.

The Coordinator of Lower-Division Writing would supervise E.306, E.310, and E.317 (if offered). He or she would be assisted by a Writing Lab Director and a graduate student serving as Assistant Director of Lower-Division Writing. The Writing Lab, though supervised by the Lower-Division Coordinator, would support all writing courses in the English Department.

The Coordinator of Upper-Division Writing would supervise E.325M, E.346K, E.360M, and E.379C, and would provide training and support for the Substantial Writing Component courses.

The Writing Program office would be staffed by one senior secretary and one secretary.

#### Rationale of the Administrative Structure:

The administrative structure, diagrammed in the Appendix, would both simplify and improve the management of our writing courses--and do so within the existing budget.

The plan allows for the development of a coherent writing program coordinated at every level by a single body (the Writing Committee) responsible for offering a comprehensive, consistently designed, and non-overlapping selection of writing courses.

To ensure the efficiency and stability of the program, the Writing Director would be appointed by, and report to, the Dean of Liberal Arts, and would in turn appoint the two program Coordinators (Lower/Upper Division). This arrangement would place the responsibility for designing and administering successful writing courses in the hands of appropriate disciplinary experts and would remove some of the current sources of friction within the English Department.

The elective design of our suggested English program would shift the focus within the department from questions of logistics to matters of quality. The administrators of the literature and writing programs would share a similar but non-competitive responsibility--i.e., to offer effective courses in the areas of their specific expertise and within

the constraints of staffing and budget. The Writing Director would work closely with the Associate Chair of the English Department in determining course offerings according to student demand and staffing capability.

A single Director of Writing would allow for a more efficient management of those components of a writing program now handled unevenly or redundantly across the English curriculum: syllabus design, course sequencing, faculty training, AI supervision, placement and testing of students, course and faculty evaluation, text selection, staffing, and support services (typing, duplicating, etc.). The Lower- and Upper-Division Coordinators would be responsible for day-to-day matters in their separate courses (staff meetings and faculty counseling, student advising, student complaints, registration, rosters, book orders, etc.).

The Lower-Division Coordinator would have the additional job of overseeing the Writing/Personal Computer Lab. While this facility has, for the past 14 months, been officially limited to assisting students in freshman courses only, students in all departmental writing courses (and many literature courses) have continued to request and use the many services it provides. Within the limits of its current resources and budget, the lab would again officially accommodate students taking any courses in the English Department. Similarly, the PC component of the lab, equipped by computers provided by Project Quest, would continue to serve any appropriate classes in the English Department.

The Upper-Division Coordinator would be responsible for developing and offering services in support of the Substantial Writing Component Courses--that is, offering the writing expertise within the English Department to faculty in other disciplines. The Upper-Division Coordinator would also solicit the support and expertise of local business and professional writers in developing writing programs to serve the needs of the community at large.

The Writing Program would require the same staff required by the pre-1984 Freshman English office: one Senior Secretary and one Secretary. The Writing Program would be located in the offices currently housing the Freshman English Office and duplicating room: Parlin 14, 16, 18, and 19. One additional room might be necessary to provide a separate office space for the three faculty administrators and the two members of the classified staff.

The graduate-student office of Assistant Director of Freshman English would be retained, renamed as Assistant Director of Lower-Division Writing. The Assistant Director would be selected annually after a review of appropriate credentials by the Writing Committee. The position would provide important experience for graduate students interested in pursuing careers in rhetoric and writing program administration.

Assuming a two-course load reduction for the Director of Writing and single-course reductions for the Lower- and Upper-Division Coordinators,

the new program would require no increase in faculty support over the current program (assuming a one-course reduction for the Director of E.346K under the current program). The new Writing Program Office would continue to use the personnel now employed in the Freshman English Office (Parlin 16) and the Duplicating Room (Parlin 14). The department already has a Writing Lab Director and the Assistant Director position. The new program would eliminate the current Freshman English Policy Committee, the E.346K Committee, and the Upper-Division Writing Committee. One additional office would be required.

Logistical matters:

Below is a summary of three alternate ways to staff the composition program we've described. The numbers relate to academic year 1986-87 and are based upon provisional estimates supplied by the Office of Institutional Studies. A full report is forthcoming.

- (1) If we use current grad student numbers and 10 additional lecturers:

Composition Capability:

Grad students--40 AI's @ 3 courses per year.....	120
Line lecturers.....	26
Lecturers--10 additional at 8 courses/year.....	80
Regular faculty--needed to make remainder of comp courses (figuring 1 course per year...)	<u>72</u>
Total.....	298

[Note: The other grad students--AI's & TA's-- are needed to handle 316K.]

- (2) If we use more TA's:

By hiring 25 additional TA's and AI's (and we could, since there are easily 25 more grad students who'd welcome the stipend), we would largely solve the problem of AI's being used in the 316K courses--that is, we would free them to teach 310, 317, and 314L. This plan has three advantages: it helps the staffing problem, it provides an alternative to hiring lecturers, and it gives the graduate students training in teaching different kinds of courses. Of the three plans, it's probably the most viable.

Composition Capability:

Graduate students: 66 AI's @ 3 courses per year...	198
Lecturers (5 line).....	26
Faculty.....	<u>74</u>
Total.....	298



- (3) If we use present TA's and AI's, and no lecturers save the 5 line lecturers:

Composition Capability:

AI's--40 at 3 courses per year.....	120
Line lecturers.....	26
Faculty.....	<u>152</u>
Total.....	298

NB: This can only be accomplished if all assistant professors, all rhetoric-interest people, and about half of the associate professors teach 2 composition courses a year, and if the remaining people teach 1 composition course a year (i.e., 303, 310, 316, 317, 325M, 346K). Such a scenario seems unlikely.

Projected composition offerings for 1986-87:

Course	Fall sections	Spring	Total	Total students
306	80	40	120	3000 (25/section)
310	20	20	40	1000 "
317	25	45	70	1750 "
346K	20	40	60	1500 "
325M	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>160</u> (20/section)
Total	149	149	298	7410

NB: The total of 298 Composition sections is 262 fewer than the number offered in 1982-83, the last year of the old schedule--a reduction of 46% in our composition offerings. The department has not yet made any effort to achieve a comparable decrease in the number of students taking literature courses. It would help our common logistical concerns if the department could devise a more aggressive exemption plan for E.316, the mammoth sophomore literature course.

Please accept our apologies for such a lengthy report. Should you have any questions, we would welcome the opportunity to try to answer them.

Cordially,

Maxine Hairston  
 James Kinneavy  
 John Ruskiewicz  
 John Trimble

# Administrative Structure: UT Undergraduate Writing Program

