

# English faculty disagrees on proposed requirement

By KLAUS HERRING

Daily Texan Staff

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in a three-part series examining the UT Department of English problems and proposed solutions.

A Department of English proposal to move the second semester of freshman composition into the junior or senior year is designed to remedy increasing enrollment problems the University and English department face — a problem first encountered 20 years ago.

James Kinneavy, a professor of English and director of freshman English, said his proposal will provide a continued writing experience for undergraduate students and will both help curb the enrollment problem and alleviate staffing problems in lower division English classes.

"English departments throughout this country have trouble with their English program," Robert King, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said.

King said other universities, particularly in the North, Northeast and Northwest, are having problems with decreasing enrollment, while the University must deal with increasing enrollment and problems associated with such growth.

Kinneavy said the No. 1 and 2 problems facing the English department and the University are increasing enrollment and teaching assistant/assistant instructor exploitation.

Along with increased enrollment in lower division English courses, recent interviews show problem areas in the English department include:

- A shortage of instructors for lower division courses each semester.
- General unwillingness of tenured faculty to teach composition and the resulting dependence on temporary faculty and AIs to teach composition.
- General dissatisfaction of TAs and AIs.
- Lack of money to finance extended programs and hire sufficient faculty.
- The inability of college students to read and write.

King said enrollment in freshman English courses peaked in the late '60s and early '70s, dropped during the mid-'70s and increased dramatically during the last few years.

He said freshman enrollment is nearing almost 6,000, a dramatic increase over the 4,000 to 4,500 students enrolled only four years ago.

Leo Hughes, professor emeritus of English, said the trend could be traced to even earlier times. "After World War II, we had an influx of ex-soldiers on top of our normal enrollment," he said.

King said during the enrollment crisis of the late '60s and early '70s, the English department relied heavily upon graduate students to help take up the slack, a course now impossible because competition for jobs among doctorate English students has become intensely competitive.

"I believe it is morally wrong to rely exclusively on graduate instructors to take up the slack, to artificially inflate the ranks of graduate students because we need teachers," King said.

"The fact is that there is a large pool of unemployed Ph.D.s in our community," King said. He said he would rather hire temporary faculty than increase graduate teaching positions.

Earlier this spring, the English department was faced with about 40 unstaffed sections of freshman and

sophomore English.

King said the "unexpected" development resulted because many undergraduates waited until the spring semester to register for required courses.

However, James Sledd, professor of English, said the unstaffed sections of lower division English were not caused solely by unexpected registration increases.

The problem surfaced because a large portion of tenured faculty in the Department of English refuse to teach composition, Sledd said. "One colleague told me 'composition stinks,'" he said.

"Earlier this semester, Dean King told the English faculty that every faculty member will have to teach composition. You should have heard the hue and cry," Sledd said.

King and Kinneavy agreed that some faculty members are unwilling to teach composition because their specialty is elsewhere.

"He (Sledd) is right when he says some English faculty don't want to teach composition," King said.

Larry Carver, associate professor of English, said some of the senior faculty members do not want to teach composition, but the allegation does not hold true for many others.

"I taught a composition course, and it was the best teaching experience of my life," Carver said.

Hughes said some faculty members want to be "stars," and the only way to be a star is to teach literature in a specialty. Hughes, a specialist in medieval literature, said the system is to blame for the attitudes of many professors.

*Functional illiteracy*

*known*

**The Dept.  
of English**

*High enrollment*

*TA/AI dissatisfaction*

"In the '30s, '40s and even the '50s a university would spend much money on a brand new, promising young Ph.D. They would promise him, among other things, that he could teach his own graduate class after two or three years," said Hughes, a teacher at the University for about 40 years.

He said now the enrollment in graduate classes has shrunk to a minimum and many of the stars are dissatisfied because they cannot teach their graduate classes.

On the other hand, many graduate students are becoming increasingly disgruntled with salaries they are paid to teach courses that no one else except temporary faculty members want to teach.

Kinneavy said the proposal to move the second-semester freshman English course into the junior or senior year is above all a move to help alleviate what he termed "functional illiteracy" among college students.

Kinneavy said a 1976 study conducted by Sledd and Susan Herford, of the Measurement and Evaluation Center, shows many students cannot write a coherent sentence, cannot express themselves on paper and cannot read.

Tuesday, details of Kinneavy's proposal will be presented along with another look at the 1976 Sledd report.