

FRESHMAN ENGLISH POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes

November 21, 1983

Attending: Ruszkiewicz, Myers, Westbrook, Daniell, Jarratt, Jolliffe,
Trachsel

Absent: Simon (excused), V. LeClercq, McMurrey, Underwood

- I. Call to order; approval of minutes.
- II. John Ruszkiewicz reported on a recent conversation with the chairman.
 - A. Mr. Sutherland will check with the dean to find out whether, given the language in the catalogue, the department can require E106/206.
 - B. Mr. Sutherland reports that the dean is concerned with the disparity in grades among sections of 306 and 307. Consequently, a memo will go out before the end of the semester from the Freshman Office announcing that Fall, 1983 grades will be examined in the spring of 1984. Mr. Ruszkiewicz will talk with AI's and lecturers with very high percentages of above average grades; Dr. Sutherland, with tenure-track and tenured faculty.

David Jolliffe pointed out that examining the fall semester grades is not really fair since there are only two weeks left in the semester--not enough time to make changes in grading practices. Beth Daniell pointed out that instructors are bound to their policy statements from the beginning of the term.

Max Westbrook had several observations about the issue. He observed that group reading of student essays can be a non-threatening way to norm grades. He indicated that inflated grades are unfair to students and that grades from more than a single term should be examined in determining whether an instructor tends to inflate grades.

Mr. Ruszkiewicz decided that the announcement should include the information that there is an FEPC committee working on ways to assist teachers in evaluation techniques, that the dean wants grade reviews, and that instructors will be called in, beginning this spring and each fall and spring hereafter.

Susan Jarratt suggested that summer grades also be reviewed since there is great pressure brought to bear by provisional students to give higher grades. She informed the group that the committee on evaluation review has had a preliminary meeting, and asked what specifically the committee should be working on.

Mr. Ruszkiewicz responded, (1) ways of norming grades, (2) revising grading standards (specifically, current set of criteria) or coming up with other instruments.

The committee should report early next spring.

Mary Trachsel pointed out that group grading sessions, such as one she participated in at Penn State, can reveal huge disparities in standards and create frustration. Ms. Daniell suggested that any grading sessions include directions, such as what time in the semester the paper was received.

Mr. Jolliffe mentioned the possibility of criterion-referenced standards and said we could derive these inductively within the department by using a computer. Mr. Ruszkiewicz said we should come up with sample essays representing various grades. Mr. Westbrook pointed out the difference between variation in standards and real fraud, and observed that sharing the grading experience makes you conscious of your own standards.

Mr. Ruszkiewicz closed the discussion by reflecting that 120 teachers of freshman sections need some common standards.

III. Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty

Next we considered the statement Mr. Ruszkiewicz prepared for distribution to all freshmen at the discretion of instructors. Ms. Jarratt asked whether intention was necessary for plagiarism: the answer was no.

We discussed several changes in the existing statement:

1. The suggestion on page 2, paragraph 3 that the writer may "rely heavily on phrases borrowed from a source."
Mr. Ruszkiewicz suggested, and we approved, a wording change: "When you take notes, you must be careful to put ideas in your own words or to use direct quotations when you are relying heavily on phrases borrowed directly from a source."
2. Greg Myers was worried about the dual message suggested in page 3, paragraph 2: it's ok to get help; it's not ok to get help. The following change was suggested and approved:

Omit from "This does not mean . . ." to "It does mean, however, that." and begin a new sentence with "any changes, deletions, rearrangements, . . ." We agreed that we are sending a dual message and want to maintain a degree of vagueness in order to allow a student to accept help within bounds, but to be able to penalize her/him for receiving too much help. Mr. Myers will provide examples of good and bad editing.

3. Mr. Myers will write an addition concerning the use of papers written by the student for previous classes.
4. The colon introducing the quotation on page 2 will be changed to a comma.
5. Mr. Ruszkiewicz will extract examples of plagiarism and acceptable paraphrase which he wrote from the library packet to be included as an appendix.

IV. Meeting was adjourned.