

March 6, 1980

To: English Department Teaching Staff

From: The Committee on Exemptions

Our committee was given the task of considering the tests and scores for exempting students from English 306 and 307. Professor Kinneavy's advice was sought and freely given. With his figures and suggestions as background, we came up with these recommendations.

I. A major problem in placement is that so many examination scores reach us near the beginning of the Fall semester. We believe an earlier deadline for freshmen testing should be insisted upon; that entering students who expect to take English 306 or 307 in the Fall must submit test scores early in the Spring semester. (A specific deadline should be set.)

Those who do not meet this deadline can be assigned freshman English the following Spring.

II. We recommend that the ECT be continued for English 306 placement or exemption, if the test can be administered in time to meet the early deadline. Only if there are serious obstacles to this early use of the ECT, do we recommend that the verbal SAT scores be used instead. The SAT is taken by most students as part of the general admissions procedure. Besides, it does correlate highly with ECT scores.

III. At the present time with an ECT (or SAT) of 550 we exempt from English 306 roughly 25% of 6,000 entering students. That is, exemptions run to about 1500. Lowering the exemption score by 5% would increase exemptions by about 300 -- to a total of 1800. Lowering the score by 10% would pass through another 300. That is, lowering the score by about thirty points would increase exemptions from 1500 to 2100 students.

Our conclusion is that such a reduction would not be a great administrative convenience. More important, even this slight lowering of the cutoff score would deprive the students of skills they really lack and would not be in their best interests. We recommend that the cutoff of 550 for exemptions from English 306 be retained.

IV. English 307 exemptions are presently granted on the basis of our own difficult two-part examination. Very few students take this examination and even fewer still, no more than a dozen per year, are excused from English 307. It may be that we have simply not adequately publicized the opportunity for exempting 307. We thus recommend that the availability of the test be more widely announced so that a few more exceptional students can be exempted. Otherwise, we recommend no change in the present exemption policy for English 307.

The Committee