

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

April 11, 1979

Parlin 214

Members present: Kinneavy, Ruszkiewicz, Witte, Newcomb, Cameron,  
Byars, Hart

Agenda:

Approval of minutes  
Cameron constitutional changes  
Report on textbooks  
Adams request

1. The minutes of March 30 were corrected and approved.
2. The committee agreed to hear briefly from the Textbook Subcommittee before turning to constitutional matters. Dr. Ruszkiewicz reported that although the subcommittee had not made much progress during 4 C's week, it had now divided up prospective texts among its members for close inspection and would have a small number to bring before the committee on April 18. Dr. Witte mentioned that he had talked to Paul O'Connell, Winthrop's English editor, and that Mr. O'Connell had agreed to ask D'Angelo to let us use the chapter on persuasion that will appear in the next edition of Process and Thought in Composition. Dr. Witte also reported that Dr. Lindemann had spoken directly to D'Angelo about the chapter and that he had said he would be delighted for us to use it.
3. Mr. Cameron began discussion of his revised constitution by saying that he hoped the committee would take seriously his remark in the covering memo that he did not expect the document to pass. He had merely aimed to prompt what he saw as some needed changes, though not necessarily in the form specified in his document. Both the committee and the Freshman Office need to be well organized to face all the changes that will come next year as a result of the new dean's policies and the increase in enrollment, he said. Last year, he added, he had seen Dr. Kinneavy carry a seemingly impossible workload, a load which might be eased through reorganization. Following these remarks, Mr. Cameron went through his proposed constitution explaining changes.

Concerning article I, he said he'd talked to both Dr. Kruppa and Dr. Rebhorn about the status of the TA rights and responsibilities document and had gotten conflicting opinions. Whereas Dr. Kruppa had said that since the document has no legal standing, it would make a poor basis for a constitution, Dr. Rebhorn had said that it would serve well. Mr. Cameron had retained it but had dropped TA in favor of AI to reflect new UT rules for instructors of record. Dr. Kinneavy commented that although the rights and

responsibilities statement is not legally binding, it has strong official standing simply because the department adopted it.

Turning to article IV, Mr. Cameron said that he'd collapsed the description of the committee's personnel functions because he couldn't see why they should be more carefully spelled out than other duties. Still, he said, IV.C.3 in the present constitution should be retained since some aspects of the counselling program remain intact. Dr. Kinneavy agreed, adding that the full counselling operation is widely thought to have been one of the best parts of the freshman English program.

Next the committee talked about V.A of the current constitution, an item which lets FEPC membership be governed by the TA rights document and which Mr. Cameron had omitted. During this discussion Mr. Cameron perused the "Rights and Responsibilities of Teaching Assistants" and found an article mandating that voting membership on departmental course committees be composed of TA's and regular faculty in equal numbers. Dr. Kinneavy pointed out that this requirement would entail adding two more AI members to the committee under Mr. Cameron's constitution in order to offset the two additional associate directors. Mr. Cameron replied that he'd expected the student-affairs associate director to be an AI, but Dr. Kinneavy and Dr. Witte objected that unless we prize visits from the ombudsman, we should not have an AI adjudicating complaints about other AI's.

Discussion shifted to the advisability of having apprentice teachers on the committee. Mr. Cameron said that he'd left TA's out because Dr. Rebhorn had told him that they probably have no standing in the department. Dr. Witte, however, suggested that a TA might make a valuable addition to the committee, especially since we'd had so many problems this year involving the use of TA's. With a TA member, he argued, we could at least expect TA's to believe us when we say that we're trying to accomplish something for them. Dr. Kinneavy and Dr. Newcomb both agreed that Dr. Witte's point deserved consideration, particularly if the committee decided to enlarge itself. Dr. Witte added that if we were to have a five-five balance on the committee and let one of the junior members be a TA and four be AI's, the ratio of TA's to AI's on the committee would reflect that of the program as a whole.

Next, item V.C of the proposed constitution was discussed. There was mention of limiting AI terms to one or two years in order to share experience, and then Ms. Byars suggested that the voting eligibility requirement be dropped since it is unenforceable. Dr. Kinneavy asked Mr. Cameron to determine whether the TA rights document covers voting eligibility.

When article VI came up, Mr. Cameron recalled that in a conversation before the meeting, Mr. Hart had pointed out that in specifying the duties of committee officers this article includes their administrative duties in the program as well, thus effectively bringing functions of the Freshman English Office into the constitution. Dr. Kinneavy said that much of the article looks more like a job description than a constitution and that perhaps these parts should go into bylaws. At any rate, he continued, the language of VI.A.1.a.(2) would have to be weakened since Dorothy Rattey hires all the department's classified staff. Mr. Cameron said he had assumed that all of article VI would need careful scrutiny, and Dr. Kinneavy agreed, adding that the constitution should describe only chair functions, not administrative ones. Dr. Witte spotted another technical inconsistency in item B, and the language there was changed to have associate directors appointed by the departmental chairman rather than by the EC.

Next, Mr. Cameron explained that he had seen the assistant director's role as being mainly an administrative assistant to the director and had thus carefully listed coordination responsibilities in VI.C. Dr. Witte said that he was troubled by item 2.b and asked whether it would require the assistant director to report to the associates instead of to the director. Mr. Cameron said that it would and that it should therefore be removed.

Dr. Kinneavy then suggested having only two associates but two assistants because such a change might be more acceptable to the department since it would require adding only one more AI and one more regular faculty member to the committee. Ms. Byars pointed out that Dr. Kinneavy's plan would cost less, too, since an AI can be given a course off more cheaply than can a professor. Dr. Witte agreed with this reasoning but expressed reservations about assigning so many administrative duties to AI's, who, after all, are here for an education. Well, replied Mr. Cameron, working in the Freshman English Office is an education in itself. Perhaps so, Dr. Witte responded, but there are other problems similar to the one Dr. Kinneavy pointed out involving student complaints. Mr. Cameron said that these problems could be circumvented by removing, say, items b.(4) and b.(3).(b) under VI.B.1, and he reiterated his opinion that AI's should serve only as administrative assistants, not as administrators. Dr. Kinneavy countered by saying that many programs around the country have AI's serving as administrators.

Dr. Ruskiewicz raised one other potential problem with Dr. Kinneavy's suggestion: it would require us to train two new assistant directors each year instead of just one. Mr. Cameron replied that

assistant directors should be appointed much earlier in the year, thus allowing them more time to observe committee affairs. Dr. Kinneavy said that assistant directors could be required to have prior service on the committee, but Ms. Byars observed that such a requirement would ultimately leave us at the mercy of AGSE elections for our assistant directors.

As time grew short, Mr. Cameron asked the committee to think about the article on subcommittees. He had tried to strengthen subcommittee functioning, he said, but he was uncertain about whether associate directors should chair subcommittees and he had thought that perhaps the descriptions of these groups' duties should be moved from the constitution to the policies document.

4. Discussion of the Adams request began with a question about the teaching structure it would establish, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz said that according to his understanding Dr. Adams would teach 75 students with the help of three TA's, for the training of whom he would earn a course off. Dr. Witte pointed out that the committee had previously talked about trying to limit instructors to a three-course freshman load and about administrators wanting us to run large lecture sections. He would oppose the Adams request, he said, because our approval of it might be misinterpreted. Dr. Kinneavy suggested that Dr. Adams could be invited to answer questions regarding these and other matters.

Dr. Newcomb then asked whether Dr. Adams intended to meet with each of the smaller groups. Dr. Kinneavy replied that he would not do so routinely although he did plan to have more teaching duties during the invention phase of the course than during the last two phases. Dr. Kinneavy added that he had told Dr. Adams about a problem with considering the proposed course experimental: since it could not be controlled without expanding it to four sections, it could yield only suggestions, not firm statistical data.

Ms. Byars noted that since fall course schedules were already out, the lateness of the request presented another problem; but Mr. Cameron said that if we were to approve Dr. Adams's course, it could be added in the supplement. The chief issue, though, Dr. Witte said, involves the use of TA's: whereas the TA program is supposed to be for training teachers, the Adams request emphasizes getting as much work as possible out of the apprentices. Dr. Ruszkiewicz added that in particular, TA's would be grading more papers than we allow. Dr. Kinneavy agreed but said that Dr. Adams, who has a reputation as one of the hardest workers in the department, did not design the proposed course to evade work.

At this point, with all the watches in the room noticeably overheated and with much business left to finish, the committee paused to consider what it could realistically aim to accomplish at the next meeting. Mr. Cameron conceded that lab-course issues were more pressing than constitutional ones, and Dr. Ruskiewicz risked declaring that the committee could settle on texts in one session. Dr. Kinneavy then asked that the next agenda be limited to textbooks and the lab, and adjourned the meeting.