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English Department could be redesigned

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Daily Texan Staff

A UT faculty member criticized an administrative decision to separate writing classes from literature classes in the Department of English Tuesday.

In response to recommendations from the Committee on Undergraduate Education, UT President William Cunningham instructed Robert King, acting dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and Executive Vice President and Provost

Gerhard Fonken to study the feasibility of creating a division of rhetoric and composition within the college in order to emphasize writing skills.

Joseph Kruppa, chairman of the Department of English, criticized the decision and said the relationship of writing to literature requires a "more unified approach."

"I think it's a bad idea," Kruppa said. "I would not want a separate division for rhetoric. We need to keep the two together."

King could not be reached for comment

Tuesday, and Fonken refused to comment.

The division was one of several recommendations accepted by Cunningham. Other recommendations for improving writing instruction include all departments requiring regular written work and an increase in the number of available classes with substantial writing components.

Kruppa said he would prefer greater emphasis on writing throughout the University, rather than separating writing and literature.

"It is not a sound academic idea. You

can't teaching writing alone," Kruppa said. "It's not something you can learn during your first two years of college and then stop. You have to keep writing constantly year after year."

According to Kruppa, some other universities in the nation have separated literature courses from composition courses, with varying results. Some universities have returned to the unified approach after dividing the programs, he said.

Kruppa also noted that the program is still being planned, and no specific course

arrangements have yet been made.

"It's kind of a general idea at this point. A full-scale academic inquiry would have to take place, and that has not happened yet," Kruppa said. "Such an inquiry would have to start with this department."

Art Geffen, associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota, said that the university divided its programs several years ago.

Geffen said the division involved little

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change in faculty and courses, but was rather an administrative division.

"The university established a program in composition some years ago," Geffen said. "Where control had formerly been in the English Department, composition is now independent. However, all the major figures of the department had their tenure home in English."

The University of California at Berkeley – to which the University of Texas is often compared – has separate departments for literature, rhetoric and composition.

Cunningham approved several additional recom-

mendations from the Committee on Undergraduate Education, many of which were aimed at providing students with a more defined path toward graduation.

Another recommendation that Cunningham accepted was a mandate that the deans of all colleges review their curricula in order to ensure that the courses fit into an "integrated structure," providing undergraduates with a coherent course of study.

Other recommendations included expanded undergraduate advising and information services as well as automated degree checks so that students have a better understanding of how to fulfill degree requirements.