

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

September 11, 1985

3:20 p.m. - 5:58 p.m.

Chairman William Sutherland called the meeting to order at 3:20 p.m. After some introductory remarks that praised the continuing high quality of our Department's curriculum and teachers, and that requested economy, directness, and collegiality of all speakers during the meeting, the chairman introduced Joseph Kruppa, E346K Committee chairman. In moving to put the E346K Committee's report to a Departmental faculty mail ballot, Kruppa explained that its makers had followed some fundamental constraints against hiring more instructors and offering more writing sections than we can presently staff. In following these constraints we weren't shirking our responsibilities, Kruppa pointed out, presenting comparisons with other major universities that showed our writing requirements to be well above the norm. Other members of the E346K Committee then spoke in turn, each addressing an aspect of the proposal. Lester Faigley, who acted as seconder of Kruppa's motion, spoke to the virtues of E306's removal to instructional settings other than the University's long term sessions; Alan Gribben listed several advantages of the new plan on the ultimate quality of our graduate program; Charles Rossman sketched out the *raison d'etre* as well as the hoped-for educational quality of the proposed new course, E311; and Jerome Bump addressed the topics of, first, the arithmetical limits on what we can teach and, second, the continued energetic role the writing laboratory will play in the proposed restructuring.

General discussion of the proposal followed. Walter Reed and Anthony Hilfer spoke approvingly of the greater range of students and course contents the proposed E311 could accommodate. Robert Twombly questioned whether we should set nine-hour--or for that matter, any hour--English requirements for students other than English majors. John Ruszkiewicz expressed his concern about the Department's requiring E306 to be taken by 4,000 students under some outside instructional apparatus ill-equipped to handle them; logistical difficulties alone seemed potentially severe, perhaps resulting in a return to the unhappy problems of temporary staff. Maxine Hairston took up several related matters that also questioned the report's wisdom. She asserted that the proposal's farming out of E306 would result in an education not only inferior but also outside our control; that Texas high schools could probably not raise the quality of their teaching; that the English Department wants to rid itself of E306 instruction because writing is neither a research nor a personal interest of most faculty; and that the University at large will not fill in the gaps in writing instruction left by our reformulations. John Farrell, John Slatin, and Wayne Lesser responded to Hairston's assertion that most English faculty either don't want to or perhaps can't teach writing particularly well. All three, in varying ways, maintained that writing can be taught extremely well in contexts other than those of rhetoric and composition pedagogy, whether these contexts be a literary canon or general humanistic inquiry. Gribben added that the report's intention was neither to rid us of nor to depreciate the worth of E306, since the alternative teaching entities would almost certainly do as good a job as we've ever done.

James Kinneavy spoke to the historical contexts and ideological underpinnings of the issue, "writing versus literature." He felt that the E346K report increased "literary" writing instruction but made no allowance for more technical writing instruction--not just E306 but also such courses as the late E310 and E317. Yet over 60% of University students major in the professional areas like business and engineering, as the majority of English Ph.D. granting universities in this country recognize by offering such technically focused writing courses. Kinneavy wished another proposal, composed by Hairston, himself, Ruszkiewicz, and John Trimble and submitted to Dean King last May, to appear on the mail ballot as an alternative to the Kruppa Committee's document. Debate continued for some time on the procedural question of how the Hairston proposal might be put to Departmental vote. The final ruling was that the Kruppa report, if the present meeting so voted, would be put to a mail ballot first; if defeated, then the Hairston proposal could be similarly presented.

Discussion returned to the E346K Committee's report. William Scheick and Kurt Heinzelman spoke in favor of certain qualities in the proposal, Heinzelman wondering in addition about the rationale behind the apparently non-literary E313 and E315, which Faigley explained as allowing for some more technical writing instruction but still making room for some disciplinary specialty. Wayne Rebhorn, Mary Robertson, and Evan Carton supported strongly the greater stress on literature in our few required courses, and in general, the separation of writing mechanics from writing content and quality of ideas. Carton insisted that E306, though taught elsewhere, continue to be required for any other English course, though Sue Rodi thought requiring what one doesn't offer illogical. Jeffrey Barnouw suggested calling the new E306 a "prerequisite" rather than a "requirement," thus addressing Rodi's objection. Ruszkiewicz commented on what he saw to be a widely held misapprehension about E306: a look at the syllabus would reveal that it was not, and had not been for over ten years, a "basic skills, remedial" course. The matter of whether the course was in reality if not design mostly remedial or mostly compositional was debated briefly by Rebhorn, Ruszkiewicz, Kinneavy, and Farrell, during which exchange the question of just what the ECT measured was raised. Larry Carver wondered about the cost/benefit ratio, as it were, of teaching E306 to freshmen who never do graduate from the University, Warner Barnes supplying the statistic that over two-thirds of our freshmen fall into that category. Citing the historical precedent of the English Department's surrendering Speech instruction, Hilfer thought that business and technical writing, if dropped by us, would similarly be taken up elsewhere. Lesser agreed that we couldn't be everything to all people and should concentrate on what we do best.

The matter of prerequisites was discussed briefly. To a question from Warwick Wadlington, Hairston confirmed that her group's proposal required no prerequisites for English courses; she noted the unlikelihood of students taking on upper division English courses clearly beyond their abilities. Wadlington disagreed, Lance Bertelsen further objecting to the alternative proposal's doing away with all English courses as requisite for graduating. Elizabeth Cullingford asked Kruppa whether his Committee's proposal allowed for "monster" E316K sections; discovering that it did, she asked, was the rationale pedagogically or logistically based? Kruppa conceded a practical

element in the policy. Twombly elaborated on his earlier comments, suggesting that the Kruppa Committee report's "principle no. 2" should propose a nine-hour literature requirement for English majors only; other Departments wanting writing should offer it themselves. Reed, Farrell, and Thomas Whitbread each spoke in favor of the proposal on the floor, though Wadlington added that the report might suggest a better means of testing college-bound students' writing proficiency than the ECT.

John Trimble, a co-author of the Hairston report, asked Kruppa to clarify how his Committee would address certain potential problems. First, could we justify the proposal's increased cost to students in both money and time? Second, could the University Extension Division handle the large number of students who'd have to take E306 under its aegis? Third, how could we credibly explain to students our requiring a course yet not offering it ourselves? And fourth, could the E346K Committee provide at least some numerical calculations to support its claim that the new policies would require no extra staff, would offer sufficient sections of its proposed courses, and so on? After Gribben suggested that the policies were in fact already working, since we've had to hire no Lecturers this year, Kruppa responded to each of Trimble's queries. First, all new requirements create demands on students; he pointed out, and new requirements are instituted all the time. Like all policy makers, the Committee tried in good faith to harmonize a range of interests---those of the Department, the program, and the students. Second, the report proposes many mechanisms for a student's satisfying of the E306 requirement; Extension is but one such method. Third, we will to some extent offer E306 ourselves--during the summer; but more germane, students presently satisfy the requirement by alternative means all the time, so the policy would not be a radical one. Fourth, calculations have been made to show that we're capable of handling the new program's logistics, as a handout Kruppa then distributed showed.

Kinneavy raised again the matter of Division of Extension's Lecturer quantity (at least 25 fulltime Lecturers would be needed to serve 4,000 students), quality, and working conditions, all of which would be as unsatisfactory as they've been in times past. Lesser disagreed, giving examples of the many excellent instructors in Extension, while Max Westbrook reminded the meeting that Extension was only an administrative unit; our Department would control the instructional features of the course. James Wimsatt observed that since E306 was such a controversial point in the proposal, perhaps we could offer but not give credit for the course, a step which Faigley though would not be practicable.

At this point Cullingford, seconded by Carver, called the question. The motion to put the E346K Committee's report to faculty approval or disapproval by mail ballot was then voted on and passed by majority voice vote. The Chairman closed the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Sept. 18, 1985,

R. deV. Renwick