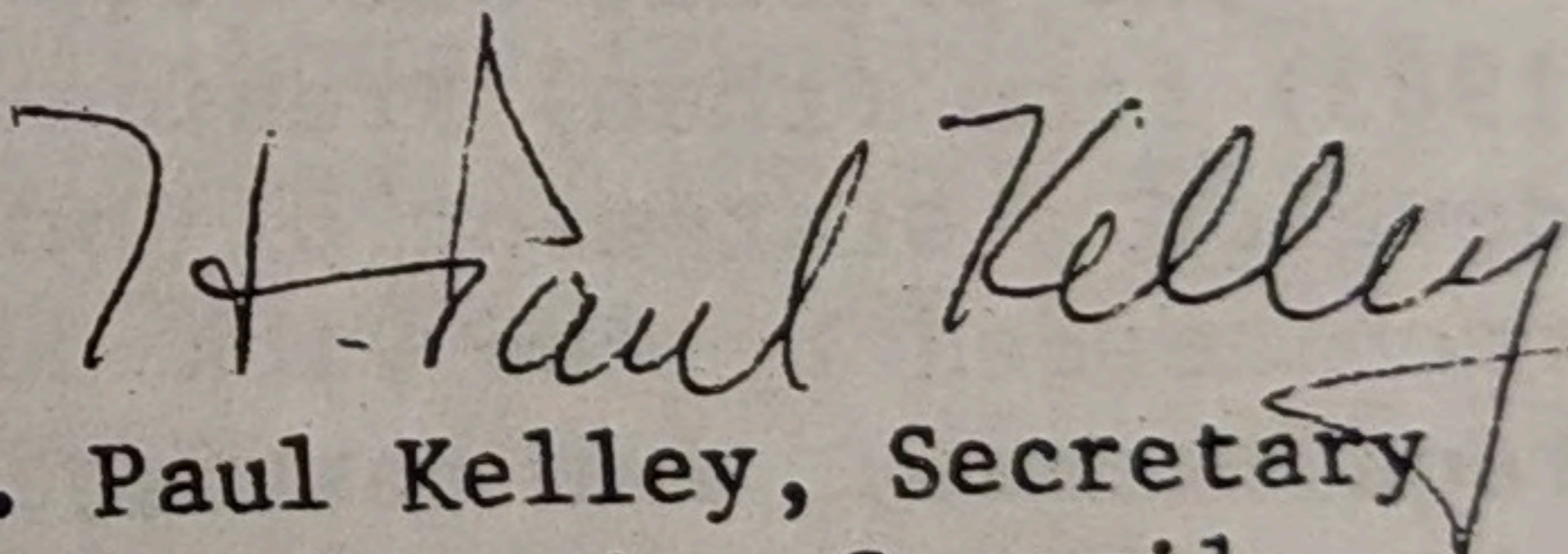


## DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS  
CONCERNING THE "FOWLER REPORT" RECOMMENDATIONS  
ABOUT SUBSTANTIAL WRITING COMPONENT COURSES

Joseph J. Lagowski (Chemistry), Chair of the Educational Policy Committee, has filed with the Secretary of the University Council the Educational Policy Committee recommendations concerning the "Fowler Report" recommendations about substantial writing component courses. The Secretary has classified the recommendations as major legislation. The 21-day circulation rule for major legislation will be complied with on April 28, 1989.

Notice is hereby given that these recommendations will be presented to the University Council for discussion at its meeting on April 17, 1989, but will be carried over until the May 8, 1989, meeting for action.

  
H. Paul Kelley, Secretary  
The University Council

Distributed to members of the University Council on April 11, 1989.

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS  
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### Introduction

The University Council at its meeting of May 9, 1988, (D&P 11934) voted to refer the "Fowler Report" (D&P 11715) to the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) for review and to make recommendations. Although the "Fowler Report" incorporates a review of the Basic Education requirements, the University Council apparently was most interested in questions arising from the Substantial Writing Component (SWC) requirements.

Accordingly, EPC makes the following recommendations on the SWC at this time; the remaining items in the "Fowler Report" on the Basic Education Requirements will be forthcoming.

### SWC Requirements

The present SWC requirements can be traced to a letter (23 September 1983) from (then) President Flawn establishing an ad hoc committee to develop a statement of University-wide minimum criteria, which were recommended by the Vick Committee as a part of the Basic Education requirements, for certifying SWC courses. The report of the ad hoc committee was approved by President Flawn (14 November 1983) and implemented by a memo (17 November 1983) to the academic Deans from (then) Vice-President for Academic Affairs Fonken. The SWC requirements currently in effect are as follows:

"Each course certified as having a substantial writing component must include at least three writing activities per semester, exclusive of in-class quizzes and examinations. These three or more writing activities must total approximately 16 typewritten, double-spaced pages (about 4,000 words). A major re-writing of a paper (requiring additional original writing, not merely editing) can be considered a separate writing activity.

"During the course, each student must receive a timely and detailed critique following each writing activity concerning the quality of the student's written expression and ways in which the paper can be improved.

"The quality of the student's written expression must be an important component in determining the student's course grade."

EPC agrees with the general premise which led to the inclusion of SWC within the Basic Education Requirements, but believes that the experience gained from the five (5) years since the institution of these courses indicates some adjustments need to be made in the details of expressing the SWC within the University community. These details involve access, flexibility, accountability, and resource availability.

### Access

EPC believes that students too often encounter severe difficulties in gaining admission to current SWC courses. The following recommendation is an attempt to provide more SWC courses and to level out the load in each college.

1. "The committee RECOMMENDS that each college be directed to offer sufficient courses to allow all of its majors to satisfy The University's Substantial Writing Component requirement within that college."

### Flexibility

The EPC concluded that the most important aspect of the criteria established for SWC courses was the total experience prescribed by the published criteria, and not the number of credit hours involved. The intensity of the experience currently is established by the number of courses that have been required under the previous guidelines, which are expressed in terms of numbers of credit hours. The EPC believes that much is to be gained in terms of availability of courses, if the offerings could be made more flexible. Accordingly,

2. "The committee RECOMMENDS that The University's Substantial Writing Component requirement be fulfilled by passing any two courses each of which is certified by the Dean to fulfill the criteria previously established [i.e., three or more writing activities totaling approximately 16 typewritten, double-spaced pages (about 4,000 words); a major rewriting of a paper (requiring additional original writing, not merely editing) can be considered a separate writing activity]."

### Accountability

One of the more serious problems with the current SWC courses is the paucity of details concerning the availability of SWC courses for planning purposes. Accordingly,

3. "The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Office of Institutional Studies make available to the Provost and the Deans a summary of SWC courses, by college, that are planned for each college. The survey should include, by college, an estimate of the number of students that could be accommodated within these courses."

We anticipate that such a survey, which could be produced at the time a final Course Schedule is produced for a given semester, would be a useful document for administrative-level discussions and negotiations to assure that the spirit of the SWC expressed in recommendation 1 is equitably fulfilled as far as is possible.

### Resource Availability

Because the expression of the SWC within different colleges often requires the training of assistants to help evaluate the "English" associated with the SWC, several members of the Committee indicated that part of the early successes in the early SWC courses arose from the availability of training workshops for this purpose. The Committee agreed that the training workshops associated with SWC courses be regularly given.

4. "The Committee RECOMMENDS that sufficient resources be made available to the Center for Teaching Effectiveness to organize and conduct regular workshops to train assistants for SWC courses."

Finally, the Committee discussed each recommendation associated with the SWC in the Fowler Report. Other than the issues associated with statements 1, 2, and 3 (above) the Committee did not support the other recommendations mentioned in the Fowler Report.