# FIRING LINE

### Division just rhetoric

Once again the University administration is attempting an administrative solution to a problem that isn't administrative.

A new Division of Rhetoric and Composition is being loudly advertised.

It's true that for many years the literati in the English Department have made a mess of the writing program.

An eminent professor of English once publicly remarked, "Composition stinks."

A former chairman of the department acknowledged that for composition, his faculty felt a "deep-seated detestation."

It's also true that as a group, faculty in other departments don't want to be bothered with teaching writing.

Research and publication, espe-

cially research in the service of big government and big money, are the surest paths to promotion in a university where top administrators have repeatedly called freshman composition "remedial."

That judgment puts over half the entering class in the state's "flagship" institution in dire need of remediation.

Now another professor of English powerlessly decrees, "The Univer-sity will have to put its money where its mouth is."

Fat chance.

Dean King has said that no university will ever pay a tenured or tenurable staff to teach freshman composition.

Instead, the teaching will continue to be left mostly to a multitude of overworked but underpaid graduate students, for most of whom rhetoric and composition are not primary intellectual

concerns. Meanwhile, squabbling over the few available goodies will be uninterrupted.

The writing program for freshmen will still be used to support graduate students in other areas so that there will still be victims for otherwise unpopulated graduate classes.

A new division will offer new opportunities for a handful of careerists, and new frustrations for a minority of serious composition teachers.

But as long as most faculty and administrators tacitly confess their real values by putting their money and their effort elsewhere, loud advertising and administrative shuffling won't change the writing program's long history of unsuccess.

> James Sledd Professor emeritus, English

### Send us your letters

Please, please

We need your Firing Line letters to help us from having to use this space for whiny solicitations. Send us your barbs and your blessings. We want to print them.

## **AROUND CAMPUS**

Around Campus is a daily column listing University-related activities sponsored by academic departments, student services and student organizations registered with the Campus Activities Office. Announcements must be submitted on the proper form by 11 a.m. the day before publication.

Forms are available at the *Daily Texan* office at 25th Street and Whitis Avenue.

The Daily Texan reserves the right to edit submissions.

#### SHORT COURSES

Methodist University Group at Hyde Park will hold beginning Western swing courses from 4-6 p.m. on Sundays until Jan. 31, beginning jitterbug courses from 7:30-9 p.m. on Tuesdays until Jan. 26, and a Western waltz workshop from 7-9 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 18.

The courses will be taught at the

Hyde Park Methodist Church on Speedway at 40th Street. It is not too late to join the course. For more information call instructor Valerie Ryan at 482-9462.

Thompson Conference Center will hold a course titled "Beethoven to Picasso: Connections in Painting and Music" from 7-8 p.m. on Wednesdays from Feb. 24 until April 10 in the Fine Arts Building.

Karen Pope and Bradley Bolen will teach this course, which is designed to explore theoretical, formal and informal relationships between the arts and music and painting in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Call Karen Pope at 471-8862 for more information.

Thompson Conference Center will offer an intensive Spanish certification program two days a week from Feb. 1 until March 13 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Call Lori Franz at 471-3125 for more information.