

To: Members of the English Department Executive Committee
From: The Departmental Committee on the Division of Rhetoric
Jim Kinneavy, Lester Faigley, John Ruskiewicz, Linda Ferreira-
Buckley, John Slatin, Evan Carton, Terry Kelley
Date: 2 December 1992
Re: Attached Report on the Division of Rhetoric

Please read the attached report before coming to the EC meeting tomorrow morning (Thursday, 3 December).

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From: The Departmental Committee on the Division of Rhetoric
Jim Kinneavy, Lester Faigley, John Ruskiewicz, Linda Ferreira-
Buckley, John Slatin, Evan Carton, Terry Kelley
Date: 2 December 1992
Re: Interim Report on the Division of Rhetoric

A Brief History of Deliberations

On October 12, Jim Kinneavy, Lester Faigley, John Slatin, Linda Ferreira-Buckley, and John Ruskiewicz held the first of what became a weekly series of informal meetings to discuss issues pertaining to the Division of Rhetoric and Composition, establishment of which had been announced on September 1. They were later named, along with Evan Carton and Terry Kelley, to the Dean's advisory committee on the Rhetoric Division and to the departmental committee. The departmental committee has continued to meet independently of the larger Dean's committee.

Initially, the atmosphere at these meetings was strained. There have been serious differences about writing instruction among us in the all-too-recent past. Moreover, five of us had told the Dean, publicly or privately or both, of our opposition to the proposed Division. We were convinced, however, that the Division would become a reality on June 1, and felt strongly that we should begin discussing the many complex issues that need to be resolved if the Division is to work at all and if the English Department's interests are to be in any way served. A further rationale lay in our desire to bring a coherent, focused set of ideas and questions to what we believed would be eventual meetings with the interim Dean. Finally, we wished to address an old problem. The English Department has been criticized for a lack of commitment to undergraduate writing instruction, yet much of the blame attaches to the University administration for its failure to appropriate the funds to support programs developed by members of the Department and approved by the administration. We saw these meetings, therefore, as an opportunity to lay out for public consideration what we believe to be the components of a responsible, effective undergraduate writing program, to leave no room for misunderstanding about what it will cost the University to endow with real substance what Frank Bean, Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, has called a "symbolic gesture."

Collegiality

Our first meeting revolved around discussion of the way we wanted to work together then and in the future. All members expressed a strong desire for creative, highly collegial relationships, and we agreed that such collegiality would require sometimes difficult acts of faith in one another, that the only way to avoid a repetition of the terrible internecine warfare of the 1990 debate over 306 would be to take the risk of trust and candor. Our meetings have not been easy by any means: we have made a point of identifying areas of

disagreement among ourselves, and we have debated those disagreements vigorously and openly. Indeed, the quality of the discussion has been a key element in persuading us that the Division might be workable despite its controversial, and to many disturbing, beginnings. All five of us feel a strong allegiance to and identification with the English Department, and a desire to advance the Department's interests. Our concerns about recruitment, with respect both to UT's national reputation and to our desire to establish the strongest possible cooperative relationship between the Division and the Department, have led us to two strong steps: we have requested a meeting with the Department's Executive Committee, and we have informed the Dean of our unanimous nomination for the first Director of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition.

Governance and decision-making

We agreed immediately (and unanimously) that the structure outlined in the September 1 document, giving full authority to a single director appointed by the Dean, was unacceptable. We wanted our decision-making processes (both in these meetings and in the Division) to be democratically organized, with full participation by all members (the Dean has since agreed in principle, asserting at both the November 5 and November 19 meetings of the advisory committee that he had intended all along that Division faculty should determine their own governance). We agreed, also, that close cooperation with the English Department was an absolute necessity, both for the Division and for the Department. We have been discussing how best to insure both that English Department concerns are well and formally represented within the Division and, conversely, that the Division is similarly represented within the Department. We are aware, of course, that some members of the Department do not regard the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between the English Department and the Division of Rhetoric and Composition as a serious one. Nonetheless, we feel very strongly that we should seek to construct such a mutually beneficial understanding and to craft procedures and administrative structures that implement those understandings in ways that do not depend upon the personalities presently involved.

The Division of Rhetoric and Composition will have greater responsibilities than the current writing program within the English Department, but will give the University a composition program equal to the best in the country while enhancing the resources and energies of the English Department itself. Faculty from the Division will maintain and develop all of the existing writing courses-- providing training, syllabi, and course materials for composition classes routinely taught by Assistant Instructors from the Department of English (E 306, E 306Q, and the three versions of E 309).

In order to insure stability in a program that has been too frequently disrupted in the past, we have agreed to retain the current syllabus for E 306,

unanimously endorsed by the full department. We have reached general agreement on establishing a coherent sequence of undergraduate writing courses, beginning with E 306 and continuing through E 379C (Topics in Composition). We will pay special attention to re-shaping E 309, so that distinctions among the three variants will be clearer and more meaningful both to AI's teaching the course and to undergraduates enrolling in it. We will also clarify the relationship among E 306, E 309, and E 325M (Advanced Expository Writing).

Pedagogical Training

The Division will make the training of new elementary and secondary teachers of English a priority. We expect every future teacher the English Department graduates to be a competent writer and a capable teacher of composition. Expanding what is already done in E 360M, the Division hopes to make supervised tutoring opportunities available to these English Education majors and eventually to establish a portfolio system to evaluate their own progress as writers.

The Division will explore ways of enhancing the training of AI's, especially those teaching E 306Q and E 309, who currently receive little or no training. Faculty will explore new procedures for evaluating AI teaching so that Assistant Instructors are assured of having useful evaluations when they approach the job market. AI's having difficulty with their teaching will have regular and dependable assistance from the administrators of the Division.

Faculty in the Division will establish procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its courses, programs, and facilities. (There are currently no programmatic evaluations of writing courses in the English Department.)

Computer Writing and Research Lab

The Division will move quickly to computerize most of its composition classes, thereby assisting the College of Liberal Arts in claiming a fair share of computer assets on this campus. The Division will provide a base for the Computer Writing and Research Lab, which will continue as a facility interested in literature, language, and composition.

Establishment of a Writing Center

We have agreed (again the Dean has agreed in principle) that it is vital to establish a drop-in Writing Center, with a professional director and a properly trained staff, to assist students throughout the College who want or need help with their writing.

Substantial Writing Component Courses

Finally, faculty in the Division of Rhetoric and Composition will, with adequate University support, play a role in coordinating and improving the University's Substantial Writing Component courses. This is a major

responsibility, but one with great potential for encouraging faculty across the disciplines to understand what they can do to enhance literacy on this campus. The Computer Writing and Research Lab expects to play an important part in supporting the drop-in Writing Center and, eventually, the Substantial Writing Component courses as well.

Rationale for English Department Support

This report has implicitly addressed the principal concerns expressed by English Department faculty at the Department meeting earlier this fall, at University Council and Faculty Senate meetings, and elsewhere. To summarize:

1. The shape and nature of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition now lie principally in the hands of members of the English Department (especially those specialists in rhetoric and composition who form the core of this committee), people with a continuing stake in the quality and collegiality of the Department and in the welfare of all its students and programs.

2. The Division will be run neither by the dean (Dean King himself will have departed before it becomes fully operational) nor by an autocratic director but by a committee of Division faculty. That faculty will be composed principally of current--and continuing--English Department members (most will eventually split their formal appointments between the Department and the Division but will inevitably wish and need to remain engaged Department members). This governing committee of the Division will function democratically and will work cooperatively with the English Department executive committee on matters of mutual concern. Possibly, by charter, the governing committee of the Division will include a member or members of the English Department Executive Committee.

3. The English Department graduate program, its graduate teaching assistantships and assistant instructorships, and its graduate admission committee's ability to award these instructorships based on promise and merit will not be jeopardized. Instructors in lower division writing courses in the Division will be drawn principally, as they are now, from students in the English Department's graduate program. Assistant Instructors will not be replaced by lecturers. Supervision of graduate instructors and teaching opportunities in the writing program are likely to be enhanced, rather than diminished, under the Division.

4. More resources in the form of additional faculty hires (beginning with the additional authorized English Department hire that the shift to the Division of the advertised junior position in rhetoric will facilitate), staff support, instructional technology, the possible re-establishment of a writing lab and tutorial positions for graduate students within it, and general attentiveness by the University administration to English Department, as well as Rhetoric and

Composition Division, needs may be expected as a result of the administration's public stake in, and of the Department's cooperation with, the Division.

Recruitment

Much of our discussion has concerned recruitment. We are convinced that we must hire this year at both junior and senior levels. We have not wanted to hire at the expense of the English Department, nor have we wanted in any way to usurp-- or appear to usurp-- the Department's prerogative. The Dean has authorized two junior and one senior appointment in addition to the two or three positions allocated to the English Department this year. (The senior appointment would take up the now vacant Professorship in Rhetoric, formerly held by Jim Kinneavy.)

Proposed Recruitment Ad

Senior position in newly formed Division of Rhetoric and Composition, with a possible joint appointment in English, beginning August 1993. Major scholarly publications and evidence of superior teaching. Strong interest in rhetorical theory or history, discourse studies, and/or composition theory and practice. The successful applicant will assist in the development of a comprehensive undergraduate writing program as well as teach undergraduate courses and courses in the English Department's graduate program.

Send letter of application and vita to: James Kinneavy, Chair, Search Committee, Department of English, University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX 78712.