

# Fight looms over English plan

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A professor of English is gearing up for a battle during the University Council's meeting Monday to amend the already-approved English course requirements to give freshmen the option of a second semester of composition.

"This university as an institution is shamefully neglecting the education of freshmen and sophomores. Period," James Sledd, a former director of freshman English, said Tuesday.

The composition course sequence was devised by the Department of English to meet the recommendations of the council's Committee on Basic Education Requirements, chaired by James Vick, assistant dean of the College of Natural Sciences.

The plan, already approved by the University Council and UT President Peter Flawn, will require students in all colleges who have not earned advanced placement in freshman composition to take English 306. All students will take E316K, a sophomore literature course. Students also will be required to take E346K, an upper-division composition course.

At the Vick Committee's insistence, students also will be required to take two additional courses that have, in the language of the committee's proposal, "a substantial writing component." At least one of these two courses must be upper-division.

Sledd's proposal, tabled at the council's Dec. 6 meeting, would offer students the option of a second semester of freshman composition, E307. Students could take either E307 or 346K to satisfy the English requirement, or they could take both.

John Weinstock, associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said Tuesday, "I think it (Sledd's proposal) is a ridiculous proposal which would have the effect of totally destroying the new English requirements that the department

has spent so much time creating."

Weinstock added that if Sledd's proposal becomes effective, students who choose to take the second semester of freshman composition will not be required to take E346K.

"That's an absolute lie," Sledd responded to Weinstock's statement. "They would be able to take 346K as one of their courses 'with a substantial writing component.' ... That's pure rubbish and 100 yards deep."

James Kinneavy, professor of English and former director of freshman English, said Sledd's proposal could lead to the following scenario: "A student takes 306, 307, 316 and is looking around for another course to fulfill one of the two additional courses with a substantial writing component. The natural, with nobody (in another department) having to create another course, is 346K."

Kinneavy said, "We'll end up staffing, for all practical purposes, four composition courses, because other departments don't want to offer those courses. ... If we had to put in a full-fledged composition course — 307 — we'd have to hire 30 to 40 more people.

"We have the biggest English department in the country because we have the greatest composition requirement, and Sledd wants to increase that," Kinneavy said. "We can't staff four courses — we have a tough time teaching three courses."

Sledd said, "They want to abolish the second semester of freshman English to cut the enrollment of freshman English in half. That's the crux of the matter."

Joseph Kruppa, associate chairman of the Department of English, said Tuesday, "It (the change in requirements) might have that effect, but that's not the primary purpose. In terms of our staffing problem, it has some benefits. Our plan is not just a plan based on practicalities or needs. It's also a plan based on improving student writing



James Sledd

skills."

Under Sledd's proposal, "a student could conceivably take two courses with substantial writing components and never have the chance to write in his own discipline," Kinneavy said. "The whole point of the Vick report is to have people write in their own discipline."

One of the council's student representatives, Students' Association President Paul Begala, said Tuesday he thinks Sledd's proposal gives students more flexibility.

Plan II senior David Phillips, another student representative, also supports Sledd's proposal. "If you don't get the (composition) training in the first two years, your education is going to be hampered," Phillips said.

An assistant instructor in English who asked not to be identified said he favors Sledd's proposal. "A lot of them (freshmen) need that second semester," said the assistant instructor, who teaches only freshmen composition.