

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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September 15, 1992

William S. Livingston  
Acting President  
MAI 400

Dear Bill:

I have several questions about the recently approved proposal for a Division of Rhetoric and Composition, which I hope you will be able to address at the University Council meeting on September 21. My questions have to do primarily with the role of the faculty in the Division.

As background let me begin with several quotations from the proposal. (My copy of the proposal was distributed to faculty members in the Department of English. Could copies of the proposal be distributed to members of the University Council before the September 21 meeting? My quotations and questions here are fairly narrow; members of the Council should find the full text of such an important proposal to be of interest, and they may have other questions or comments.)

*... The Division will establish the content of these [Plan I lower-division writing] courses, develop and approve appropriate syllabi, pilot test new courses, authorize course variants, and choose textbooks, subject to established review by the College Course and Curriculum Committee....*

*... The Director of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition will appoint all TAs and AIs within the Division, subject to the approval by the Dean.*

*Faculty appointments in the Division will be made by the Director, subject to approval of the Dean. In cases of tenure and tenure-track appointments the Director shall consult with the chair of the faculty member's department and the Dean prior to making an appointment....*

*Director. A faculty member appointed by the Dean of Liberal Arts. The Director will administer the Division's budget and will be responsible for policy, curriculum, AI hiring, staff hiring, teacher supervision, and teacher training within the Division....*

*Instruction in the expository writing courses offered by the Division will be by tenured and tenure-track faculty, senior lectures, lecturers, and assistant instructors.*

*a. Upper-division staffing. Faculty in rhetoric and composition currently in the English department will teach in the Division and staff most of its upper-division offerings, especially E 325M, E 360M, and E379C....*

I take it as an essential principle of sound university governance that the faculty should have primary responsibility for the curriculum, the choice of new faculty, and appointments to tenure. The proposal raises questions about the degree to which this principle is being followed in establishing the new Division.

The proposal gives the Director, subject to the approval of the Dean, total control of the faculty appointments in the Division. Is a faculty appointment to the Division comparable to faculty appointment in a department, so that the Division's faculty will tend to remain constant over time? Or will the faculty in any given year just be those who are teaching in the Division that year? Will the Division have a budget council or comparable group? In traditional departments and colleges the tenured faculty is independent and serves *at least* as a counterbalance to the chair or dean. Perhaps you can offer assurance that that will be the case in the new Division.

Will the Division's budget cover salaries for faculty who teach in the Division? If so, what will be the faculty's role in determining those salaries and in awarding merit raises?

Who will be primarily responsible for recommending tenure and promotion for those who teach in the Division? The Division or the faculty member's department? What if the reward systems of the Division and the faculty member's department are in conflict (which seems not unlikely)?

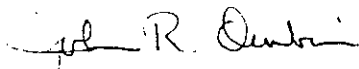
In most departments TA and AI appointments are made taking into account the needs and resources of both the undergraduate teaching program and the graduate program. This proposal states that "the Director of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition will appoint all TAs and AIs within the Division, subject to the approval by the Dean." This appears to introduce a potential conflict between the wishes of the Director and those of the graduate faculty (in this case, presumably, that of the English Department). Has thought been given to this?

Finally, could you share with us how much faculty involvement there was in the formulation of this proposal? I have had the impression that new

graduate programs or units are discussed by the Graduate Assembly. Is there a reason why the proposal for a Division of Rhetoric and Composition was not presented to the University Council before it was approved?

Several members of the faculty have talked with me about these questions because of my role as Chair of the Committee of Counsel ~~of~~ on Academic Freedom and Responsibility. However, that committee has not met this academic year and thus has not discussed the questions.

Sincerely,



John R. Durbin  
Professor of Mathematics

c: H. Paul Kelley, Secretary of the General Faculty