

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT CONCERNING THE NEW ENGLISH REQUIREMENTS

James H. Sledd (English) sent the statements and questions set forth below to President Peter T. Flawn on December 17, 1983.

Notice is hereby given that these questions will be asked at the University Council meeting on January 23, 1984.

H. Paul Kelley

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The University Council

QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT CONCERNING THE NEW ENGLISH REQUIREMENTS

Background. The minutes of the Senate of the English Department for December 8, 1983, include the following item: "New English requirements: [Name omitted] will chair the committee charged with overseeing the new E.346K program; 'substantial problems' remain there. At the freshman level, the recommended E.106 and E.206 courses present significant difficulties and may not be taught initially. The new 'writing component' requirement is proving to be a great challenge for most departments."

In last year's debate on the new requirements, the Council heard few or no predictions of "substantial problems," "significant difficulties," and great challenges. On the contrary, the Council was told that the College of Liberal Arts had "been working for four years with the English Department on this new program," which had been prepared for by many "empirical research studies" (D&M 14190-14191, D&P 9020-9021), that "three syllabuses" had already been prepared for E.346K (D&P 8335), that some sections of that course would be upgraded versions of courses long in existence (D&P 9019), that the program represented by E.106 and E.206 had already been carried out "for the last year and a half with marvelous success," "marvelously" serving as many as "600 people a week" (D&P 9016-9017), etc. The College of Liberal Arts was similarly assured, on October 13, 1982 (see its minutes for that day), that "three ad hoc committees" had already been set up "to consider the issues involved" in the proposed courses with "substantial writing components"; and with no apparent hesitation or dubiety, college after college revised their programs to incorporate the new requirements.

Last year's debating points and this year's report are hard to reconcile.

Questions. 1. What are those substantial problems, significant difficulties, and great challenges which the English Department now reports? 2. Why were they not anticipated after the alleged four years of planning, long experience, and protracted meetings of many committees? 3. Since failure to offer E.106 and E.206 would weaken support for those freshmen who most need help and need it most immediately, what would be the effect on minority students, for whom especially it was suggested that the "laboratory" handling such work "will be useful" (D&M 14192)?

Distributed to members of the University Council on January 19, 1984.