

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
OCTOBER 2, 2006

Bill Roach, as acting chair in the absence of Jorge Nobo, convened the Academic Affairs Committee at 3:34 pm in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union. Members present were: Patricia Renn-Scanlan, Jane Carpenter, David Pownell, Shaun Schmidt, and Loran Smith. Invited guests present were: Ron Wasserstein, Margy Stewart, and Bradley Siebert.

AGENDA: Discussion of University General Education English Requirement. No action taken.

The committee invited Margy Stewart, Coordinator of Freshman English, and Bradley Siebert, Coordinator of Advanced English to discuss goals, objectives, and procedures of the English General Education requirement.

Margy Stewart opened by saying that EN 101 strives to make students better writers in terms of thoughtfulness, development and response to ideas, and improve the editing of their writing for the correct use of standard written English. She distributed a portion of the EN 101 program review which specifies these goals and lists objective for each goal. She noted that the goals and language of the documents originates from the Composition Task Force Report prepared and approved by the faculty in 1995. That document also covers EN 200 and EN 300.

Stewart continued by noting that a recent review of the EN 101 program revealed improved writing skills but needed work in thoughtfulness. The more that students can be drawn into interactions with the subject matter, the more they would apply what they are learning. They have made some revisions and the thoughtfulness numbers have gone up. The department is about ready to implement a changes which would be indicators of thoughtfulness in student writing: use of complex sentences, a mix of abstract and concrete nouns, use of dynamic verbs rather than forms of "to be," etc. These are being applied this year.

It was mentioned that a majority of the EN 101 instructors hold the terminal degree, use of different texts, different readings, and different workbooks. All sections have common goals, common content, and common assessment, through the instructors select their own readings. There are no common syllabi but all syllabi are reviewed by the Department chair to determine if it is consistent with the model syllabus approved for the course. During discussion, it was found that EN 100 (3 cr. Hrs) is still in the catalog but is not being taught. Also, it was suggested that the rubric in assessing student writing in EN 101 should be adopted campus-wide among all faculty to reinforce the learning of EN 101.

Bradley Siebert said that part of the motivation for the EN 300 program was the large number of transfer students who had taken Freshman English at another institution. He explained the English Placement exam, how scores were arrived at. EN 200 is not considered to be a remedial course but it is intended for students who would struggle in EN 300 as identified by the Placement exam. It was noted that a significant number of students taken EN 200 as an elective course.

During discussion of both courses, the following were some of the points that were made:

- We can not control where students taken EN 101. Likewise, we have no control over when students taken EN 300. If they take the course in the last semester of their senior year, it doesn't help them in their upper division writing classes in their major.
- Writing Across the Curriculum is a start, especially if faculty apply the same rubric as students are being taught in EN 101. The Washburn Writers Program has also been

successful, taking graduate and senior students and allowing them to mentor EN 101 students and provide peer reviews of their writing.

- We need to get writing more prominent in the academic community. Perhaps require that each class have a writing component and having this policed by departments and schools.
- Another model being explored is the First Year Experience. The University has hired John Gardner as a consultant. The contemporary trend is away from a disciplinary focus and much more focused on the liberal arts, rather than on the major. These seminars might link a CH 101 and EN 101 class and, through team-teaching, force students to make connections.

Because of the time constraints, the discussion was concluded at this point but it was assumed that the committee would continue discussing EN 101, EN 200, and EN 300 at its next meeting and Dr. Stewart and Dr. Siebert were invited to return if they had the time and inclination.

Next meeting: Monday, October 16th, at 3:30 in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:50 pm.