

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
REPORT OF THE INTERCOLLEGIATE WRITING COMMITTEE

Submitted to the University of Arizona

Faculty Senate
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REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE
from the
Intercollegiate Writing Committee

OVERVIEW

Implementation of Faculty Senate resolutions on writing has made considerable progress in most areas and is delayed in one. The Intercollegiate Writing Committee is a fully functioning University committee, meeting regularly to discharge its duties, now regularly reviewing proposals for writing-emphasis courses. The Outreach program has visited over fifty Arizona schools; assisted in sponsoring two regional conferences in Yavapai and Pinal counties; sponsored a conference on articulation between Arizona high schools and the University; published a newsletter on writing; and published a reading list of commonly recommended books for students preparing for University studies. The Department of English has evaluated freshman composition programs and is now trying in experimental sections to improve the program in training students in the use of writing as a tool for scholarship. Beginning with this fall's entering freshmen the Department of English will use essays as part placement in freshman composition. (Arizona State University is studying reforms in its undergraduate requirements in writing and using the University of Arizona's program as a model.)

AREAS OF PROGRESS

Writing-Emphasis Courses

The IWC has established guidelines for the writing-emphasis courses and is currently reviewing course descriptions as they come to the

committee. To date the IWC has received approximately thirty course descriptions from departments.

Freshman Composition Placement Test

The testing of entering freshmen is increasing in sophistication and accuracy. The use of essays as part placement will provide more accurate data than previously available for assignment of students in appropriate level classes in freshman composition. The fact that entering freshmen will write placement essays appears to have influenced high schools to increase their commitment to teaching writing.

AREAS OF LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS

The 1981-82 year has been a difficult one for the economy across the country. Arizona is no exception. Revenues from tourism, production, and tax collections have fallen off considerably. This drop in revenues has caused a delay in the further development of some existing programs and delay in initiating some requested programs.

University Composition Board

A very important part of the new writing program at the University of Arizona is the institution of the University Composition Board (UCB). The UCB is to serve several functions: planning, administering, and reporting results of the Upper-Division Writing-Proficiency Examination (UDWPE); providing consultative services to academic departments in the design and instruction of writing-emphasis classes; maintaining liaison with Arizona schools and community colleges; and providing a research component for improvement in instruction. University Composition Board employees are to

be staff, serving on twelve-month contracts, since the UCB's services are required throughout the year.

For two years in a row, the University has submitted to the Arizona Legislature position packages requesting supplemental appropriations to fund the UCB, and those requests have not been granted. The University faces the 1982-83 year without this support.

Upper-Division Writing-Proficiency Examination

The Upper-Division Writing-Proficiency Examination (UDWPE) was not administered during the 1981-82 academic year. Lack of staffing the UCB (see above) prohibited the administering of this test.

SUMMARY

Areas of progress, such as the functioning of the Intercollegiate Writing Committee, the work of the Outreach program, and the further development of the testing program in freshman composition, are important steps in support of the University's commitment to helping its students improve their proficiency in writing. However, lack of adequate funding from the Arizona Legislature has caused delays in the University's efforts to get on with the task. Lack of funding and the accompanying publicity describing the state of Arizona's economic woes may even be contributing to the delay in some departments' submitting course descriptions for their writing-emphasis courses.

Full implementation of the writing program seems to be beyond the current resources of the University. There may be further delays in full implementation until adequate resources are forthcoming.