



MEMORANDUM

To: Donna E. Shalala, President

From: Mary Coombs *MC*
Chair, Faculty Senate

Date: November 17, 2003

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2003-09(B) -- Revision of the General Education Requirement regarding Writing Requirements

The Faculty Senate, at its October 29, 2003 meeting, voted on the attached proposal regarding revisions to the Writing Requirement section of the General Education Requirements as follows:

1. Approve recommendations 1 and 2 under bulleted item I to be implemented as is.¹
2. Approve the remainder of the recommendations in principle. These recommendations are to be implemented with staged trials, the results of which shall be reported back to the Senate for approval before the proposal in its entirety (in its current form or a modified version) becomes policy.

This legislation is now forwarded to you for your action.

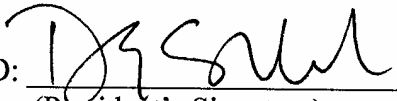
MC/kl

cc: Luis Glaser, Executive Vice President and Provost
David Wilson, Chair of Committee revising the General Education Requirements

¹ This is fully consistent with changing Bulletin Item 2 to refer to AP "language or literature examinations."

CAPSULE: Faculty Senate Legislation #2003-09(B) – Revision of the General Education Requirement regarding Writing Requirements

PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE

APPROVED:  DATE: 11-18-03
(President's Signature)

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL TO IMPLEMENT: Perri Lee Roberts

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LEGISLATION: _____
(if other than June 1 next following)

NOT APPROVED AND REFERRED TO: _____

REMARKS (IF NOT APPROVED): _____

Writing Across the Curriculum
Recommendations of the Joint Committees on Curricular Revision

November 2002

I. Bulletin Items

1. Students (except those first enrolling in ENG 103) will satisfy writing proficiencies at the University of Miami via ENG 105 and 106, or their approved equivalents, in the first year of residence.
- 2) Students with an Advanced Placement [AP] score of 5 on the language and literature examination, or with a score of 7 on an International Baccalaureate [IB] English examination may be exempted from English 105. Those with transfer credit for English 105 will take English 106 or its equivalent in the first year of residence; those with credit for English 105 and 106 will take an approved advanced composition course or intensive writing course section in the first year of residence, unless otherwise exempted with the approval of the English Composition Program. Validation of transfer credits rests on achieving a grade of C- or higher in the first writing course taken in residence.
- 3) In addition to ENG 105 and 106, unless otherwise exempt, students must take one approved writing-intensive course section per academic year for a minimum total of three writing-intensive courses beyond ENG 105 and 106. The three advanced writing intensive courses in addition to ENG 105 and 106 may be completed before the final year of residence; at least two of them must be completed before the final year.

“W” credit may be earned only in sections designed as such and approved by a university committee as writing intensive.

Demonstrated proficiency in advanced academic writing may be granted via review by university committee and will exempt a student from a maximum of two writing intensive courses.

- 4) At least one of the three advanced writing course sections will be in a student’s major discipline, or in a proximate area of the curriculum. Demonstrated proficiency and exemption, granted upon review of a student’s writing performance by the appropriate university committee, will not exempt a student from an advanced writing course section in the major.

II. Strategic Recommendations

A. The members of the joint ad hoc committees observed that increasing the number of writing-intensive courses required for graduation over the last decade from three to five such courses has not produced a perceived improvement in undergraduate writing abilities. In an effort to reduce in general the number of requirements for students, the members of this committee suggest that three such courses may be more productive than maintaining or increasing the required number of writing-intensive courses.

It is our hope that newly articulated expectations for writing intensive course content and outcomes, as well as improved support for students and for writing instructors in all disciplines, will sustain the goal of improving undergraduate writing performance.

B. All writing-intensive course sections should normally be capped at 17 students. **Note:** A cap of 23 is too high for first-year seminars and for first-year composition courses, for which the Council of Writing Program Administrators recommends a cap of 17.

C. All writing-intensive course sections, as identified by the instructor, shall be reviewed and approved by a university committee for their writing instruction content and for assignments in writing-to-learn, including evaluation for demonstrated writing proficiencies. In reviewing such courses, the committee will take into consideration the range of formal and rhetorical strategies in use across academic disciplines. This committee would also grant exemptions for demonstrated advanced writing proficiency.

No department may assume writing intensive status for all of its course offerings. To fulfill the intensive writing requirement, a course section will have to undergo initial and periodic review, as recommended by university committee, for writing instruction content and assessment strategies, not only for the amount of writing assigned.

D. The university writing review committee will draft a statement defining the leading characteristics of intensive writing courses.

A draft statement of writing intensive courses:

Writing Intensive courses will include multiple assignments, revision, or a multi-stage project, as well as writing instruction—not only, that is, evaluation. Such courses will include extensive written commentary on student work, and opportunities for students to revise work across the term (not only to edit it for correctness), or otherwise to demonstrate developing fluencies in subsequent work. Writing will be evaluated for proficiency in exposition, narrative, argumentation, and analysis (appropriate to different course levels and discursive contexts), as well as for general proficiency in formal writing strategies, including the control of citation form, and of standard grammar, diction, punctuation, and spelling.

E. The university may want to revisit the model of learning communities explored in the last decade, as there may be productive links to be made between any course and a writing intensive section.

III. The Place of Writing in the University of Miami

There is serious concern among the members of the joint ad hoc curriculum committees that writing and reading skills are not well supported in our university community, and not in evidence in the work of many of our students. Our discussions suggest that the full gamut of literacy skills, ranging from control of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics; to constructing arguments in writing; to advanced research writing, needs more support and a higher profile in our institution.

Campus visits to prestigious private universities, particularly to Stanford and to Duke, have prompted several members of the committees to recommend that in revising our curriculum, the University of Miami follow the lead of these institutions to create writing programs separate from their respective English departments. Interviews with faculty members and

administrators at Duke and at Stanford communicate that this separation, initiative, and substantial funding were crucial to the success of curricular renewal at each institution.

Each institution created a new program and appointed a nationally known scholar in rhetoric and composition as its director. At Duke, Joseph Harris directs the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Writing, while at Stanford, Andrea Lunsford directs the Program in Writing and Rhetoric; each holds tenure in the respective English Department. See, respectively, <http://www.cltw.duke.edu/> and <http://www.stanford.edu/group/pwr/>.

The place of Miami suggests rethinking the place of writing at its university—the place, that is, of English language literacy within a multilingual community. What would a Language Center look like that integrated work performed by a Writing Center with connections to all of the languages within our community? Wherever possible, we should work in the future to capitalize on the multilingual abilities many of our students possess.

While many highly specific recommendations have taken shape among committee members, they may be reduced to a few leading strategic points:

- 1) Move English Composition to the center of the College of Arts and Sciences so that its director would report to the Dean's office and to the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs.
- 2) Conduct a national search to fill a senior appointment as Director of the Writing Center; enhance on-line capacity of the Center, including suggested writing standards and evaluation guidelines for students and for instructors, and open dialogue with other academic support services reporting to the Vice Provost's office.
- 3) Make another appointment for a Writing Across the Curriculum scholar who will play a leading role in faculty education. Create opportunities for tenure-stream faculty to educate themselves as writing instructors, and incentives for them to teach writing intensive courses in their disciplines, such as: supplementary pay; acknowledgment in annual review; one-time money for research travel and materials, computer equipment & other supporting technology; designated parking places; potential for departments academic units to earn new lines or visiting appointments by supporting and gaining approval for writing intensive courses—with due adjustments for disciplinary differences.

IV. Structural Changes for Writing across the Curriculum: Discussion Points

Changing the role of English Composition at this university by changing the location of the program may have several effects, not all of which may be welcome to all. The English Composition Program has been a part of the Department of English. While the ad hoc curriculum committee members may not effect changes, we need to think through the implications of any changes we recommend.

Some of the questions now before our community are:

- 1) What is to be gained by such changes in the learning experience of our undergraduates, especially first-year students? What perceived problems in undergraduate writing performance will be addressed by relocating the Composition Program? How will we

measure that productiveness of any such changes in the learning and the writing of our students?

2) How will resituating the Composition Program work to improve the instruction of, and support for, writing across our curriculum?

3) How will such a change affect—and be received by—the English Department?

- Nearly all graduate students in creative writing and in literature hold assistantships that they fulfill by teaching in the English Composition Program, and by working in the Writing Center. How would the department revise assistantships without the certainty of current practice—to assign new graduate students to training and teaching in the Composition Program for at least part of their years of support? Some accommodation, or new assignment, would be necessary for MFA, MA, and PhD students.

4) How will such a change affect, if at all, full-time lecturers who teach most of the classes in the Composition Program?

5) Where in the university will the program be located?

- There has been energetic discussion on the committee about the formation of Composition as a separate department in the College of Arts & Sciences; such a change, however, would involve several levels of approval, and possibly additional funding for the current program budget.
- Were the program to remain a program, and not be constituted as a department, what status would it hold in practical terms at a university where, in relative terms, departments enjoy more resources and higher profiles than interdisciplinary programs?

With regard to raising the status of the program: some would place the Composition Program (if not as a department), along with the Writing Center, at the center of initiatives for curricular renewal and with a substantial budget to undertake writing across the curriculum for supporting the new writing intensive requirements.

Further, a new capital campaign in Arts & Sciences would augment the above scenario substantially by locating both the Composition Program and the Writing Center in a constellation with a new Center for Languages, Literacies, and Cultures. The new Center would draw upon the cultural and linguistic diversity of South Florida as a living laboratory for study and research for first-year students and faculty members, reaching into the public school system and the many communities with the region. Its interdisciplinary conception would speak to concerns about shaping a campus community that values and excels in multiple fluencies and literate practices. At the current time, however, such a center is an exciting idea within a proposal for a fundraising campaign that has not yet begun.

- If Composition retains program status, to whom will it report? The Dean of Arts & Sciences? The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs?

University of Miami faculty in Arts and Sciences hold their tenure in departments. If the Composition Program were not reconstituted and funded as a department, where would its director hold tenure? Were a new tenure-earning line—for a Director of the Writing Center, for example—filled, where would that person hold tenure? (Within an English Department that no longer oversees the Center and the Program?)