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Fort Hays State University Faculty Senate Minutes, February 8, 1966

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English 1 and 2 Proposal --
RECOMMENDATION: to approve English Composition 1, Intro. to Lit 26 and Expository Writing 51 (raised to a 3-cr. hr course) in the Basic Studies.

Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Senate, Tuesday, February 8, 1966 at 4:30 p.m. in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty.

Members present: Mrs. Cobb, Dr. Coder, Mr. Dalton, Dr. Edwards, Mr. Evans, Miss Felten, Dr. Fleharty, Mrs. Hoffman, Dr. Hollister, Mr. Osborne, Dr. Proctor, Dr. Rice, Mr. Schmidt and Dr. Garwood, Chairman.

Also present: Dr. William Thompson and Mr. Blickenstaff

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Dr. Garwood, who stated that a copy of the proposed plan for revision of the English basic studies courses had been sent to all members for study. The proposal from Dr. Thompson was as follows:

Present requirements are that English 1 and 2 (Composition) be taken by students their freshman year; English 26 (Introduction to Literature), their sophomore year. The proposed change, if effected, would still have English 1 offered the first year; half the freshmen would take it the first semester, half the second. English 26 would still be taken the second year. Then the third year English 51 (Expository Writing) would be taken in lieu of the English 2 course formerly taken on the freshman level.

The proposed program is thought by the English staff to be both academically and psychologically sound. As things are now, Freshman English is regarded as a bitter pill by the bulk of those who have to take it. True, first year students will grudgingly acquiesce to the proposition that they need to know how to write well. For the most part, however, they have yet to be motivated by practical need. Most lower division courses require little writing. Consequently, much student work in English 1 and 2 is discharged in a perfunctory fashion by people who consider themselves an unwilling captive audience.

English 1 under the new program would be compact, tough, challenging. Much that is done now in two semesters could be consolidated into a one-semester course sans repetition, busy work, and boredom. What students need to know in the way of concepts not imparted to them in the public schools can be given them in one term. To attempt to give them more than they can find immediate use for has not proved fruitful in the past. By instinct and by heritage they are pragmatists--not professional students.

Our teaching experience has taught us that the third-year student is a much better motivated person than the freshman. He has had to recognize his limitations; indeed, from time to time he has been frustrated by them. By now he

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is into class work in fields that demand considerable writing from him. He is also close to the end of his work on the baccalaureate degree and (if conscientious) is appalled by what he does not know about his mother tongue. In short, he is at a stage in his career when he is receptive to what repelled him just a short time back.

The advanced composition course (3rd year) will be geared to the needs of the individual student whenever possible. If, for example, the student is doing a piece of research in one of the sciences, the science paper upon which he is laboring can be the piece de resistance of his writing laboratory. For students whose courses do not happen to require expository writing, special assignments can be made that are centered on legitimate areas of academic interest. Possibly, the course can combine both the lecture and tutorial approaches.

It is recommended that students passing the advanced composition course with a C or better be exempt from taking the English Proficiency Examination. The final examination in the course can also serve as the English proficiency. Students transferring in with six hours of freshmen English on their transcripts could take either the Proficiency examination or the advanced composition course.

In addition to being academically sound, the proposed program will require a smaller English staff. Had the program been in effect this past semester, eight less teachers would have been needed. This figure does not, of course, reflect what the program will require three years after installation. A better picture can be obtained by using our present enrollment figures and assuming that the program has been underway for three years. In this latter case we would have needed four less teachers than we actually had to use last semester. The English staff feels that in having to increase its staff by the acquisition of three to five new instructors every year (for the sole purpose of teaching freshman English) it is succumbing to the tyranny of numbers. So much time, energy, and money is expended on quantitative growth, that there is little left over to spend on qualitative improvement.

What is proposed here is in a sense innovative. But all innovation is not bad, and much that we regard as sacrosanct rests on traditions long outworn. Where, for example, did we get the idea that a college education should take four years? As I understand it, the idea had its genesis with the wealthy English families of the 16th Century who used to send their sons abroad for their education; they felt that four years was a long enough time for the young scions to be away. The nine-month academic year to which we adhere so religiously dates back to the last century, a time when rural families needed their children home in summer to assist in the fields. The six-hour freshman English course? Who knows? It has been the object of constant tinkering for nearly a century, and no one has ever

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been happy with the end result. Perhaps it is time to strike out in a new direction."

A discussion followed in which Dr. Thompson noted that the proposal is not a new concept. Washington State started using it in 1957. Adrian College and Bradley College have also utilized a similar change in their English requirements. The proposed plan is not being considered as the cure-all for the English problems existing, but it would aid in improving the situation. It is his belief Fort Hays graduates would leave the college with a better English background.

The question was raised concerning a student who wished to take an English course in his sophomore year. These might be situations where a student transferring as a junior to another school might need a second course in English Composition. There would not be many students in this category. Special permission to take English 51 as second semester sophomores might be given to these particular students.

Dr. Garwood discussed the new faculty requirements and the needs for the English area were mentioned. English 1 course would be tightened or beefed up.

It was stated that there existed an interest in the syllabus for the new English freshmen course. One has not been written but a brief summary was given by Dr. Thompson as to the contents of the course. Not as much time will be spent on work already covered in high school, but freshmen would be required to make up their own deficiencies. The work covered in the proposed course would be more advanced (consisting of more composition) than the one being offered at the present time. The question was asked if this would increase the rate of failures. Mr. Thompson said there might be failures but the course would not be designed to fail people.

Dr. Garwood stated that six hours of English could be transferred from another college and would meet our requirements. The transfer student would have an option as to taking course number 51 and making at least a "C" in it or taking the English proficiency examination.

Possibly the ACT scores could be used to determine when a freshman should take the course. The students with low scores could be enrolled in the first semester of their freshman year.

Must a student take English 51 in the junior year or can he take it in his senior year? The answer given was that a junior who didn't pass the course would have to take it in his senior year. Everyone would be asked to take it in the junior year.

Style manuals to be used in course 51 would depend on the style used by different areas when term papers are assigned. Dr. Thompson said it would be helpful if a style manual would be provided for the instructor.

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RECOMMENDATION: It was recommended that we change the sequence of English courses required under Basic Studies. The change will be effective Fall, 1966. Seconded and carried.

Dr. Garwood reviewed the agenda for the next meeting which will be held Tuesday, February 15 at 3:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

John D. Garwood, Chairman

Standlee V. Dalton, Secretary

Cecilia Leikam, Recorder