

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
Minutes of April 19, 2001

Members present: Herb Chereck, Mark Daniel, Hilary Gerdes, Craig Hickman, Serene Khader, Dick Koch, Anne Leavitt,
John Nicols, K. J. Park, Stephen Ponder, Scott Pratt, Kathy Roberts, Karen Sprague

Members absent: Faye Chadwell, Paul Engelking, Wayne Gottshall, Kate Kranzush, Wendy Mitchell, Marian Smith, Glenda Utsey,
Bob Zimmerman

Meeting began at 8:37 a.m.

Opening Comments

John Nicols reiterates his appreciation expressed earlier in the week via email. He announced to members that we are back to our role/status as an advisory council.

Timely Completion of Writing Requirement

John confirms consensus that students should be able to complete WR 121 during the freshman year.

Karen summarized her findings on the availability of WR 121 classes and distributed the same information in a handout. The data suggest that there may not be enough writing sections. Some sections are needed for incoming students, and additional sections for students already on campus ("in the pipeline"). See summary page of the handout for actual data.

The English department had been planning to offer considerably fewer sections (20-30) than the number needed. They're operating on the assumption (shared by most people) that the supply of writing sections has been adequate in the past and that there is no pipeline need.

John inquires as to what the number of sections needed will be once we eliminate the

pipeline need.

Karen indicates that at that point, the number of sections needed for incoming students will be what it is now for incoming students - plus a small increase for increased freshman enrollment. She notes that Bob Zimmerman deserves credit for pointing out that there was a problem with the number of writing sections - not just their distribution over the year.

Serene Khader recognizes that the numbers include Honors College students and notes that these students are exempt from WR 121. Karen estimates that this would represent approximately 100 students, 4 sections, and will get accurate data to correct the numbers.

John conveys his understanding that it is not just a problem of writing sections not being filled and spaces going unused.

Herb points out that 2160 seats were available and there were 103 vacancies in WR 121 this academic year (2000/01). He estimates that approximately half of those vacancies were a result of spaces being "trapped" in FIGs.

Karen notes that approximately 5% of the seats were empty, including 2% that were unused because they were in FIGs. Since the need for seats is significantly greater than 5%, however, the problem will not be solved simply by taking writing sections out of FIGs - as has already been done for Fall 2001.

There is discussion of the importance of solving the problem:

- We can't impose a deadline for completion of the writing requirement if we don't provide an adequate number of classes.
- Insuring that students take writing early may improve retention.
- Given the apparent magnitude of the problem, there is surprise that we haven't heard about it before this. Possible explanations are offered:
 1. Having to delay writing is not unpalatable to students.
 2. Students who don't take writing early tend to be among those lost by attrition. John asks for data on the number of students who failed out of school who also did not complete the writing requirement.
 3. The accumulation of large numbers of students in the pipeline who still need WR 121 is a recent phenomenon and there hasn't been time for dissatisfaction to build.

Dick believes that the council agrees on all the information pertaining to the need for more writing sections and that the audience now is the deans. Karen agrees that the next step is meeting with the deans.

The student representatives are asked for their perspectives.

Serene believes that most students would prefer to put writing classes off but concedes that it is logical to take it early. The biggest concern of students is availability of writing classes.

The meeting concludes with Karen's promise to correct the writing section data for Honors College exemptions, to check that her understanding of what the English Department is planning to offer for AY 2001-02 is correct, and then to bring the matter to the CAS deans for resolution.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 a.m.

HANDOUT SUMMARY

Estimated need for WR 121 sections - AY 2001/2002

Incoming students (Fall 2001):

(J. Buch's estimate, corrected for Honor's College)

Total = 3175

minus # exempt
from WR 121 = 573

minus # in Honors
College = 78

needing WR
121 = 2524

Correct for 8% fall-
spring attrition = 2322

Assume average # of students/section = 24

(English Dept's number - based on all sections: special small ones, as well as standard ones)

$$\text{sections needed} = 2322/24 = 97$$

Students in the pipeline still needing WR 121:

(H. Chereck's data)

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Total domestic + intern'l students} \\ \text{needing 2 writing classes} \end{array} = \frac{761}{239} + = 1000$$

(as of 4/10/01)

$$\frac{\text{minus domestic + intern'l students}}{\text{in WR 121 now}} = \frac{249}{43} + = \underline{292}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \# \text{ needing WR 121} \\ \text{Correct for 20\% spring-spring attrition} \\ \text{rate} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} = 708 \\ = 566 \end{array}$$

$$\text{sections needed} = 566/24 = 24$$

$$\text{Total WR 121 sections needed} = 97 + 24 = 121$$

Note: Number might be higher by ~2 sections because of the new freshmen that enter in winter and spring terms (~50).