

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY SENATE

The eighth regular meeting of the Faculty Senate for the academic year 1986/87 will be held on Tuesday, April 14, 1987, at 2:10 p.m. in Mendenhall Student Center, Room 221.

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Minutes of March 17, 1987
- III. Special Order of the Day
  - A. Announcements
  - B. Roll Call
- IV. Unfinished Business
- V. Report of Committees
  - A. Admissions Committee  
Composition of the Freshman Class
  - B. Curriculum Committee, Bill Grossnickle  
Curriculum Committee Minutes of March 26, 1987, including:
    - Revised Women's Studies Minor
    - Revised B.S. English
    - Revised B.S. Physical Therapy
    - Revised B.S. Home Economics Education
    - Revised B. S. Applied Physics
    - Revised B.S.B.E. and Transfer Program
    - Revised B.S. INDT Ed. Tech. Ed. (Transfer and Certification Prog.)
    - Revised INDT (Prof.)
  - C. Faculty Affairs Committee, Marsha Ironsmith  
Update on the Status of the "Procedures for Resolving Faculty Grievances Not Involving Equal Employment Opportunities or Affirmative Action Complaints"
  - D. General College Committee, Robert Christian  
Writing Across the Curriculum (Attachment 1)
  - E. Research/Creative Activity Committee, Brian McMillen  
Update on the Status of the "Research Policy Statement"
  - F. Teaching Effectiveness Committee, Bill Bloodworth  
Videotaping Lectures for Faculty Development
- VI. New Business



POSITION PAPER: WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AT EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY SENATE OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
BY THE WRITING CENTER STEERING COMMITTEE

Mature communication skills are essential to all college graduates in their professions. As a result, a recognized goal of the University is to aid students in developing these skills, a process that must be maintained throughout the tenure of the student at the University. In recent years the Writing Center has begun programs--ranging from remedial programs for incoming freshmen to tutorial programs for juniors, seniors, and graduate students--which provide instruction to students in the various kinds of writing tasks they must perform in college and, ultimately, on the job. However, the Center's efforts should only be part of a larger program implemented throughout the University to enhance writing across the curriculum, stressing in all departments the use of writing for purposes of learning as well as writing for purposes of communicating learning.

In this document, we briefly describe (1) the status of writing skills of ECU students, (2) the value of writing to their professions, and (3) the development elsewhere of programs in writing across the curriculum. Further, we present a resolution to the Faculty Senate that, if passed, would allow the University to devise a program in writing across the curriculum and, hence, foster student learning.

1.

Placement essays written by all freshmen entering ECU during the past four academic years (1983-1986) reveal that 40 % of our students enter college without one or more of the following minimal writing competencies: the ability to write sentences and avoid major errors in grammar and punctuation, the ability to limit a subject to a workable size, the ability to stay on a chosen topic for the duration of a piece of writing, and the ability to follow a recognizable pattern of organization. Freshmen who are unable to demonstrate competence as writers are required to enroll in the Writing Center's Program of Study in addition to freshman composition. This Program is an attempt to counter as soon as possible the weak writing of ECU students. But the Program of Study, by itself, has had only short-term success.

In response to continued poor writing by our students, the Writing Center has developed referral and walk-in programs which take as their goal further instruction to students having writing problems, regardless of their major or of the courses in which they are required to write. Referrals and walk-ins from students writing in courses outside the English Department have skyrocketed to a substantial 68 % of all students using those programs, or approximately 520 students each semester. The majority of students referred to the Writing Center or volunteering through the walk-in program are juniors and seniors. Still, we believe these figures only hint at the depth of our colleagues' frustrations over student writing. What's more, we believe that these programs, by themselves, do not reach all of the students at ECU who need further instruction in writing.

2.

The impact of insufficient training of students is indicated in research by ECU faculty concerning writing on the job at two local industries. Nearly 82 % of those surveyed had not received training in writing since freshman composition. This high



percentage is most disturbing in light of the fact that these same employees spend 23 % of their worktime composing documents and 17 % of their worktime reading documents written by others. Further, 89 % of those surveyed indicated that writing is of great or crucial importance to their job. Yet those surveyed--the majority of whom were graduated from East Carolina--consider that they have not been prepared to do the writing required of them on the job.

## 3.

Students can be encouraged to write more often during their college years, without making each teacher a teacher of writing or each course a course in writing, by employing strategies that have worked elsewhere. Indeed, East Carolina University is not alone in its need to combat poor writing among its students. As a response to problems similar to the ones outlined above among ECU students and graduates, many universities have developed programs in writing across the curriculum. Such formal programs have included (1) education of faculty, (2) inclusion of more writing in content area courses for purposes of learning as well as for purposes of communicating learning, (3) development of upper division writing courses, (4) requirements for senior theses, and (5) upper level testing of proficiency in writing. Generally, the approaches have attempted to involve faculty other than those in English Departments in helping students with their writing. While the results have been quite promising, two major impediments must be overcome: (1) logistical problems concerning implementation of either new courses or course revisions and crediting for writing courses and (2) faculty "burn out" in the absence of a suitable reward system. Any program at ECU must be designed to overcome these impediments.

In light of the above information, we ask that the Faculty Senate approve the following resolution to begin the process of evaluating the procedures by which writing across the curriculum could be more fully developed at ECU.

WHEREAS, the faculty senate acknowledges the importance of writing as a communication skill and as a tool for learning, and

WHEREAS, students in all disciplines taught by the University need mature writing skills to succeed in their courses and subsequently to succeed in their chosen professions,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT a proposal for writing across the curriculum be developed for East Carolina University.

To institute this resolution, we ask that the Faculty Senate charge the Writing Center Steering Committee, or an ad hoc committee designated by the Senate, with the following tasks: (1) to collect relevant information about research on writing; (2) to study writing-across-the-curriculum programs in use at other institutions with student populations similar to the student population at East Carolina University; (3) to analyze these findings and any other relevant data in light of the needs of ECU faculty and students; and (4) to make specific recommendations to the Senate for the development of a program in writing across the curriculum so that the Senate can use the available information to decide if such a program can and should be instituted at East Carolina University.