

To: Tomas Gomez, Chair, Academic Senate
From: Jim Sauerberg, Chair, Core Curriculum Committee
Zach Flanagan, Chair, Core Curriculum Implementation Committee
November 1st, 2011
RE: Movement of Composition 2 to First Year

To help the Senators in their deliberations about the placement of Composition 2/English 5, Zach and I would like to address some of the substantive issues raised during the October 20th Senate meeting.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR PROPOSAL: In the spring of 2011, the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC) began ongoing conversations with the departments about the new core's requirement of an upper-division writing course in the majors, a course that would need to function as a third developmental step building upon Composition 1 and 2 (English 4 and 5). Some departments already had such a course, but many did not and so began to discuss the best manner to implement this change to their curriculum. It was at this time that the CCIC received its first feedback from the departments (in this case, Business Administration) that the best place for such an upper-division writing course in their major would be during the sophomore year, as preparation for more advanced writing work in junior- and senior-level courses. Thus we were (and still are) faced a potential problem that the second-level writing course (Composition 2) might fall either simultaneously with, or even after, the third-level writing course in the majors—a significant problem for the goal of developmental learning in the Habits of Mind. In fall 2011, this problem only grew, as the newly-formed Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) and Habits of Mind Working Group (HoMWG) heard similar concerns from other departments (Anthropology, Kinesiology, Communication, English).

A solution to these concerns presented itself this fall as the HoMWG worked to map out the specific developmental progression of each of the Habits of Mind learning goals: Critical Thinking (CT), Shared Inquiry (SI), Written & Oral Communication (WOC), and Information Evaluation & Research Practices (IERP). This process made it clear to us that there is *not one but two* different, if complementary, tracks of student development through the Habits of Mind. The first track, addressing primarily SI and CT, would be introduced in a significantly-modified Composition 1 (English 4) course and then would be predominantly housed and developed in the four-course Seminar sequence. The second track, addressing primarily WOC and IERP, would also be introduced in Composition 1 but would then be predominantly housed and developed in Composition 2 (a significantly modified and *standardized* English 5) and upper-division writing in the majors. This is not to say that Shared Inquiry (for example) would not occur in Composition 2 (for example), but rather that Composition 1 and Seminar are where we would scaffold its development and assess it. (Similar examples could be given for, say, Written & Oral Communication in Seminar 3.) This realization of the two different tracks for student learning made it clear to us that, while Composition 2 must follow Composition 1 and precede the upper-division writing course, it does not have to follow (or precede) any particular Seminar course. That is, moving the position of Composition 2 in the second track (Comp 1/Comp 2/UD writing) in no way affects the first track (Comp 1/Sem 1/Sem 2/Sem 3/Sem 4).

Because moving Composition 2 to the spring of the first year (as a standard, but not universal, expectation for most students) does not affect the arc of student learning but does create flexibility for majors who desire a sophomore-level writing course in the disciplines (and also ensures an earlier substantive exposure to proper citation of sources), the HoMWG suggested (at its Sep 14 meeting) that the CCC consider this change. Jim and Zach followed this proposal by discussing the proposal first with many members of the CCTF (Core Curriculum Task Force) and then with the TUG chairs on Sep 20 and

SOLA chairs on Sep 27. Since all these bodies had received this idea favorably, the proposal was reviewed and formally endorsed by the HoMWG on September 28th and the CCI/C on October 6th. (Jim also emailed the TUG chairs/program directors on October 4th informing them that this proposal was likely coming to the Senate, and requesting their input, both pro and con. None was given.)

IMPLICATIONS: The HoMWG has a somewhat asymmetrical interpretation of the possibilities here. If the Senate rejects our proposal, this will suggest to us the Senate wishes a strict interpretation of its language. Thus, with very few exceptions, all students would be required to take Composition 2 in the spring of their sophomore year. Further, all departments would need to put forward a junior or senior level disciplinary writing course (i.e., the sophomore-level course described earlier would not suffice).

Conversely, a Senate adoption of this proposal indicates an endorsement of flexibility, and that students should take Composition 2 when it is most educationally advantageous. Hence, for example, those passing out of Composition 1 might take Composition 2 in the fall of their first year, whereas those who need to start in the (new/revised) English 3 would not take it until their sophomore year. Similarly, if overriding educational reasons demand (e.g., the strict limits on science-student schedules in the first year), some students would postpone Composition 2 to their sophomore year. In all cases, Composition 2 would continue to be a pre-requisite for the upper-division writing course. (In this scenario, the HoMWG is likely to work with programs and department to determine what timing is most appropriate for their students.)

In no case is there more or less work (or change) required of Composition, Seminar, or the majors in order to meet the learning goals of the new core curriculum. All are currently working hard to adapt to the expectations of the new core and will continue to do so.

PROCESS FOR CHANGES IN THE CORE: As the chairs of the CCIC and CCC, our role is to enact the spirit and letter of the several Academic Senate resolutions regarding the Core. This involves decisions that are, frequently, completely within our purview, and then we, after what we hope is due diligence, make those decisions. The decision to move Composition 2 is not one that the CCI/C has the authority to independently make, and so we brought it to you. Were other revisions to the Core contemplated, the CCC, as the elected body responsible for the Core, expects that those suggestions would be brought to us to determine if they are pedagogically appropriate and necessary, and, if rising to the level of significance, the CCC will then bring them to the Senate for its consideration.

CONCLUSION: It is our belief that modifying the 'letter of the law' (moving Composition 2 from the spring of the sophomore year) would better serve the spirit of the Senate's work, which has as overarching goals providing flexibility and developmental learning for our students. We do not view this as a change in the Core, but as a more educationally appropriate way of implementing the vision adopted by the Senate.