

# English Department Retreat

Fri. Oct 12, 2012

In attendance: Isabel Anderson, Erin Farmer, Lisa Giambastiani, Nancy Koncecnny, Chris McBride, Melissa Reeve, Josh Scott, Tracy Schneider, Jack Schouten, Josh Stein, Sharyn Stever, Michael Wyly

Minutes Taker: Melissa Reeve

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## PART THE FIRST

- I. Committee service
  - A. What kind of structure / expectation do we have to share to load of committee participation?
    - i. One concern is that we overdo the committees—we don't need a seat at every table on campus
    - ii. We should name the committees we want to make sure the department is represented in
    - iii. Best thing is for us to all sit down together for robust discussions—what departmental activities need to include the whole department, and how can we “politely insist” that everyone participate in department-wide conversations?
  - B. Inter-dept committees:
    - i. Basic Skills (lab working group and 348G group—which course could rotate)
    - ii. CME
    - iii. Transfer / Lit
    - iv. Course-focused FIGs to develop course handbooks, all the way through our core sequence
    - v. Needed: Reading committee
  - C. Dept. meetings
    - i. 2x/month—2 diff times so that everyone could be at least 1/mo
    - ii. We have to start using CCC confer, skype, various methods to convene everyone from the centers, home, etc.
  - D. Dept. culture
    - i. We have 11 FT members, missing 4 from our peak size—pending one near retirement, we are looking at a place of needing 4-5 members: new hires = perfect opportunity to re-set dept culture
    - ii. We also have a weaker PT pool than in the past
    - iii. Start of semester FlexCal truncated and coopted by admin talking points—miss opportunity to connect with adjuncts. We need to reclaim that time.
  - E. What is our minimum expectation of FT involvement?
    - i. Different committees take different kinds of time commitments. How can we set this? Hourly? Service on departmental committees as well as outside ones?
    - ii. No one should be able to “opt out”—yet there's no teeth to anything we decide—can we come up with a way to urge people?

- iii. Time conflict problem—what is minimum commitment for being an “engaged member”??
- iv. Ideas:
  - a. Every FT fac should be involved in “2 points” worth of meetings
  - b. Senate: 2 points
  - c. Eng. Committee: 1 point, chairing: 2 points, or 1.5
  - d. Hiring committees
  - e. We could quantify the points of each committee by figuring out hours, frequency, etc.
  - f. “sanity breaks”—overcommit one time, then need a rest—we could make the commitment annual

**ACTIONS:**

- 1a. Ask for ALL of the Div. Meeting time for our uses—what can we reasonably expect to happen at a meeting of the whole school? We can organize, make these plans known—we can’t be “dinged” for Flex or for Div. meeting time if we can demonstrate we were doing something else. Let’s meet & keep minutes.
- 1b. Get reps from large depts. Together, request meeting with Jeff, put our request on the table: what’s not working, what we propose as a solution
- 1c. Make “approved meetings” part of our bylaws, and those departmentally-sanctioned functions count against div mtg time.
- 2a. FIND A WAY TO ESTABLISH EXPECTATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT – move into dept meeting agenda, or empower a few people as “committee service committee” to propose a plan.
- 2b. Survey dept: what are the needs? What are the important external and internal committees: which ones are critical to English?
- 2c. Publish a list of current dept. committees & who’s serving & how much
- 2d. Purposefully connect these above plans time to the ones from the last retreat.

<BREAK: FOOD & MERRIMENT>

**PART THE SECOND**

- II. Reviewing 348G for permanent status
  - A. Josh Scott presented pass rates, etc.—analysis of first 348G cohort (attached)
    - 1. 348 G F’11 cohort: low pass rate but high “improvement” rate in terms of qualifying for the next course or higher
  - B. Evidence in support of 348G
    - i. Student surveys: only 8 responses so far, but so far ALL respond to maintain or increase the difficulty level of 348G
    - ii. Eng. 1 level assignments

- iii. F11 and Sp12, all but one section were afternoons due to block scheduling—ALL sections were outside “prime time” of 9-1 that usually attracts the most on-task, motivated students—still had very high completion rates
- iv. Portfolio grading system—
- v. 348G is partly about how we teach it, but also the TIME: 5-units gives us the time with students.

C. Challenges of 348G:

- i. Disabilities still coming & increasing—many don’t want to self-identify
- ii. If we’re going to commit to this direction we need to wholly reframe; we can’t just keep adding things, they system or “cluster” of Dev. Eng courses only becomes more confusing
  - a. Our system right now only feeds itself
  - b. The sequence is only getting more complicated” “byzantine”
- iii. Problem: overall pass rate—but already improving, by 10% between F11 and S12
- iv. The schedule is awkward; we need to make sure it’s offered in ways that meet student needs

D. What is our plan for students who don’t pass? We need something other than repeating—

- i. Maybe everyone starts in 348G, and then reverse-place students in other levels who appear to need them—or maybe 8-week sessions to give them a place to go that moves them forward
- ii. Support: the sequence offers this for the students who can’t make it in the 5-unit accel.
- iii. Break it out into 2 semesters: 348a & b – also gives the possibility of just doing the “b” class if you don’t pass the 5-unit
- iv. Eng. 1 augments: 310 and 320 are already on the books—recommended to work 1-on-1 with lab on reading or writing skills
- v. We shouldn’t be too entrenched in the “pretransfer” and “transfer-level” student; there can be a possibility for a student to move on anyway, even without a wholly successful result in 348G-type course.
- vi. 1-unit augment to Eng. 1 for students who complete 348G but don’t appear ‘quite ready”

III. Shifting views of “developmental” / “remedial” / “basic skills” students:

- A. Our traditional pathway was based on 70’s assumptions about catering levels to differentiate for student needs- this produced high pass rates at the course level, but low matriculation rates moving through to transfer
- B. We have been underestimating our students: teaching this class makes us realize what they are capable of, and changes the way we teach everything else

IV. Questions about our traditional developmental sequence:

- A. The numbers (comparing pass rates through Eng. 1 from 348G & from the traditional sequence) speak to the need to re-examine our whole sequence
  - B. Do we go “whole hog” or not?? Do we have the data to replace our sequence? Do we want to? Is the traditional sequence likely to “die off” anyway?
  - C. Do we eliminate 305?? 331 is also just a “holding tank” for students who will never make it. These students need a place to go, but is English the place?
  - D. 305 & 331 need a serious look—though we can’t impose conversation on Reading faculty re: 331—but it needs to be fixed. It is called a vocab class but it’s not; 305 is called an English class, but it’s not
  - E. 370 is in crisis—motivation is low, students are in transition to college but may not be humble enough to adopt growth mindset—skill set is lower, motivation is lower—low studenting skills, skipping class, etc. In many sections there is still skill-based instruction rather than intellectually engaging material—increased contact hours make the difference
  - F. Are there ways to institutionally induce sticking through the sequence—priority enrollment, etc. that would try to close “exit point” losses in the traditional sequence
- V. GE transfer sequence concerns
- A. We need to look more programmatically at the whole pathway students go through—look at the whole arc of the program
  - B. Eng. 2/4 conversation: different student profiles
    - i. Students doing well in the 2 courses are doing different things, but students struggling in these courses are struggling for the same reasons
    - ii. Students who just scraped through Eng. 1 is in trouble in Eng. 2 or 4—scaffolding isn’t in place (Students can currently take Eng 4 with a D in Eng. 1!!!—this is out of compliance with state AS mandate requiring C or higher for AA/AS or transfer—there are “legacy students” who predate the Eng. 1 AA req)
    - iii. Studenting issue of any student who would even think Eng. 4 was a good idea w/ a D in Eng. 1
  - C. Look at contact hours: English 1, 2, 4 should probably be 4 units. 370, too
- VI. We need to re-envision the lab as part of this conversation.
- A. Pilot sections of 370 without lab?
  - B. Maybe students would benefit from lab time—but why not with their own teacher?
  - C. Why not a 4- or 5-unit lecture/lab combo that would pair Students with their own instructors in lab?
    - i. Center numbers are a good pilot of this b/c this is de facto situation: same instructors are working in the labs as are teaching the classes
  - D. Not implying we should shut down the lab—rather, open it up to serve our students in the ways they need (including into and thru the transfer-level sequences)
  - E. One of the reasons the lab is hampered is that Admin has cut staffing. Making it part of our course units is a way for us to reclaim it as part of our load and course structure.

F. Eng. 1 has not enough time with Ss w/ 30 @ 3 units—our office hours are the only built-in support, and Ss who need it most won't come for it—could Lab be made available as a support here?

**More Action Plans:**

**ACTION: make 348G permanent**

**ACTION: Continue to proceed with pilots, data, and research**

ACTION: Come up with an internal system for wait-listing while we wait for Banner mod? Do this for at least 1 course per semester—the high-demand ones where there are always students waiting & denied

ACTION: Automate getting our students intake assessment data

**ACTION: Decide what we're going to do about figuring out what the next step in the sequence is for Ss who fail 348G**

- **Gather pipeline data from the next 2 semesters of the accelerated sequence (S12, F12)—before we look at eliminating other courses. Also, find out what the current students who fail are doing (Peter's tool from Math)**
- **How are we currently deciding where to send people next? What are we looking for, outcomes-wise, at the 348G course as well as at other levels in the sequence—what are students expected to do? We have to figure out what we value to determine what we measure.—does the CME measure what we value? Look at sequencing and level-advancement mechanisms to make sure level advancement is assessed on what we value.**

SUGGESTION: every FT should teach 305, teach the range, to know who these students are before we start making decision about where we're going to send them—at the same time, there won't be a healthy mix because counselors place students with certain instructors they've identified as kind—this leads to a lack of diversity in a classroom, DSPs are disproportionately places with certain profs