

Archives

March 10, 1978
#10 of 1978

COMMUNITY CHRONICLE

MONDAY - March 13

3:00 - Planning Council
Board Room

Noon - Meeting to Discuss
(N212) English Department
Memorandum

TUESDAY - March 14

7:30-9:30 - Reception for Degree-
Seeking Students

CC Theatre
2:00 - FEC - Conf. Room, Ad. Bldg.

Golf - (Va. Wesleyan)
Va. Wesleyan & Averett

Reception for
Consultant on Curric-
ulum Matters, Dr.
Buchanan - 3-5, CC.
Board Room. On Campus
14th & 15th.

WEDNESDAY - March 15

3:00 - Curriculum Committee
CC Board Room

2:00 - CC214 - 1st Series of Panel
Discussions on Sociobiology.

Faculty Forum - 9:05 P.M.,
WVEC, 1490 AM & 11:00 P.M.,
WVHR, 101 FM - "Alexander
Solzhenitsyn" - Part I
Dr. Al Millar

THURSDAY - March 16

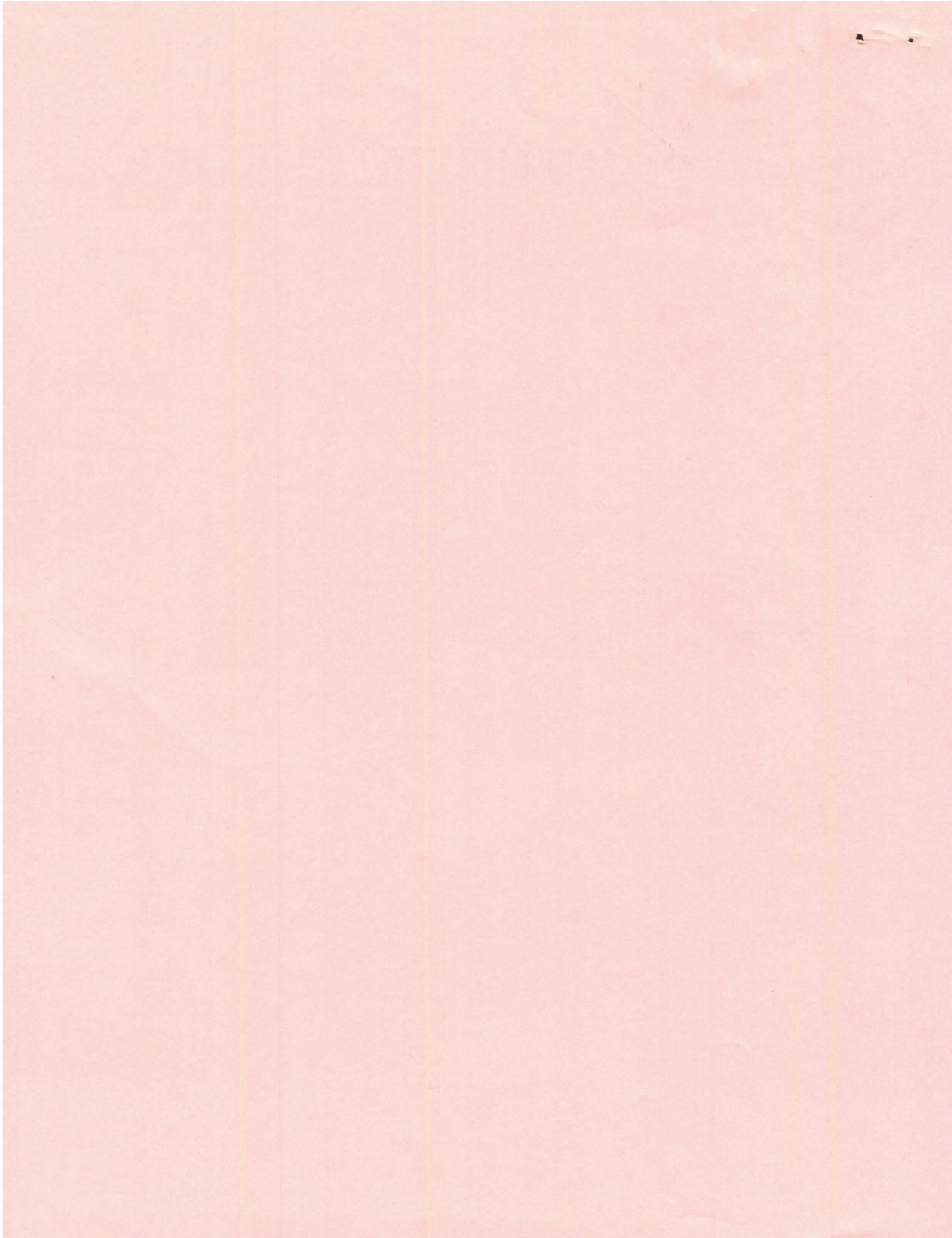
10:00 - President's Administrative
Council - CC214

Golf - (Rocky Mount, N.C.)
N.C. Wesleyan

FRIDAY - March 17

SATURDAY - March 18

SUNDAY - March 19



OF ACADEMIC INTEREST

Integration of the Knowledge of Man Forum: Sociobiology

The first of a series of panel discussions on the topic Sociobiology will be held Wednesday, March 15, at 2:00 P.M. in Campus Center 214. The panel, consisting of Professors C. W. Chang, Doerries, Durel, Healey, Hoaglund, Lopater, Mollick, and Teschner will begin to explore vital questions arising from Sociobiology, the study of the biological and genetic basis of the social behavior of animals (including man). Professor Markusen will be the discussant.

Major Objectives of the Forum:

1. To explore the relations of sociobiology to the sciences, natural and social, and to the humanities.
2. To develop a better understanding among disciplines of the potential utility of sociobiology in the study of human behavior.
3. To stimulate joint research efforts employing the sociobiology approach.

The suggested topics (participants should not feel restricted to this list):

- a. Science and Human Values
- b. What Unites Science and What Divides Science
- c. Sociobiology vs. Other Disciplines
- d. Social Darwinism and Sociobiology

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Curriculum Development Consultant to Visit

As part of its examination of the distribution requirements, the Curriculum Committee has secured through the good offices of the National Endowment for the Humanities a consultant on curriculum matters.

The consultant--Dr. Harvey Buchanan, Professor of Humanities at Case Western Reserve University--will be on campus Tuesday and Wednesday, March 14th and 15th.

As part of our effort to circulate Dr. Buchanan as widely as possible we will have a reception from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. Tuesday, March 14th in the Board Room of the Campus Center. Please drop by and discuss your curriculum concerns with Dr. Buchanan.

Bob Saunders, Curriculum Committee

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Multi-Disciplinary Minor In Gerontology

The Faculty has endorsed the concept of a multi-disciplinary minor in gerontology. For information of the Faculty, the proposed program is here presented. The proposed courses involved will be presented to the Faculty for approval at a later date.

Proposed is a multi-disciplinary minor in gerontology consisting of 18 hours. This minor will be coordinated by an appointed faculty member with the advisement of a faculty committee comprised of faculty members teaching courses in the program.

This multi-disciplinary minor is designed for the following possible student needs.

1. To provide a body of knowledge about older persons to be combined with skills obtained from the discipline of the student's major to provide viable career options working in gerontology related areas. Existing possibilities include:

- (a) Governmental Administration. Possible career options would include nursing home administration, administration positions in area agencies on aging, housing authorities, health planning.
- (b) Social Work. Nursing homes, area on aging outreach programs, mental health facilities, senior centers, social service agencies.
- (c) Sociology. Research and planning, community development, recreation departments.
- (d) Psychology. Counseling programs associated with delivery of services to the elderly.

Future possibilities include:

- (e) Physical Education. Recreation specialists for nursing homes and municipal recreation departments.
 - (f) Education. Adult education programs.
2. As a minor for the student who has an academic interest in gerontology but no career objectives in the area.
 3. As a certificate program for gerontology practitioners in the community who are working without an academic background in gerontology. An A.A. degree or equivalent prerequisite college work should be the criteria for entering this program and any course prerequisite should be met or waived by consent of instructor after determining student's ability to enter the course.

The multi-disciplinary minor will consist of 18 hours. Included in these 18 hours are 15 hours of core courses (5) required of everyone. These courses provide what is generally considered the minimum basic body of knowledge and experience for such a program. In addition to the 5 core courses, the student can choose one additional course (3 hours) in keeping with his/her interests and needs.

CORE COURSES

1. Sociology 305. Sociology of Aging. Three hours, three credits. Offered each year, fall semester. Instructor: Ruth L. Kernodle.

Aging as a social process and its relation to biological and psychological processes. Analysis of role loss, changing roles as a result of aging. Problems associated with the social aspects of aging. Social programs for the aging.

Prerequisite: Sociology 200 or consent of instructor.

(Note: This course is being offered in the fall of 1977 for the second time. Since it will draw from a wider audience than the gerontology minor it is projected to be offered every year, offered alternatively in day and evening sessions.)

2. Psychology 495. Topics. The Psychology of Adulthood and Aging. Three hours, three credits. Offered each year, spring semester. Instructor: Dr. S. E. Lopater.

A treatment of the biological, psychological, and social characteristics of adult development with emphasis on the dynamic nature of self-examination and evaluation during this life stage. Aging is discussed as both a consequence of adulthood and a separate life-span state in which biological limitations adversely prejudice psychosocial potential.

Prerequisite: Psychology 201 or consent of instructor.

(Note: Will be taught spring semester 1978 as a topics course and guided by this experience, proposed as permanent course. Probably should be offered each year as it will draw a wider audience than from the gerontology minor, offered alternatively in day and evening sessions.)

3. Biology 395. Topics. Physiological Aging and Health Problems. Three hours, three credits. Fall, 1979 and alternate years.

Examination of the aging process and consequent changes in human physiology and body systems. Relationship of physiological changes to health and nutritional problems. Survey of major health problems and possible interventive possibilities.

(A course for the non-science major to provide information and understanding about the elderly person which will be helpful in practice settings. Should be taught first as a topics course, either team taught or by adjunct faculty, before becoming a part of the permanent curriculum since some modifications may become apparent.)

4. Political Science/Sociology 395. Topics. Social Policy and Programs in Health and Aging. Three hours, three credits. Spring semester 1978-1979 and alternate years (unless demand warrants otherwise). Instructor: Lea B. Pellett and Harvey C. Williams.

A survey of pertinent federal, state, and local legislation and programs. Issues in policy, planning, and administration for health care and programs for the elderly.

(Course will be cross listed in Political Science and Sociology and will be team taught or taught in modules. After the experience of being offered as a topics course, to enter permanent curriculum.)

5. Practicum in Gerontology. Three hours, three credits. Each semester.

Part-time internship in appropriate agency/organization. Periodic conferences, written evaluations, and internship project. Students must apply for internship through the department chairman at least 30 days prior to the semester.

(Practicum placement will be coordinated by Gerontology program coordinator with the department through which the student is registered. This will ordinarily be the student's major department. Otherwise, the student will register for the practicum in the most appropriate department as it relates to the practicum experience. Student may not register for the practicum before completing 6 hours of the minor and must arrange placement with the Program Coordinator at least one month before the beginning of the semester.

Certificate students working in a geriatric setting may use their experience as the practicum setting but must receive academic supervision and complete a substantial reading program in areas bearing directly on the field placement in addition to the regular expectations of the practicum.)

ELECTIVE COURSES

6. Econ. 495-0, Economics of Health Resources. Prerequisite: Economics 201-202. Economic theory and applications in the health care system; medicare care organizations and economic aspects of aging. The present system of health care delivery will be examined with respect to achievement of social objectives and policy for improvement will be discussed.

(Course being offered Spring of 1978. Will have a wider audience than the minor so will be offered as demand is determined.)

7. Education 395. Topics. The Older Adult Learner. Three hours, three credits. To be offered 1979-80.

This course will examine learning theories and instructional strategies appropriate to the education of the older adult. Environment, past experience, motivation, atti-

tude and intellectual capacities will be studied as factors significant in educating the older learner.

8. Physical Education 395. Topics. Recreation for the Senior Citizen. Three hours, three credits. To be offered 1979-80.

This course is designed to give students a background and understanding of the physical and recreational needs of the elderly. The emphasis will be on appropriate content, methods and instructional techniques which will be useful for those working in recreation centers, senior citizen homes, and other related programs for the aged. Field experience with local senior citizen centers will be a part of the course requirement.

POSITION OPENING

Admissions Director

Christopher Newport College seeks Director of Admissions. Principle responsibilities include recruitment of largely local student population (both traditional and non-traditional) and management of day-to-day office operations. Additional responsibilities and functions appropriate to the position. Position reports to Dean of Admissions. Requirements: Master's degree and 3 years admissions experience; 5 years or more experience preferred. Salary: \$13,000 to \$15,000 depending on qualifications. 12-month position, available July 1, 1978. Send resume by April 15 to Dean Keith F. McLoughland, Admissions Director Search Committee, Christopher Newport College, P.O. Box 6070, Newport News, Va. 23606.

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FACULTY NEWS

Martin Buoncristiani was awarded a Summer Faculty Research Fellowship from NASA. He will work in the space sciences group.

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Robert Cummings attended the Eastern District Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation in Baltimore, Maryland on March 2-5.

NOTICES

Summer House Rental Wanted

A friend from University of Nebraska will be spending the summer at NASA and he needs housing for his family

"I will be arriving about the third week of May. The family will not join me until mid June. Our plans are somewhat flexible and can accommodate the vacation plans of a prospective landlord. We don't want anything pretentious, just three bedrooms with a fairly convenient location to Langley."

Anyone wishing to rent his home this summer please contact M. Buoncristiani, 599-7192.

TO: CNC Faculty.

FROM: William D. Wolf, Director of Freshman English.

Subject: A Proposal and Rationale for Writing Competence at CNC.

In the past year, we have all heard the axiom repeated time and again: "College students can't write any more." The Carnegie Foundation, business leaders, the military, and the newspapers have seized on this issue; President Windsor and Dean Edwards, addressing the problem at CNC, have established writing competence as one of the College's goals, and have requested that the English Department suggest ways to implement it here. Whatever the reasons for present conditions (television, modular curricula and social promotion in the secondary schools, the '60's, open admissions, the Communist conspiracy, or whatever), we must confront the problem directly, and soon.

We have a responsibility to the Peninsula, to the Commonwealth, but most of all to our students, to make sure that their bachelor's degree means achievement, not merely attendance. Our credibility as a four-year liberal arts college depends on it. No other skill or body of knowledge is more basic to an educated person than reasonable thinking, careful organization, and clear expression. And it is madness to deny seriously that writing is and will remain our principal means of communication.

ODU has trumpeted their new writing program up and down Tidewater. But noise, money, and a complex system do not a writer make. We believe that we can achieve comparable results with less fuss and much less cash. Here is how.

I. Continue our present admissions and testing procedures for exemption and placement. With a few minor adjustments, the system can work even better than it already does. We now use a writing sample as part of this process; we need no major revision at this time.

II. Institute a simple but important change in the Requirements for Degrees (p. 39 of the 1977-79 catalog) by requiring a grade of "C" in English 102 or 104. As a corollary, all students who transfer 102-104 credit to CNC, or who make a "D" in 102 here, must pass the Composition Competency Test (see below).

Rationale and explanation:

Why require a "C" in English 102? Because 101 and 102 are not humanities or even "content" courses--they teach skills that help a student survive. Logical thought, careful organization and clear expression are so basic that a student who is less than competent in them does not just fail an English class, but (s)he cripples his or her whole intellectual life. If our baccalaureate degree is to mean more than a certificate of attendance, we must assure ourselves that our graduates can write clear and correct (but not necessarily elegant) English prose. Furthermore, many colleges and universities will not accept a "D" as a transfer grade. A "C" is the least we should expect from our 102 students.

III. On p. 37 of the present catalog, insert the following: "Composition Competency Test. The Composition Competency Test, a two-hour, impromptu, 400-word writing sample, will be scheduled once each semester and once in the summer. It will be graded by faculty committees consisting of at least one full-time member of the Department of English and two other full-time faculty members. All students receiving transfer credit for English 102 or 104, and all students who receive a 'D' in English 102 or 104 at CNC, must receive at least a 'C' on the test in order to graduate from the College. Students who do not receive at least a 'C' will be notified within two weeks after the examination date, and will be advised either: 1) to re-take the test the next time it

is offered; 2) to seek help from an adviser, who will be named in the letter; 3) to enroll immediately in English 349. If a student fails the test a second time, he or she must successfully complete English 349, Expository Prose, in order to graduate. The test must be taken before completion of 90 semester hours of credit."

Rationale and explanation:

What is it? The Composition Competency Test (hereafter CCT) will be a two-hour impromptu writing sample. Each student will select one topic from a list which will cover a variety of subjects. (A different list will be used each semester.) The student will use his or her time to plan, write, revise, proof-read and re-copy a 400-word theme. The impromptu, controlled writing situation would minimize cheating and emphasize the student's own skills and resources.

Who would take it? Students making a grade of "D" in our second-semester course may not have met course requirements--e.g., have trouble with a term paper which is 30% of the grade--and still may be adequate in composition skills. The CCT would give them the opportunity to demonstrate this.

Requiring the test for transfers is harder to justify. Let us not mince words: by insisting that they take the test, we assert that our baccalaureate degree means that we vouch for the student's ability to write.

Nothing in higher education varies so widely as freshman English programs. Some emphasize literature, and may approach it through genres (fiction, poetry, drama), archetypes, themes, or a hundred other ways. Some stress basic skills and rhetoric, as ours does; others focus on sentence-building (cf. our Basic Studies course) or linguistics. Some, still quaintly stuck in the '60's, use the "touchy-feely" method, seeing composition mainly as a means of self-discovery. The list goes on and on. Moreover, large composition programs, proliferating into literally hundreds of sections, cannot certify the quality of any one section. Grade inflation has invaded some writing programs, as well. The main points are: we cannot be sure what any grade in composition means unless we give it; we cannot be sure that our students can write English prose unless we read it. The CCT is the most efficient, fairest, most objective way to measure writing skills.

Who grades it? The CCT is one place where our faculty can have a stake in a program that affects all of us. Each permanent faculty member should take a turn in rotation, making up and grading the test. Depending on the number of students taking it at any given time, committees would be set up, each consisting of one member of the English Department as chairperson and two others chosen by the Dean. The committees would divide the papers assigned to them, read them, and decide to pass or fail according to mutually-acceptable standards (see below). Failing and marginal papers must be read by more than one grader.

The Admissions Office states that in Fall 1977, we accepted 407 degree-seeking transfer students with more than 24 credit hours. We assume that most of these bring with them Freshman English credits. With our current staff, each committee would be responsible for about 51 themes, or 17 for each member--less than one composition section. The chairperson would collect the papers from the students, distribute them to the readers, call conferences if needed, record the grades, and turn them in; (s)he would also interpret for and guide the readers so that more or less standard practice would be followed from semester to semester.

What are the standards? Attached is a statement of grading standards and samples of excellent, competent, and failing work drawn from actual student papers. These reflect current standards in our English Department.

What do we tell the students? The committee should make one of three decisions on each paper:

1) Pass.

2) Re-take. The paper is uneven or marginal (too strong to fail, but too weak to pass). The student must see an adviser in the English Department, perhaps the chairperson of the committee, for full evaluation and specific advice on weaknesses. The adviser may suggest remedies such as self-help texts, tutoring through Basic Studies, or auditing of English 101, for example. Because the individual papers will have so many differences, the committee should not attempt to explain reasons for its decision in its letter to the student, but leave this for the conference. The student must re-take the CCT at the first opportunity, and a second marginal paper would result in automatic assignment to English 349.

3) Fail. The paper is so deficient in basic composition skills that re-taking the CCT without formal instruction would be fruitless. The student must enroll immediately in English 349.

We have discovered that indeed, disagreement can occur over deciding between a C+ and a B-, or even between a B- and a B+, for example. But deciding between passing and failing is a different matter. Our guiding principle should be: do we want a person who writes like this to hang a CNC diploma on his or her wall? We do not ask for elegance, brilliance or even superiority--just clarity, organization, support, and reasonable mechanical accuracy.

IV. Install a new course, English 349 (Expository Prose), with this description: "Practice and instruction in writing clear, coherent, and correct expository prose. Required for students who have not satisfied Requirement #7 under 'Requirements for Degrees' (p. ___). To pass, students must earn at least a 'C.' Those who do not will receive an 'I' and must repeat the course."

Rationale and explanation:

Why another course? The English Department now teaches 101-2-3-4, Advanced Composition (209), Business and Technical Writing (353), and Creative Writing (351-2); Basic Studies handles new freshmen with poor backgrounds and skills. But none of these courses meet the specific needs of this group of students. 209, 351-2, and 353 all have specific purposes, and are emphatically not remedial courses. The 101-4 sequence and Basic Studies are taught at the wrong level or without credit (see below for why these courses are inadequate for this program). The new course will meet the unique needs of one group only: those who fail the CCT.

Why a credit course for remedial work? Most of the enrollees in 349 will be transfers. The majority will be sophomores or juniors. While we want to insist on writing competence, we do not wish to construct unreasonable road-blocks or scare off students considering a transfer here but who are apprehensive about their writing skills. Therefore, English 349 would take 3 hours of elective credit (for a student with writing problems, how could this time be used any better?) and would give the student enough time and individual attention to address the problem. A "C" in 349 would be equivalent to passing the CCT.

Furthermore, from experience with running a non-credit writing lab which allegedly prepared students for a proficiency exam, I discovered that motivation was a severe problem. Students become obsessed with passing the test rather than with learning to write; cynicism, boredom, poor attendance and shameless angle-playing were the rule. Granting credit will hardly take us from the cave into the sunshine, but at least we will have stated that writing skill is important enough to the students and the College that we will reward students

for improving it. We will, in other words, pay back an investment in time and effort with three hours of elective credit.

By handling the course in the regular curriculum, we will save money. We would have to ask for a supplemental budget from the Commonwealth to run a non-credit lab, without much hope of getting it. Also, the numbers of students taking the CCT (and failing it) will fluctuate from semester to semester, yet costs for a permanent writing lab will stay roughly the same. A credit course can add or drop sections as we need them. In addition, by providing time, opportunity for help, and the twin spurs of a grade and credit, the course will teach our potential graduates to write better than any voluntary system could. And finally, the course will place responsibility where it belongs: with the English Department, which has been entrusted with teaching the bulk of the writing program.

Why should a student with specific difficulties or marginal skills take an entire upper-division course? Since students in 349 will, by and large, have many severe difficulties rather than one or two, the course is not designed to address a few minor problems whose elimination would enable the student to pass the CCT. This policy would downgrade the importance of the course and the skill it teaches into still another foolish hurdle to be evaded in any way possible. A 300-level remedial writing course is not a spelling bee once a week, a few sentence diagrams, and drill; it is writing practice, criticism, and individual attention. And to reiterate--a requirement like this says to the student: "Writing is so important that you need it before you take anything else, and we will not grant you a degree until you can do it competently."

Let us be blunt about motivation. Teaching beginning or remedial writing at any level is hard, time-consuming, but rewarding work. The English Department hardly stands to take usurious profits by producing FTE out of this program. We will bear the administrative burdens, the job of reading the papers each semester and summer, and the responsibility of maintaining consistent and fair standards. Nor do we wish to force punitive, heartless, and unattainable rules onto every student. We teach our freshmen not to stereotype or judge without direct knowledge, and we hope that our colleagues will accord us the same courtesy. In fact, we perceive a need in many of our students; we think that we can help them and the College; we are offering to do so.

V. Make it an official policy that all courses (whenever appropriate to the discipline) should include at least one paper, and that this paper be graded on writing skill as well as content.

Rationale and explanation:

Writing is a skill that can be learned, like long division or folk dancing; but unlike bicycling or swimming, it can be lost. The key is reinforcement. It is absurd and hypocritical to place the entire burden on one of two departments, assign all multiple-choice tests and no papers, and then complain because our students can't write. An essay test takes ten times as long to grade as a so-called "objective" test, but it is one way to insist that students and teachers keep their skills sharp.

The ODU program states that "all faculty members require writing in every course offered at the university and take the quality of a student's writing into consideration in the evaluation of student performance"; it "strongly urges" a required writing seminar in every department. Demanding a writing seminar in each department is an invasion of departmental autonomy and a violation of academic freedom. Moreover, it will shift responsibility from the

majors' writing abilities to the "seminar person" and away from all faculty; it will encourage technical jargon; and worst, it will not address the problem of general literacy, which is the purpose of the program. Yet, the problem of following through remains. Other than an administrative order insisting on a paper wherever appropriate, how else can we be sure that faculty are committing their own time and effort? Is not the objective important enough to restrict ourselves this way? And for all our moralizing, pontificating, pleading, groveling, and begging, have we helped our students learn to write?

Let's face this problem directly. If we agree that the problem is real, then we should move to correct it immediately. The English Department stands ready to guide, suggest, and serve. We need only your support and approval.

STATEMENT OF STANDARDS FOR COMPOSITION COMPETENCY TEST

In Freshman English at CNC, a "C" is the most frequent grade. It represents competent but not brilliant or even superior work. The main factors include:

CONTENT: The theme shows mature thought, and avoids cliches, banalities, overgeneralizations, and blatant disregard of facts. It shows an intelligent mind at work. (N.B.: "originality" is never demanded--just thoughtful reflection.)

ORGANIZATION: The paper has a central idea or thesis and is proportioned methodically, but often lacks imagination. Structure is functional and efficient, with no serious problems of proportion.

SUPPORT: The writer at least recognizes that concrete evidence is essential. Examples make the point, but are often obvious, commonplace, or even obscure.

EXPRESSION: Language is usually appropriate and correct, but shows little sense of effect; it is generally "flat." The meaning is clear, but lacks force due to unimaginative diction and presentation.

MECHANICS: The paper is free of major sentence and paragraphing errors (the most basic units of written communication are the sentence and the paragraph; accuracy is essential). It may contain a few slips in grammar, punctuation, and spelling, but not enough to impede communication.

A paper exhibiting the above characteristics would pass. Failing work often has these characteristics:

CONTENT: The paper may avoid the main issues or the assignment altogether. It may stubbornly deny facts, or show total lack of preparation on a subject; often it insults the reader by refusing to take the assignment seriously.

N.B.: a light tone usually means that the writer takes his task very seriously. But a writer who shows lack of interest in an assignment by refusing to try is in serious trouble.

ORGANIZATION: Proportion does not emphasize important points; thesis is unclear, lacking, or so broad that it cannot be covered in the space and time allotted. The paper may not have an ending, or may digress to no point. Often, failing themes leave the reader wondering what they are about.

SUPPORT: Generalizations and assertions follow one upon another without evidence; the theme depends on personal or received opinion almost exclusively.

ly. Paragraphs are often short, sometimes containing only one sentence. The writer seems to assume that his word alone is good enough for the world.

EXPRESSION: Language is unidiomatic, careless, and needlessly dull. It shows little knowledge about what words mean; usage is often faulty, and word choice frequently is incorrect.

MECHANICS: Errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling are so frequent that they are an irritant. The writer shows either a weak background or rudeness in poor proofreading. Frequent sentence or paragraph mistakes are often present.

PLEASE NOTE: If a theme exhibits one of the above conditions in severe enough measure, the paper may fail even if the others are competent. A piece of writing is a total effort, and one aspect done badly will call attention to itself so memorably that it can wreck the rest of the essay.

#1

During my youth, my family lived on a dead-end street in Pelham, a small suburb of New York City. The three families, all first and second generation Italians settled there upon their arrival from the old country. The elders all spoke with the same southern Italian dialect and they fractured the English with sentences like "Whatsa matta you no goda schoola today, eh?" My family was dull; the Priscos and the Rossi's kept the neighborhood lively.

Old man Prisco had a temper that erupted like a volcano but with greater frequency. His vocabulary of cuss words in both Italian and English was the envy of every kid on the block. On dull days, we sat around waiting and listening for Mr. Prisco to bang his thumb with a hammer, drive a crooked nail or misplace a tool and, inevitably, the hammer and nails were sent flying through space while the air turned blue with unprintable words. Watching while he installed storm windows, we saw him smash all ten with a baseball bat when one of the panes became jammed on the window stripping. He still holds "the meanest father-of-the year award for strapping ten year old Frankie to the cherry tree for two hours because Frankie went fishing without his permission.

Rose Rossi, a middle aged widow, lived next door to us. She was an outspoken, loud-mouthed rugged individualist who cared little for the dictates of society in general or the opinions of the neighbors in particular. She was an authority on the socio-economic problems of the world and local and national politics. Knowledgeable about minor physical ills and skilled with a screwdriver, and wrench, she made house calls for routine illnesses and plumbing failures. During emergencies, she was usually the first one on the scene and had the coolest head present. Her favorite pastimes were gardening, listening to the opera, fueding with the Prisco's and her grown children, none of whom would live with her. She liked the opera loud and clear. When she listened, the whole block listened. Saturday was our day for culture, and, like it or not, arias from Aida, Carmen, Tosca or whatever, broadcasted from the metropolitan Opera House, filled the air. On days Mrs. Rossi accompanied the soprano, we ran for our earmuffs.

When she wasn't chastising the neighbors or her family, Mrs. Rossi picked on the town mayor, a charismatic little man who won election on promises. She didn't vote for him and seldom missed an opportunity to remind him of unfilled promises and bungled decisions. Dressed in housedress, sneakers and floppy hat, she made frequent trips to Town Hall demanding an explanation for new tax hikes, complaining about the snow removal fiasco or wanting to know who was going to pay for the latest beautification of Town Hall. Once she staged a one woman demonstration in front of the mayor's office. She was prepared to stay there until he dispatched a crew to cut down the tall weeds on the town lot adjacent to her property.

Motivated more by a desire to conserve her own resources than to conserve the world's supply of energy, Mrs. Rossi was probably the nation's first energy conservationist. She did not own a car, seldom used public transportation or cabs. She usually traveled to only those places she could reach on foot. Carrying her suitcase, she even walked the two and a half miles to the hospital prior to her admission for general surgery.

A decade before the women's liberation movement, assertiveness training and self-fulfillment became popular, my neighbor, Rose Ricc, was "doing her thing." If anyone had told her she had discovered herself as a woman, she probably would have chuckled and replied "Mama mia, baby, you better believe it."

#2

I live by a mean old lady. Her name is Margaret Smith. Margaret tries to be nice but underneath she is a devious old lady. Margaret is seventy years old but acts like she could compete in the roller derby. But Margaret can do many miraculous things. She rotates her own garden and plants and seeds it. Margaret also rakes her own leaves in the Fall with no help.

But Margaret has one problem, she thinks she's the master of the neighborhood. She called the pound about the next door neighbor's dog and they had to get rid of it. She is also known for spreading false gossip about the neighbors. This includes me and the other young men in the neighborhood.

The thing about Margaret is that she acts tough but in all actuality she is afraid of her own shadow. She is so scared somebody might take something from her garden or back yard, that she had the telephone company put a light pole in her back yard. She even pulls her car around back under the light to keep an eye on it.

Margaret is not well liked by the women of the neighborhood. The reason is that she has a tendency to rub you the wrong way. Another reason is that when the ladies of the neighborhood wash and hang out their clothes, Maggie will burn her trash on purpose to smoke them up. The women have complained but she just keeps doing it.

She also says that a peeping Tom is coming around her house at night. That is why she sleeps with a gun under her pillow. When she told the women of the neighborhood this they couldn't believe it. All they said was. "who would want to look at her"?

Finally, many of the old original neighbors have moved because of this one lady. Just think how one person can mess up a good situation.

#3

It may be in your life that you may find only three or four true friends. This may be so because all people have different values, lifestyles and ways of doing things. Most people you know today are acquaintances because you may only associate with them for awhile. Take for instance the friends in your highschool, most of the ones you thought were your friends drifted away from you when you started going to college and they just went to work. The same might happen to those you meet in college because after graduation you might have different jobs and soon you also meet new friends. True friends is someone you like to stay in touch with when you have different things to do or even if you find different people to associate with. You would also like to see your friends get along with the new acquaintances you have met, so you introduce them. Friends may also display many qualities that make them a friend forever.

One of these qualities may be that they respect your feelings. For instance, if for some reason you may not be yourself one day, your friends may spot this and try to say something that might cheer you up for a while. They may not ask you the reason for your being this way because they respect your privacy. They know if you want to talk to them you will. A friend will also respect some of your judgements that you make for yourself.

Another quality that a true friend holds is that they stick by you when everybody else maybe against you. It may seem that when other people are against you that your friends are there by your side and haven't at all turned

against you. For example, you had some bad rumors going around about your reputation. Your acquaintances will turn against you because they don't want to get the same reputation that isn't true. In a since the acquaintances of yours beleive the rumors but your true friends stay by you side. They could care less what somebody has spread around about you.

True friends also stand by you when your not around. For instance, an acquaintance may find someone whom they also like. If this person dislikes you, an acquaintance may turn against you when they find this out and soon state it to everybody. However, a friend might also find a person which they like, and that person may also dislike you but friends will acknowledge that they are good friends of yours and will remain so. They may also add that they would appretiate it if that person would please not talk bad about you in there presents. There may also be times that they will take up for you.

I am not saying that good friend don't have disagreements because they do but these are just some of my opinions of what qualities a good and true friend will have.

#4

A family that lived next door to my family for many years, the Harris family, could be very friendly at times and very disagreeable at other times. They were also a very religious family. They had a boy about my age whom I was friendly with, although we weren't real close. Though our parent were friendly to one another, the never really socialized together.

Most of their outside activities were directed toward the church. Since they were very religious, they didn't believe in going to bed late or sleeping late. This wasn't so bad on school days but it could be very obnoxious on other days when we were trying to sleep and they were cutting their grass at 6:00 in the morning. Although this may not have been entirely because of religion, I'm sure this was part of it.

At times they carried their religion too far. Once their youngest son was in a car accident. The doctors told them he would need a blood transfussion to live. They refused to let the doctors give him one because their religion would not allow it. We tried talking to them, but it didn't do any good. The hospital had to get a court order to give the boy a transfussion. Although they never really complained to anyone, there seemed to be a lot of tension around that household for a long time afterwards. It was almost as if they blamed the boy.

Since these people were our neighbors, we tried to take the bad with the good. They could be very friendly. One time when my mother was in the hospital, Mrs. Harris cleaned our house and cooked our meals for almost a week. Her older children took care of my little brother while my father was at work. This helped out a great deal.

Many times they would take my mother places since she could not drive. Sometimes she would go shopping with Mrs. Harris and out to lunch; however, this was not frequent. No matter how friendly they were, they always seemed to be holding something back. It was like they never really wanted to get involved with anyone else. They didn't want anyone else to get involved with them either. We lived beside them for many years and never really got to know them.

Sometimes my family disagreed with the way this family did things, but they were our neighbors and we tried not to say too much. We just tried to return what friendship they did give.

Comments:

All three papers were written in response to this assignment: "Choose one of the following dull topics and write a theme that makes it interesting." The topics were pets, neighbors, friends, how I spent my summer vacation, and how the beauties of the campus affect me.

Theme #1 ("Neighbors in Pelham"):

Content: Excellent. The writer shows sharp observation and attention to the world around her. The ending delivers the message.

Organization: Well-done. "Pyramid" shape opens with general statement, uses a short but pointed example, develops a long example, then concludes sharply.

Support: An especially strong point. Packed with details, sights, sounds. Shows, does not tell.

Expression: Precise and generally colorful; rarely takes the easy way out, but is never confusing. Senses the possibilities of language, if occasionally bordering on cliché ("air turned blue," "rugged individualist"). Uses sentence length well.

Mechanics: A few minor errors ("metropolitan," "fueding," "conservationist"), but tenerally accurate, considering the length and complexity of the sentences.

Grade: high B, possibly A.

Theme #2 ("Margaret Smith"):

Content: Marginally acceptable. Unified thesis pursued doggedly, if without much imagination. No digression, at least.

Organization: Adequate. Blunt transitions jerk the reader this way and that, but each paragraph sticks to the point; opening and closing are functional, but hardly elegant.

Support: Uneven. Paragraphs 3 and 4 use examples marginally well while #2 introduces a juicy possibility without developing it. Short paragraphs indicate lack of concreteness.

Expression: Below par. Wordiness, ("The thing about Margaret is that..."), tautology ("old lady," "Margaret," par. 1; "reason is that," par. 4), and especially short, choppy, repetitive sentences indicate rudimentary skills in sentence-building. Diction is clear and correct, but generally unimaginative.

Mechanics: Not very good. Problems with commas (Par. 2, first sentence; par. 3, second sentence), pronoun shift (par. 4, second sentence), and spelling ("ladys'") are almost serious.

Grade: C- or possibly D+. If a student wrote this on the CCT, I might recommend a re-take, but not a failure.

Theme #3 ("Friends")

Content: Below par. Par. 1 consists entirely of generalization and cliché; vague main point (whatever it is); weak conclusion.

Organization: The theme's long suit. Evidence of planning, especially in the body of the paper. Too bad the writer does not take advantage of it.

Support: Rather weak. Examples are generalized, without much force; they lack concreteness. Par. 1 is disastrous. Too much of the paper reads like a bad sermon.

Expression: inferior. Diction is dull; sentences, though sometimes long, lack subordination. The writer has a tin ear and almost never punctuates. Misuse of words ("in there presents") shows unfamiliarity with written English.

Mechanics: awful. I count 9 misspellings, two subject-verb agreement errors, a comma splice, two wrong word choices, a wrong use of "which" for "whom," and one misuse of an adjective ("bad") for the adverb, not to mention problems of word order and failure to punctuate.

Grade: F. The writer needs extensive drill and practice in fundamentals.

Theme #4 ("The Harrises"):

Content: Quite adequate. The reader knows the family better after reading the paper; observations are clear, if undistinguished. Clear thesis.

Organization: Clear and logical. No abrupt breaks or sudden digressions. Methodical.

Support: Functional, if not exciting. Details make the point, but not vividly. Repetition in penultimate paragraph does not help.

Expression: Diction is mature but not terribly precise, witty, or colorful; the writer seems content to describe or explain, not put the reader in the situation. Sentence structure is competent, without fireworks.

Mechanics: A few mistakes ("weren't real close," "transfussion," and an agreement error) do not impede the reader unduly. Perhaps the writer should be more careful.

Grade: C. The paper gets the job done and fulfills the assignment as an adult college student should. The paper does not excite, but neither does it offend.