

English Department Minutes
Monmouth College
Monday, September 10, 2007
3pm-5pm

Absent: None; Watson in at 3:15pm; Bruce in at 3:30pm; Solberg out at 4:05pm; Kitchen out at 4:15pm

1. Rob quickly reviewed the minutes from the previous departmental meeting; there were no questions or comments.
2. What is College Writing

Steve Price presented an overview of a previously distributed article (Sullivan) with the above title as the first topic in five special-topic meetings for the fall semester. He also handed out articles with information from the NCTE and WPA regarding writing standards.

- *The following are points Price summarized from the article:*
 1. The article is from a book about college-level writing published by the NCTE, which gave the book much publicity.
 2. The reading is a result of new assessments trends in writing.
 3. The book is in the CAC collection in the MLC (Carol's office). According to Steve, it is relatively quick reading and tends to lack evidence to prove that the ideas in the book work. The authors raise questions, but do not answer many of them, while lacking any scholarship regarding the effectiveness of their ideas.
 4. Price was interested in addressing the following questions: what is a student's experience in writing? What are the impacts of such experience on students? What differentiates high school writing from college writing? How do colleagues at MC view college-level writing? How do we, as a department, explain what we are doing with writing instruction to others?
- *The following are specific notes/comments based on the above questions:*
 1. Since the essay deals mainly with community college courses, there are many political ramifications that do not apply to this department; however, we are seeing under-prepared students entering the college and create different teaching experiences in courses such as ILA and English 110 than in upper-level courses. This trend could result from a cultural shift away from family units and away from challenging curriculum in high schools. Watson suggested that the department needs to focus on its clientele in order to tailor a more successful first-year experience for students. It could be an institutional mission to define what an unprepared student is and how that student can be helped in the college.

Hale asked what it takes for a student to be prepared to do good college writing and most agreed that English 110 is the place to

prepare good writers. Rob noted that the standards of the course remain, but the rhetorical tasks become harder as the course progresses. Various instructors noted that many 110 students enter the course with the inability for sustained effort in writing, with syntax problems, with inability to plan writing or to develop thought clearly in writing.

Watson suggested some type of remediation strategies to treat these deficiencies, perhaps producing a document that identifies the cultural and educational backgrounds of our students through personal interviews. This could create a pilot program in 110 to address these problems, but would involve much time and effort. The issue must be dealt with locally, though, since national surveys aren't always effective for the situation at MC.

2. In reference to the Greenberg quote in the article (p. 5), department members agreed that incoming students will not function well with different forms of writing, but students can identify good academic writing if given examples. English 110 assignments sometimes take away some dimensions referred to in the quote since a group of essays rated as "C" level work may have different strengths and weaknesses. A rubric is hard to use with this type of issue since students often feel that the parts of the rubric are evenly balanced. In order to address this problem, Kevin Roberts will create new drafts of the 110 rubric for future use and will receive input from the department regarding the changes.

3. Department Chair Meeting

Rob handed out information to tenure-track faculty regarding assignments for admission days, open houses, and SOAR. He also noted that room scheduling and assignments were discussed at the meeting.

4. Admissions

At 4:15pm, Chris Johnson, Shannon Cremeens, and A.J. Danielson joined the department to discuss departmental concerns/issues with admission. The following items were presented to the above three as updates:

- New chair (Rob Hale) since January
- Third year for English 110 as Composition and Argument; a new text was used this year
- Black Friars will present Taming of the Shrew on March 3, 2008.
- Printing Press is on the web on a monthly basis
- The Coil is in progress
- The department has a new web page with an alumni section
- Recent graduates of the program have jobs for newspapers, insurance companies, schools, toy companies, internet publishing companies, etc. This information is on the web page.

- Ann Stone, Shannon Slee, Eric Davis, Maddy Ethington, and Kate Griffith may be good majors for prospective majors to shadow or lunch with on campus
- Prospective students need to be made aware of the CAC program and Writing Fellows, as well as the new 19th Century Studies minor.

The department voiced the following concerns:

- Hale addressed the dual credit issue. Incoming students must have a four-hour argumentative writing course or two three-hour courses for comparable credit at MC. It is becoming an institutional decision to not always accept dual credit. Chris Johnson noted that if a student has an AP 4 or 5, he or she might opt out of English 110. The issue also becomes whether or not the department wants to count any literature from the AP for composition.
- Price requested that Admissions uses positive language when describing English 110.
- The department was concerned about the issue of journalism at MC and how Admissions addresses it. The college does not offer the course, but can prepare English majors for journalism through graduate school elsewhere and through local apprenticeships. MC students also have access to working on publications on campus and they are able to receive “clips” right away due to the small size of the campus. Watson has a draft of a rationale for journalism preparation that he will send to Johnson and the English Department.
- Watson asked that prospective students know that they will be challenged in courses such as ILA or English 110. Proper preparation in high school is imperative.
- Hale presented the topic of a possible humanities camp at MC for rising high school juniors. The department has discussed this before, but it could be a benefit for Admissions.
- Chris Johnson offered the following: MC has a minimum acceptance of an ACT composite score of 18; below that might be allowed if six or more semesters of “B” or above work is evident. Fewer students are taking solid-core preparation classes in high school, but there is a bigger correlation between college retention and high school class rank rather than ACT scores. Sue Dagit has been exploring this, too. Johnson admitted that Admissions does “take risks” with some prospective students, but the value of the students’ high school education is taken into consideration.

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Roberts.