JOHN B. SIMPSON  
Campus Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor  

Dear John:  

RE: Writing Program External Review Closure Report  

I present here the closure report for the external review of the Writing Program conducted during 1999. The external review committee (ERC), consisting of David Bartholomae (University of Pittsburgh and Team Chair), Sheridan Blau (UCSD), and Linda Brodkey (UCSD), visited the campus on May 17-18, 1999. Their report was received on June 29, 1999, and the closure meeting took place November 16, 1999. Participants at the closure meeting were CEP representative David Sweet, CPB representative Alison Galloway, GC representative David McCloskey, Dean of Humanities Jorge Hankamer, Writing program Chair Carol Freeman, Principle Analyst Kathleen Dettman, and myself, serving as Interim AVCPP and chair of the closure meeting.  

The review team's report confirmed the outstanding quality of writing instruction provided by the instructors in UCSC's writing program. To quote the ERC report, "As a provider of intellectually rigorous and serious undergraduate writing instruction, it ranks with the very best writing programs in the country. In its faculty, in the range and quality of its lower division courses, in its imaginative response to Subject A, in its outreach initiatives, and in its approach to ESL instruction, it is the most distinctive and outstanding program in the UC system."

Because of the universal agreement concerning the quality of the program, the focus of the review and closure letter is on future directions and the role of the Writing Program at UCSC. This discussion can be summarized under four major areas:

1. The role of upper division curriculum  
2. The delivery of the curriculum  
3. The funding model for the program  
4. Future directions for the Writing Program  

The role of the Writing Program in providing upper division curriculum.  

During the years of budgets reductions, the Writing Program reduced the range of its upper division curriculum offerings. The Writing Program has indicated it is unwilling to rebuild its upper division offerings by providing upper division writing courses aimed at the general campus student population. Instead, the view of the program is that writing
initiatives must come from faculty across the campus, with the support of the faculty in the Writing Program.

This year, the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Education has developed a proposal for the initiative that would expand writing instruction at the upper division level. The Writing Program would play an important role in this initiative, helping to work with CEP to develop guidelines for new writing intensive courses. If funded, the initiative calls for working in the first year with the two largest undergraduate majors on campus, Biology and Psychology, to develop and support writing intensive upper division courses. Lessons learned from this experiment should be invaluable in guiding the campus discussions of the role of writing.

The focus of the program itself is on expanding the upper division course offerings in the Journalism minor and supporting the new Communications and Rhetoric minor.

The Communications and Rhetoric minor was approved by CEP in June 1999. As the program itself notes, this minor represents a means of restoring an intermediate and advanced undergraduate curriculum. All participants in the review highlighted their concern for what was viewed as the minor’s insecure funding base.

The basis for this concern can be traced to a gap in the campus procedures for reviewing and approving minors. CEP approves proposals for minors. Under current CEP policies, a student may minor in a discipline by fulfilling the course requirements for the minor established by the sponsoring agency. Normally, the number and types of courses required for the minor will be in the same pattern as those required for a major, except that the total number will be reduced by two. A minor may be offered in subjects not offering a major, in which case the appropriate number of courses will be determined by the sponsoring agency and the Committee on Educational Policy.

These policies do allow for a minor in the absence of a major, but in this case, the approval process fails to address the resource needs of the minor. The establishment of a major requires a review of the academic curriculum as well as the resources required to mount the program. Such a review involves the office of the VPAA, as well as CEP and CPB. Given the existence of a major, the approval of a minor has been handled solely by CEP. This has been appropriate when a major exists since the resources needed for the minor are at most incremental. The establishment of minors is not reviewed by either the VPAA or CPB. Thus, there is no automatic mechanism for ensuring that the resources necessary for the minor are actually available and have been committed by the sponsoring program and/or division. As a consequence, we can have minors approved by CEP for which the sponsoring program can claim it does not have secure funding. If minors without majors are to be offered at UCSC, the campus should revise its program approval procedures to ensure the VPAA and CPB are involved in reviewing all such proposals.
The delivery of the curriculum

The Writing Program agreed to a goal of having graduate student instructors teach 20% of the Writing 1 sections. Graduate students require adequate training and supervision if the overall quality of instruction is to be maintained. Graduate students hired to teach writing must first take a training course given by the Writing Program. This increases the cost to the graduate student, making employment teaching Writing 1 a less attractive option than serving as a TA. This makes it difficult for Writing to attract the best graduate students in the numbers that would be needed to meet the 20% goal. Consequently, the program has faced difficulties as it has tried to achieve this goal. At the time of the closure meeting, about 14% of the sections were being taught by graduate students.

One option is to make multi-year commitments of support to graduate students who undergo the training to teach writing. There may also be a role for the Graduate Council in encouraging graduate programs to support the policy of using graduate students to teach writing and to think creatively about how they can take advantage of this program to support the students in their programs.

The funding model

The Writing Program currently has an anomalous and privileged position with respect to the budget and funding structure of the campus. Unlike academic programs administered through departments, the Writing Program has been provided with an automatic 100% funding for workload increases based on freshman enrollments. In contrast, other programs rarely receive funding directly tied to workload. Instruction resources are generally allocated only after consideration of a variety of factors, which includes workload, but also strongly emphasizes programmatic (both research and instruction) considerations within divisional and departmental priorities.

The ERC, the Writing Program itself, CEP, and CPB all argued for expanding the current funding model for Writing to include all its activities, not just freshman writing courses. Unfortunately, none of the participants articulated a rationale or general set of principles for guiding such decisions. CPB comes close to providing such principles in citing the “placement of campus service units within [an academic division] upon which it is dependent for funding...” However, this would argue for automatic 100% workload funding only for the freshman writing courses, as is presently done, and would not provide a rationale for a similar funding mechanism for other curricular activities undertaken by the Writing Program. Further, virtually all departments provide service courses to students from throughout the campus, yet they do not receive the guaranteed funding Writing does.

There are many excellent programs on campus — it does not follow that each should be funded by separate line allocations from the central administration. To do so would reverse the successful moves the campus has made in decentralizing decision
making to the academic divisions and to departments. Providing funding to a dean charged with administering a set of departments and programs places the Writing Program no more at the mercy of the dean than it does Philosophy, Electrical Engineering, or Psychology.

The special budget status of the Writing Program is scheduled to be revisited this year. The central administration and the deans, with the advice of CPB, should consider the underlying principles that guide the campus in making decisions to fully fund some programs for workload increases and not others. If the argument is that all freshman service courses should be funded 100% for workload increases (currently the situation with Writing and the Colleges), then a review should be conducted to determine if there are other units that should also be treated in this manner. This would, however, not justify extending the special funding of the Writing Program to cover upper division course offerings, or the courses in their Journalism and Communications and Rhetoric minors. These should compete with other minors and majors on an equal footing.

As the dean notes in his response, the present funding model for the Writing Program supports a "predetermined conception" of the Campus Writing Program (CWP). In so doing, it may limit the ability of the Writing Program to develop innovations, either in terms of new methods for delivering their traditional curriculum or in launching new curricular initiatives.

Future directions

The Writing Program is tied, in part, to broader campus conversations about the role of writing, both in the context of general education and disciplinary majors. These broader issues cannot be addressed by the program itself, since they involve the role of writing instruction in the campus's vision for general education. As the campus addresses these issues, it needs to take advantage of the proven experience of the Writing Program in providing excellent writing instruction at the lower division level, and the expertise and support the program has the potential to offer in helping expand writing at the upper division level throughout the curriculum.

Absent campus-wide decisions about writing, the Writing Program's future centers on the continued provision of a very high quality freshman writing program and the two minors: Journalism and Communication and Rhetoric.

Summary

The Writing Program delivers high quality instruction and has been well served by a dedicated group of lecturers. The growing undergraduate enrollments have justified the additional recruitment of SOE lecturers, individuals who can also help provide the administrative support needed to manage the program. The Dean of Humanities has indicated support for at least two additional SOE appointments, funded by the conversion of TAS dollars. The addition of two SOE lecturers would add increased depth to the
leadership of the program, and strengthen its ability to compete with other programs for the funding needed for new activities. This year, the Dean has been authorized to extend offers of appointment to two candidates out of this year's single search. This would bring the number of SOE lecturers in the program to 4 - one year in advance of the Dean's earlier plans.

The campus has not yet provided a clear articulation of its expectations for writing instruction as an integral part of a UC Santa Cruz undergraduate education. The campus can call upon the expertise, experience, and dedication of the excellent faculty in the Writing Program as it develops mechanisms to ensure students are adequately trained in writing, but it will require a campus conversation that extends well beyond the Writing Program to reach a consensus on how this should be done. As the program itself notes in responding to the ERC report, the ERC "recommendations...have implications not so much for the Writing Program by itself as for the campus as a whole..."

Sincerely,

Carl E. Walsh
Faculty Assistant to the Campus Provost

cc: Chair CPB John Hay
    Chair CEP George Brown
    Principal Analyst Kathleen Dettman
    Department Chair Carol Freeman
    Dean Jorge Hankamer
    VPAA Faye Crosby
Writing Program External Review
Questions for Six-month to One-year Follow-up

1. Has a new budget agreement between the central administration and the Dean of Humanities been negotiated to govern budgetary allocations to the Writing Program?

2. Have new SOE recruitments been successful?

3. Has the program been able to offer courses in the Journalism minor such as Minorities in Journalism and Newswriting on a more frequent basis?

4. Has the program been able to meet the goal of having 20% of the Writing 1 sections taught by graduate student instructors? Has the program been able to work with other departments to help facilitate the involvement of graduate students?

5. Has the Writing Program made a proposal that addresses the problems resulting from 80% to 95% time appointments for lecturers?

6. Has the program been able to assist in developing guidelines for writing intensive course offerings by departments throughout the campus?