6/28/99

Jorge Hankamer
Dean of Humanities
15 Cowell College Common
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Re: External Review of the UCSC Writing Program

Dear Dean Hankamer,

Before we begin to report on our visit, we would like to thank the people who helped to make our stay such a pleasant one, with particular attention to Jane Mino. Jane responded quickly to requests we made on campus, and she was a generous and graceful host. None of us can remember a visit that was so carefully and thoughtfully planned. It was a real pleasure to be on your beautiful campus and to meet with you and your colleagues.

We were on campus for two days, Monday, May 17 and Tuesday, May 18, 1999. In advance of our visit, we reviewed a variety of documents, including: a description of the Writing Program, with course descriptions, assessment guidelines, sample student papers, and statistics on workload and enrollments; faculty CVs and a full faculty roster, with summary job descriptions; documentation surrounding the 1992 review of the Writing Program; the 98/99 Writing Program Self Study; the Writing Program's six year plan and the Divisional six year plan. We were also given an advance schedule of our meetings. We won't list all the individuals with whom we met, since you have a copy of our agenda.

Let us take a minute, however, to thank all those who took time to meet with us, particularly the students, the student tutors, and Vice Chancellor Simpson, Vice Chancellor Mangel and Chancellor Greenwood. After reviewing the schedule, we requested meetings with undergraduate students, which were arranged, and we asked for...
additional student essays, which were provided. While on campus we were given a variety of additional documents, including Writing and Learning, the handbook for UCSC faculty and a variety of documents supporting upper division courses and writing across the curriculum. We feel we were provided full and open access to the Writing Program, and full and frank answers to our questions.

We will organize our report by means of the categories and questions in our charge.

1. Program/Curriculum

Introduction: The UCSC Writing Program has a long and rich history; it has a talented, experienced, and highly professional faculty, including some with national reputations in the area; it offers outstanding courses and programs in the lower division; it is poised to revive a significant and impressive upper division Writing Across the Curriculum Program. 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.

The Writing Program provides important service to the institution as an academic unit. With a campus-wide writing requirement, it is also one of the institution's most significant points of contact with entering students, their parents, and the legislature. Our sense is that the program is held in very high regard by the students and by other faculty on campus. It is one of the many things that UCSC does with distinction. It is important that the senior administration be aware of this. The Program's continued health and vitality should be of utmost concern. If it is not already, it should be a part of the institution's development and public relations campaigns.

The Writing Program since the 1992 Review, and the Effects of the New Funding Formula: We were asked to consider the program in relation to the earlier, 1992 review. Since 1992, the Writing Program had to seriously reduce the range of its work due to budget cuts. The cuts were focussed primarily in relation to upper division courses. UCSC had begun to develop initiatives to support an innovative and, at least from a distance, highly successful writing across the curriculum program. The Learning Assistance Program, in particular, was distinctive in its outlines, and what remains in the existing peer tutoring program (and in the plans for an extended program) is impressive indeed. (We met with some of the student tutors. They were wonderful and it was clear that the work they were doing was important to their own education and not
just to the students they served.) We all looked at the peer tutoring initiatives with envy and plan to carry them as a model back to our own institutions.

We were asked to assess the effect of the loss of the upper division, writing across the curriculum programs on undergraduates and faculty. While we are not in a position to assess this directly, it is obvious that these programs were important, effective and innovative in their design. It seems obvious to us that the campus lost something significant when these programs were cut. UCSC is now one of the few major universities to lack a significant Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. This should be of concern to the senior administration, since it may compromise the institution's ability to recruit students and faculty.

While the upper division initiatives were cut, the work with the lower division, however, continued to be of the highest quality. The faculty continues to be engaged, innovative, and highly professional. The group has developed a sense of community and mission that clearly continues to sustain those who have been around for many years and to inspire those who are new. The new funding mechanism seems to insure that there will be continued support related to enrollments. The current definition of faculty workloads is responsive to the time that must be spent administering a large and complicated and ambitious program, and supervising and training a large staff.

What is potentially lost in this formula for funding are lines to support the work of students and faculty beyond the first year. This is a real danger. It is generally understood that a school with a serious concern for undergraduate writing will support student writing across the four year curriculum. A budget tied to the introductory courses could seriously compromise those efforts on the UCSC campus. There needs to be a line in the budget to insure that the support extends beyond the first year. Since the Writing Program has a history of excellent work in the upper division, it makes good sense to tie those funds to an expanded role for the Writing Program.

We learned while we were on campus that there are efforts to create a tutorial center through Student Services. From our perspective, this would be a great mistake. There is a history of extremely effective diversified and decentralized tutoring in the Learning Assistance Program, and the Writing Program has proposed five new writing centers. There is training and expertise at hand in the Writing Program and their initiatives recognize the importance of tailoring tutoring programs to particular academic areas and drawing on the expertise of students and faculty in those areas. It would be poor management to let a new funding procedure drive a campus wide tutorial center away from the very faculty who can best do the work.
Assessment: You asked, "How do other programs, both within the UC system and nationwide, systematically assess the effectiveness of their Writing Programs?" At one point schools were administering exams to students entering the junior year and/or at the point of graduation. These exams proved to be costly, cumbersome, controversial and inaccurate. Currently, most programs evaluate students through some sort of portfolio review. When the evaluation is done beyond the level of the individual instructor, the portfolios are chosen randomly or selectively to insure a representative sample. At some schools a faculty committee (a College Writing Board) is charged with overseeing undergraduate writing: approving proposals for writing intensive courses, evaluating the first year program, administering prizes and awards and, in general, promoting student writing on campus. The greatest advantage of a College Writing Board is the degree to which influential faculty on a campus can begin to speak for student writing (and to value student writing as writing) and to make it and the effective forms of writing instruction more visible.

From our experience, the ideal form of campus-wide evaluation come when individual departments are made responsible for signing off on the literacy of their majors. This is usually accomplished when there is an established writing across the curriculum program and one of the writing intensive courses (or some program of writing across several courses) is required in each student's major department.

Journalism Minor: By all accounts the journalism minor is a very successful program, serving students and faculty interests alike. The program has produced an impressive list of graduates and supports outstanding publications on campus.

The ten students who met with the review committee spoke eloquently about their interest in journalism and their experiences with the award-winning publications sponsored by the program. They particularly praised the support and accessibility of the faculty. An impressive array of senior theses have been produced by students in the program. When asked, the students said that they preferred a journalism minor to a major, since the minor allowed them to pursue journalistic work in the context of a full liberal arts education.

The meeting with the faculty confirmed the students' understanding of the program as academic rather than pre-professional. The faculty serve the students not only through their contacts in the classroom but as informal academic advisors. Faculty and students alike see the program as vital and stable; all, however, said that they would like to diversify the student population (particularly in terms of race and ethnicity). This would require, among other things, regular offerings of courses directed at issues related to minorities and the media. Students (though not the faculty)
expressed a desire to increase current offerings to accommodate all who wish to register. They are under the impression that the program can only take in half the number of students who desire to take courses in journalism.

**ESL:** The UCSC Writing Program has achieved admirable and singular success in helping ESL students satisfy campus writing requirements without assigning those students to the sorts of segregated and stigmatized courses that ESL students on other UC campuses tend to resent and avoid. The UCSC solution is to provide strong tutorial assistance for ESL students in college core courses and then to offer two additional intensive writing courses (Writing 20 and 21) for any students (including transfer students and other native speakers) who might need additional writing instruction at the Freshman level. These two additional courses are, in fact, populated largely (but never exclusively) by ESL students who have not passed the Subject A exam. These are not test-preparation courses nor courses that focus solely on remedial skills. Rather, they are college-level courses that examine intellectually challenging topics and require students to read college-level texts and write college-level papers. They provide intensive tutorial assistance for ESL students.

In completing the work for these courses, students complete a number of papers which at the conclusion of the course they may submit in the form of a portfolio to demonstrate that they have achieved a level of proficiency sufficient to exempt them from the Subject A requirement. The portfolios are not requirements of the course, but are invited from students who have not yet passed the Subject A exam and who may wish to challenge the exam by means of a portfolio review. Portfolios are reviewed by teams of instructors; instructors may not evaluate portfolios submitted by their own students.

This method for satisfying the Subject A requirement assures student proficiency with greater reliability and fairness than can be achieved through any additional administration of the Subject A examination. The examination is, at best, a compromised and flawed instrument designed for administration to large numbers of students whose proficiency must be evaluated quickly and cheaply. Its reliability is compromised by the limited time given to students for writing and by the problem of topic compatibility. ESL students, in particular, need additional time to draft and revise college papers and are often unfairly disadvantaged by Subject A topics that presuppose cultural experiences common to most entering UC students. The portfolio evaluations provided through Writing 20 and 21 represent a distinct advance in the technology of assessment, especially for ESL students, and set an example which other UC campuses would be well advised to follow.
2. Program Faculty

The Writing Program has a talented, experienced, and highly professional faculty, including some with national reputations in the area. They have done an excellent job in recruiting, in evaluation, and in faculty development. This is a strong and cohesive group, proud of its accomplishments and worried about its (sometimes) precarious status. There are two obvious points of concern.

Additional SOE appointments: The Writing Program has benefited greatly from the vision and energy and leadership provided by Carol Freeman and Don Rothman. The institution should begin now to recognize others who have moved into leadership positions and to insure in the future that members of the staff will be in a position to move into and share the many administrative tasks of the program. In consultation with Carol and Don, the administration should begin to plan for the Writing Program's next decade.

It seems very clear that one way to reward those who have already given significant leadership, to broaden the senior administrative group, and to expand the representation on the Faculty Senate is to provide 3-5 additional Security of Employment positions. If nothing else should come of our recommendations, these appointments should have the highest priority.

Ladder appointment in composition and rhetoric: We also spent a considerable amount of time talking with others and among ourselves about the appropriateness of a ladder appointment in Composition and Rhetoric. While Santa Cruz can provide excellent preparation for graduate students as teachers of writing, it does not have research faculty in the tenure stream to begin a program of graduate training that would allow graduate students to declare research expertise in the field. We concluded that there is little interest at this point in the established academic departments for such a person or for such a program of study. And it would be entirely inappropriate to add a ladder faculty line simply in order to oversee or supervise the current Writing Program. The Senior Lecturers are well able to do that work. We do not, then, recommend a ladder appointment.

Outreach: Writing Program faculty at UCSC are, we believe, more significantly involved in campus outreach programs than any other faculty group at any other UC campus. This is largely a function of the admirable and long-standing involvement of members of the Writing Program faculty in the Central California Writing Project (CCWP), where many Writing program lecturers have held summer
fellowships and subsequently taken on leadership roles as consultants and program coordinators. Through their involvement in the CCWP, lecturers from the UCSC Writing Program are providing inservice programs and guidance for language arts teachers and their students in elementary and secondary schools where relatively few students aspire to or achieve eligibility for university admission.

The CCWP has also taken on responsibility for providing UC outreach programs in California’s Central Valley region in connection with the academic plan that will eventuate in the opening of the new UC campus at Merced in 2005. Academic planners from the UC Office of the President have told a member of this evaluation team that they regard the contribution of the CCWP and the UCSC Writing Program faculty as an essential element of the UC Merced campus development plan and of the University’s broader efforts to increase the number of UC eligible students graduating from high schools in the Central Valley. These schools are largely "low performing" schools, populated by children from low-income families. Not surprisingly, the Central Valley is also the least represented region in the University system statewide. The challenge of improving student performance in the Central Valley schools and assisting teachers to provide instruction that will prepare their students for college-level work seems to be the special strength of the CCWP and of the Writing Program lecturers who play a key role in CCWP outreach.

If you think of the benefits, outreach brings a substantial return on a minimal investment. An outreach program does, however, require commitments of faculty time, particularly in creating the networks of trust and contact within the community. The success of the program depends upon individuals receiving release time in order to do the work. There are no obvious ways to cut costs or to increase efficiency.

3. Program Administration

The Writing Program is well run and efficient; the faculty and curriculum is carefully and imaginatively organized. The leadership is outstanding. We see no obvious gaps or overlaps. There are, however, some areas of concern. The first, Staff Support, should be considered a top priority.

Staff Support: The staff support for the Writing Program is seriously underfunded. On most UC campuses the responsibility for the teaching of writing is undertaken by two or sometimes three different faculty groups, belonging to two or three different administrative units—typically identified as the Subject A program, the ESL program, and the Freshman Composition program.
each with its own offices and administrative staff. At UCSC all these responsibilities are assigned to one faculty, organized in one administrative unit, and served by one administrative staff.

The staff support provided to the Writing Program is not adequate to the size and importance of the unit. At UCSC, the various operations of a comprehensive writing program are located in a single office and supported by a single administrative staff, consisting of one office manager and a three-quarter time secretary, for a total of 1.75 FTE. In comparison, at UC Santa Barbara a similar range of academic functions is carried out in two administrative offices (the Writing Program and the ESL Program) by a total support staff of 4.5 FTE (with workloads and class sizes comparable to those at UCSC). In the Writing Program alone at UCSB, the staff includes a full-time Student Affairs Officer, a full-time Office Manager, a full-time AA for budget and scheduling, and full-time specialists for tech support and for support of the Director.

The UCSC Writing Program should be granted additional support staff and the Office Manager, Laurel Woodside, should be granted a job reclassification to reflect the level and extent of her considerable responsibilities. The program has survived in recent years because of her talent and dedication. She is, however, bearing an unreasonable workload. Her patience and good will are impressively generous; they are not unlimited resources.

Travel: The Writing Program does not have a separate budget line to support travel to conferences. What happens in practice, then, is that faculty bargain away travel opportunities in order to have dollars to support other initiatives, like peer tutoring. It seemed inappropriate to us that these interests should be in competition. We would recommend a budget line devoted to travel and/or faculty development. It is certainly to the institution's interests to have the profession more aware of the work on this campus--and to have faculty at UCSC in dialogue with those doing similar work on other campuses. There is, for example, an excellent summer program at Cornell, the Cornell Summer Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. The schools currently involved include the University of Michigan, Duke, Princeton, the University of New Hampshire and Temple. Programs like these could serve a renewed writing across the curriculum initiative at UCSC.

Large enrollment courses: There is no use searching for examples of successful large enrollment writing courses. There are none.

It is best to think of the necessary small size of the freshman writing course as valuable resource; it provides the one small, intimate place of contact in a freshman year that will have many large courses and many opportunities to feel lost and anonymous.
When we spoke with students, they were almost unanimous in their praise for their freshman writing courses. We did not get the same response when we asked about the core courses.

Workloads: The current full-time workload for Unit 18 Writing Program lecturers is eight courses per year, but no Unit 18 faculty member in the Writing Program holds a 100% position. This practice derives from the conviction of the Writing Program directors (and many of the faculty) that, given the labor-intensive character of instruction in writing, particularly in lower-division courses, no faculty member should teach more than two writing courses in a quarter. Such a course load amounts to a 75% appointment, and that is the appointment some writing program lecturers actually hold.

Most, however, take on a number of co-curricular duties and for each of these they receive fractional appointments amounting to one-sixth or one-twelfth of a course. Thus, by grading subject A exams, advising students, supervising independent study projects, and serving on various program committees individual lecturers raise their appointments for particular quarters or for the entire academic year to percentages that approach but never reach 100% and that typically amount to 87% or 90% or 93% appointments.

The problem with such appointments is that for highly professional and committed teachers of writing, an appointment at 93% or 87% time represents a commitment to what amounts to full-time work. How does any conscientious teacher of writing teach two courses, hold office hours, read and respond to student papers, advise students, read subject A exams, serve on committees, and so on, while holding back 7% or 13% of his or her time? Could anyone doubt that a conscientious Unit 18 teacher teaching 92% time in the UCSC Writing Program will spend as many working hours each week as the average Unit 18 lecturer on any other UC campus who holds a full-time 100% appointment? In effect, then, UCSC Writing Program lecturers typically work full-time while being paid less than a full time salary, and they accumulate reduced retirement credit for what appears officially as less than full time employment. This state of affairs is unjust and exploitative and ought not to be tolerated by the division or campus administration.

As a remedy to the problem of discounted appointments we suggest adopting a more reasonable and understandable workload formula for Unit 18 Writing program faculty which would be more consistent with practice at other UC campuses, where a full-time workload is represented by seven courses plus one course-equivalent for the regular co-curricular work that every faculty member would be expected to undertake--Subject A test scoring, curriculum development, committee service, student advising, and the like. This standard workload definition would mean that during one academic quarter each year most full-time appointees would teach three courses rather than two, a circumstance not to be welcomed,
but one to be weighed and considered in order to regularize lecturer appointments for the full-time faculty, and one whose effects might be mitigated through judicious course assignments.

We should also note that the standard full-time course load definition we are proposing would not eliminate the need to maintain an additional schedule of co-curricular assignments that would continue to be counted as course equivalents. These might include, for example, the supervision of 4-6 TAs, service on the Writing Program personnel committee, service as a course coordinator, and other sorts of duties for which ladder faculty are ordinarily granted course relief.

Finally, a note on truly temporary and part-time faculty: Within the definition we have proposed of a full-time load, faculty hired part-time or on a quarter by quarter basis would be excused from co-curricular activities not directly related to their course assignments and would be hired at a percentage of time based on a workload definition of three courses counting as full-time employment for a single quarter. Lecturers hired full-time for Fall and Winter and rehired in Spring might, for the sake of fairness, be assigned only two courses in the Spring as a full-time workload.

4. Future Goals

**Graduate Student Instructors:** UCSC and the Writing Program have made a commitment to increasing the number of graduate student instructors. The Writing Program is certainly prepared to offer the necessary training and supervision. We looked briefly at the revised training program and it seems sound, wise and consistent with other programs in the country.

We want to be sure, however, to point out some of the potential difficulties the Writing Program will face if it takes on responsibility for additional graduate students. The only meeting on our schedule that was a disappointment and a concern was the meeting scheduled with graduate students. Only one person showed up. And that person had a limited sense of his graduate education as pre-professional training and very little sense of how and why composition teaching might serve his career.

We were on campus a short time and we did not meet with official representatives of the various departments. Still, from what we learned on campus we do not sense that the work of the Writing Program would be supported by those departments or that the faculty in those department would see the teaching of writing as part of the necessary professional formation of their graduate students.
The program will fail unless graduate students either feel the pressure to take the work seriously or see the advantage to taking the work seriously. Teaching writing is hard, demanding and time consuming, more so than other courses assignments available to graduate instructors. It is very easy for students to shirk these responsibilities, to decide that they are intellectually or politically suspect, and it is very easy for departments to make them low priority assignments--that is, given at the last minute to the worst teachers. And it is very easy for students to be given the preparation necessary to teach writing courses and then to abandon those assignments as soon as possible.

We believe that experience with the teaching of writing can be a significant addition to a graduate student's dossier upon entering the job market, and this includes graduate students in fields other than English. (This has been the experience of the graduate students at Cornell, where there is an extremely successful program to develop writing courses taught by graduate students from various departments.) Increased graduate student involvement in the Writing Program can be a good thing for everyone, but only if there is substantial and consistent faculty support and involvement. We do not know whether the conditions exist on the USSC campus for the teaching of writing to be considered in the academic departments as important and significant work.

There are other reasons to be cautious. Given the current crisis in the academic job market, we are hesitant to approve any increase in the size of graduate programs unless the increase is justified by job placement. It would make good sense for the Dean to assess the placement rates of the various graduate programs before adding additional instructor's lines--or to tie those lines to a regular audit of placement.

Certificate Program: We approve the Writing Program's proposal to offer a Certificate Program in the teaching of College-Level Writing. It may prove useful to some. It will not, in itself, address the concerns we have above about motivation and commitment.

Applied Minor: The Writing Program has proposed an applied minor in Communication and Rhetoric. They certainly have the intellectual resources to provide this minor. And there are others on campus, particularly in the area of Science Writing, who could contribute. And we believe that such a minor would be a substantial contribution to the undergraduate curriculum. We all expressed a wish to have a similar program on our own campuses.

While we would encourage the development of this minor on campus, we would make its priority second to the renewal of the Writing Across the Curriculum Program.
We hope our comments can prove useful. Again, our thanks to you and to your colleagues for insuring that our visit would be both pleasant and productive. We would be happy to answer additional questions, should any arise.

Sincerely,

David Bartholomae
Chair, UCSC Writing Program Review Committee

Review Committee: David Bartholomae, University of Pittsburgh
Sheridan Blau, University of California, Santa Barbara
Linda Brodkey, University of California, San Diego