

Academic Senate Amends W Writing Requirement

Disciplinary communication to replace the requirement

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The writing requirement for incoming UC Santa Cruz frosh will change in fall 2010, the Academic Senate voted on Wednesday.

The W general education requirement, a requisite for all students who wish to graduate, is traditionally fulfilled through a single intensive writing class. New changes will allow students to bypass this through either a 5-credit class or a combination of three classes totaling at least 5 credits. Transfer students, who currently are exempt from the W requirement, will now also have to take the classes.

The changes come in response to "resource constraints in some fields," according to a flyer distributed at the meeting, as well as a perceived deficit in the writing training on campus. The new requirement, called disciplinary communication (DC), aims to provide writing training appropriate to students' field of study.

"Faculty should be clear in their minds that the current W requirement is broken and is not working," the flyer said. "Students often find themselves in W courses that do little to enhance the kind of particular writing skills that they need in their majors and will need in their future careers."

DC also aims to give students a chance to develop communication skills beyond writing that are valuable to their chosen field, such as class presentation and public speaking.

"I hope this passes," Bill Ladusaw, professor of linguistics, vice provost and dean of undergraduate education, said at the meeting. "By the time the students get to upper-division their writing is not as good as faculty expects. I have been talking to my colleagues about an assessment project that would include the lower-division writing courses."

The Academic Senate, a body of faculty and student government representatives, guides the education focus of the university.

However, not all of the at-



Photos by PHIL CARTER City on a Hill Press

THE ACADEMIC SENATE met at Stevenson Event Center to discuss the W general education requirement on Feb. 18.

tendees were confident that the change will have a substantial effect on the students.

"Right now students are having difficulty graduating because they cannot fulfill this requirement. But I really think it will have minimal effect on writing ability," said Barry Bowman, professor of molecular cell and developmental biology. "Now, I have somewhat of a viewpoint from my own experience in the biology department. ... We have over 2,000 majors ... and there aren't very many of us. For all those students to get attention in the major is difficult."

The flyer cited that the Committee on Education Policy "does not expect its revamping of the current W requirement to solve all the problems with student writing," but that "[the W requirement] is currently in crisis — something has to be done."

Bowman echoed these sentiments, but stressed the importance of a thorough review of the writing program.

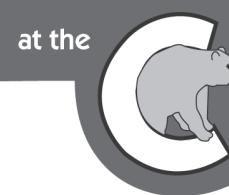
"We all feel the students don't know how to write, perhaps because the students don't read,"



BARRY BOWMAN,
UCSC Biology Professor

Bowman said. "I would love to see along with this change a real serious measure of the level of the problem."

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