

For Immediate Release

May 24, 2004

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**UC Riverside eliminates Subject A courses, terminates faculty  
But student requirement remains; administration says,  
"Go to community college"**

In a cost-cutting move that has angered faculty and students, UC Riverside administrators have eliminated the Basic Writing program in the English Department—the classes that have delivered "Subject A" preparation for the past one hundred years. All UC students are still required to pass the Subject A examination or its equivalent within their first year of study at UC.

"More than 60% of incoming Riverside students cannot write standard college English," says lecturer Stephanie Kay. "How are students supposed to meet this requirement now that the Subject A program is being abolished?"

Kay disputes the administration's claim that the Basic Writing courses are inefficient. "Of the 2,200 students who entered the Basic Writing program in the fall of 2003, almost 80 percent had successfully completed the Subject A requirement by the end of Winter 2004. This hardly suggests inefficiency."

"This has been a remarkably effective program by any measure," says Kay, a thirteen-year veteran of teaching Subject A, "and critical for the success of minority students." UC Riverside has the highest proportion of students of color of any campus in the UC system.

According to Wallace Cleaves, who has taught in the Basic Writing program for several years, "Coming from a minority background and having worked with a number of students from disadvantaged socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, especially native American and Hispanic students, it has become apparent to me that these very competent and bright students are not getting the fundamental grade school education required to make them competitive with students from advantaged backgrounds. One of the best things about the UC system is that it has provided an opportunity for these groups to develop these all-important skills and it would be nothing less than a tragedy if that opportunity is lost."

The UC Riverside administration says the program is "time-consuming," "frustrating," and "expensive," but also that state funding cuts have forced the decision to eliminate the program. Chancellor France A. Cordova has proposed that students go instead to summer school or community college to take the necessary classes to prepare for Subject A exams.

Marty Hittelman, president of the California Federation of Teachers Community College Council, finds this unlikely. "Currently we're expecting 150,000 community college students that we lost from fall 2002 to fall 2003 to return, increasing pressure on existing classes. And now, on top of that, UC and Cal State are expecting the community colleges to serve their redirected students."

Last month more than forty Writing Program lecturers received notices that their services will likely not be required next year. Some of these "non-senate faculty" have taught, on one-year contracts, for fifteen years or more. The lecturers union, UC-AFT, has filed an information request with the university administration, seeking to determine precisely how state budget cuts have affected the ability of UC Riverside to deliver its Basic Writing program courses.

Statewide UC-AFT president Kevin Roddy notes that "This is a world that needs more writing, not less. And yet in a time when a constrained budget has forced the University of California to examine its priorities, apparently an education in writing is not one of them."

A recent editorial in the UCR student newspaper, *The Highlander*, protests the proposal to drop the Subject A program and shunt students into community college courses: "Loosening the requirement is shortsighted and foolish, particularly at a time when UCR is trying to improve its academic reputation. Basic writing skills are a fundamental skill to success and UCR should demand that freshmen students demonstrate proficiency in this area."

UC Riverside lecturers have been circulating petitions and leafleting, publicizing their struggle to save the program, and plan to pursue remedies through their union contract. For more information, or to talk with lecturers or students, contact Stephanie Kay, 909-781-1070.

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