

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE

VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

TO: Mary Helen Thuente, Chair
Department of English and Linguistics
FROM: Fenwick W. English
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
DATE: January 13, 1998
SUBJECT: Response to Department Resolution

While the English Department's Resolution concerning racism does not mention the OAA or the VCAA directly, it is clear that it was directed at me. As a statement the English Department resolution de-contextualized my remarks, and made it appear that statements or insinuations were issued by me that the English Department and/or its Chair were racists. No comments or insinuations were issued by me or my office in this regard. Instead my comments were directed specifically towards the Summer Bridge program, and the "troubling appearance to some of our constituencies, i.e., that of racism."

Written statements, memoranda and e-mail from the English Department Chair and other members of the English department, comprise the data base that presents "the troubling appearance to some of our constituencies, i.e., that of racism."

·In a memorandum of October 24, 1995, from the English Dept. Chair to the English Faculty disparaging remarks were made about the counseling offered by Multicultural Services including the observation that, "one cannot expect much more when 'any B.A. will do' when 'counselors' are recruited" (p.3). This observation created the impression that the English Department Chair believed the people and service in the Multicultural Affairs Office were inferior.

·In a memorandum of August 22, 1996, the English Department Chair stated that the first year L151 course "should have been done in consultation with and been approved by the appropriate English Department committees and administrators" (p.2). In fact, the course was offered in consultation with English department faculty and had the approval of the Acting Department Chair since the Chair was on a sabbatical.

·In a memorandum of February 24, 1997, the English Dept. Chair said to Dean Coufoudakis she rejected Ed Moritz's proposal to teach S112 stating that, "Bridge students, however, are not model or typical freshmen." She proposed English W032, a distinctively less demanding course which was unacceptable for Bridge students to meet graduation requirements. This proposal meets English Professor Brennan's definition of racism when he said in his e-mail of 12/17/97 that, "the true racists are those who assume

that African-American and other minority students are inherently incapable of meeting the performance standards of the university."

·In an e-mail to the English Department of 2/13/97 the Chair continued to insist on W032 as the only solution when she said, "If Ed and Chris would accept W032 as a course number this matter could be resolved." This rigidity was maintained in spite of the fact that in the first class of Summer Bridge students eight of the fifteen (53%) enrolled in the Fall or Spring for the first time, passed W130, W131, or W135 after the Summer Bridge experience. The English Department alternative was based on the assumption that students were inferior and homogeneous when the data did not support this assumption.

·Confidential information on the Summer Bridge students (their names, social security numbers and grades) were secured from the English Department and distributed to the Budgetary Affairs Sub-Committee. This action was in violation of their privacy rights guaranteed in the Buckley Amendment. It was used to support an attack on the Summer Bridge program.

These exchanges/incidents involved one program in which the majority of the students were of color. They formed the context for my comment that they presented, "a troubling appearance to some of our constituencies, i.e., that of racism."

Perhaps the English Department was not aware of how its actions have been perceived by personnel in the Offices of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Multicultural Services. I believe that the Summer Bridge Program would be strengthened by the English Department's cooperation. As we prepare plans to again offer Summer Bridge for 1998, I would invite the Department's participation.

cc: Van Coufoudakis, Dean
School of Arts and Sciences

Faculty--English Department

Frank Borelli
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Christine Patterson, Director
Multicultural Services