

EDITORIAL

"I got an eight in English 200, but I've failed the writing competence test twice!"

"I passed my writing competence test but I got a four on my English essay."

These snatches of conversation illustrate the contradictory position of the University's latest attempt at "student weeding"; the writing competence test. The test is designed to ensure that all students have a grasp of the rudiments of writing at the university level. Yet students are discovering that the results they obtain on this test do not necessarily parallel their performance in an English course. Obviously, a professor worth his tenure is not going to give an eight to a student who can't perform up to university standards, yet students can excel in English and still fail the test. This is a scary fact when one considers that the university could potentially require a competent student to withdraw. Why is the correlation between writing competence test results and class performance so uneven?

The writing competence test is not difficult to pass. The exams are graded by two markers to ensure fairness. The problem lies in the test's very purpose — the evaluation of the student's grasp of writing basics.

Too often students try to write the essay of the century (inspired by the exam's "emotional" type questions) and get so carried away that they tend to flaw their arguments and employ pompous vocabulary. The exam does not require students to display James Joycean abilities, but rather calls for well-structured sentences, clean grammar and adequate structure. Marking on spelling is rather unfair, as most people are not walking dictionaries. Often students, afraid of spelling a particular word incorrectly, use a simpler substitute, paradoxically losing points in vocabulary.

The advice given to students through the grapevine is to write a "bland" essay (without cliches). For someone who is talented in English, this is a good suggestion. The exam should be regarded as an exercise in the basics.

Unfortunately, in two years, students will be required to pass the writing competency exam as a basis for admission to the U of A. Surely the university doesn't believe that a student's potential can be assessed in one shot from an inaccurate exam. Students should be given the chance to improve their skills at a university level and barring entrance to someone on the results of one exam defeats the purpose of higher learning.

Perhaps one way to ensure that students possess university level writing skills is to require that all students from every faculty receive a grade of at least six in a first year English course. This solution would save a lot of grief on the student's and university's part.

M.C.

Correction

Don Millar is the presidential candidate representing the Progressive Alternative Slate, not the Millar Slate as mentioned in an article in the Jan. 29, 1985 issue of the Gateway.

The Pink Triangle

What is the role of gays and lesbians in mainline and liberal religions? Are gay employees at the students' union discriminated against? How well has the new gay and lesbian club at the U of A fulfilled its mandate?

These are some of the issues the Gateway will examine in the Pink Triangle supplement on Feb. 14. If you have any ideas or contributions to the special gay and lesbian issues supplement, call Gilbert or Suzette (afternoons) at 432-5168. Articles, poetry or fiction may be submitted to the Gateway office in 282 SUB or through the mail. Please mark envelopes "Pink Triangle". Deadline for submissions is Feb. 7, 1985.

Also upcoming: the International Women's Awareness Week supplement. Deadline for submissions: Feb. 28.

WHAT IF: trendy vigilantism extended into the classroom?



LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Mundane headline

Mr. Bouchard, I do not know which world you get your information from. Obviously, it is not the real one.

Your editorial of January 29, proves once again your apparent ineptitude in the journalistic arena. Firstly, your facts are wrong. A minimal effort on your part would have corrected this example of poor journalism. On what "hearsay" do you base your factual claim that I have insisted that SU employees take leaves of absences from their positions? I have not even talked to Mr. MacLaughlin for one thing. Why do you place yourself in the compromising position of lying?

If you want to deliberately defame or slander or libel or whatever in an effort to "destroy" me, then at the least display a modicum of what I naively refer to as your intelligence. I was elected to do a job, which, despite your desultory comments to the contrary, I feel I am doing. Whether you agree with what I do or not is your opinion but I daresay your position does not give you the right to abuse the fundamental precepts upon which our society is founded, i.e. —for a simpleton, one does not make untrue statements about another person.

Gilbert, I hope you'll come to your senses someday and realize what it takes besides diaphanous of the mouth to be a journalist.

For the information of yourself and the readers of the Gateway I'll state that I have duties, work, functions, etc., to attend during these two weeks: I do not take my job lightly. If I do not do it no-one else will. The CRO (Chief Returning Officer) has come down with a ruling concerning leaves of absences. I encourage the Gateway to read it, before they comment on it.

I have also made an agreement to only campaign for certain hours, putting myself at an immense disadvantage. For your information I have been receiving the equivalent of a \$900/mo. salary, \$150 less than the other four executive members since I took office. I donate part of my salary to the SU every month. I have yet to see the Gateway display an ability to stand behind their words as I do. I'd say more, but I'm sure you'll just add some mundane headline.

Floyd Hodgins
SU President

Disgust and dismay

It was with disgust and dismay that I read the deliberately misleading notice in Jan. 24's Gateway, outlining the SU General Election and referendum. I am aware of the ongoing dispute over the SU Building Policy. I believe that the referendum question is worded in such a way that the real issue is not made clear. The question asks, "Do you wish the SU to place restrictions, in addition to those which exist within applicable federal and provincial laws, on activities in the SU Building?"

This question fails to state that the actual concern is that the existing federal and provincial laws place no restriction upon the presentation of sexist and/or racist material in the SU Building. The above-stated question implies that further restrictions would mean censorship, rather than protection of certain groups.

I would like to know whether or not those students voting 'No' realize that they are in fact, saying "No, I don't mind if our SU Building is used to exhibit sexist and racist material!"

Wenda Mundell
Pharmacy III

The Gateway

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Yippee! Don Teplysk said. I won a million bucks! Even though nobody believed him they weren't about to jeopardize a possible good thing. Jim Herbert, Greg Owens, Kent Cochrane and Bill Daskoch decided to test him. Beer on Don, they announced gleefully. Don never flinched. Perplexed, Anna Borowiecki, Susan Sutton, Melanie Klimchuk and Ashley Prest all vied for his attention in more subtle ways. Don offered to show them all a good time. David Wright was jealous of all the attention being paid Don, so he announced that he had won something too. Hans Beckers, Shane Berg, Olga Jagodnik, Tim Hellum and Dave Boyd bought the bait and tried to worm what he had won out of him. He wasn't telling so Brad Clark, Bill Overend, Ann Grever and Alex Miller held him down while Chris Menard and Peter Smyth tickled him till he talked. Tune in next week for more details.