

English and Literature Disciplines – Ankeny Campus

Information contributed by Richard Chapman, English Professor, Communication Chair for Ankeny Campus. Compiled by Judith Vogel

The English and Literature disciplines began offering courses in the Phase 1 area. This was the area of the Ankeny campus where construction of the college started. They moved into Building 2 when it was completed. Rick Chapman was hired to teach English classes by then Director of Public and Human Services Russ Slinker in 1970. It was the beginning of a 34-year career at DMACC for Chapman. At that time, the college was on a quarter system. Literature, foreign language and drama* comprised the humanities; composition, speech and journalism were in the communications discipline. Writing courses offered initially were English 101- Composition/Expository, English 102- Composition/Argumentative, and English 103 – Composition/Literary Analysis. Bruce Hann, Julie Gingerich, and Ruth Aurelius set up the original Communication courses.* In the Humanities area, the original literature courses offered were British Literature, American Literature, and Intro to Literature. The faculty felt strongly that they wanted students to have an understanding of mass communication. Chapman referred to this quote by Thomas Jefferson: “Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press.” As a result, a course in mass communication was added to the curriculum. Since then, several additional courses have been added which were determined by workplace needs, student interests, and transferability to 4-year institutions. Those courses include Technical & Business Writing, Women’s Literature, Children’s Literature, Science Fiction, College Prep Writing, Communication Skills, Mythology, Contemporary Literature, African-American Literature, and Creative Writing for both poetry and fiction. Chapman created two film courses: Film Appreciation in 1976 and Film as Culture in 1978.

Chapman remembers working with a host of long-term Communications and Humanities full-time faculty. In addition to Hann, Gingerich, and Aurelius, the list included Julia Haggard, Cynthia Cordes, George Hagerty, Dale Norris, Rick Chrisman, Jim Stick, Rose Toubes, Sharran Slinkard, Joann Brown, Cynthia Lewis, Ruthann Harstadt, Will Zhang, Randy Jedele, Alan Hutchison, Eden Pearson, Marian Tonhouse, Paula Yerty, Julie Roosa, Bonne Doran, Julie Simanski, Judith Vogel, and Judy Hauser. Faculty in the English discipline developed several activities for students: *Expressions* magazine, Celebration of Literary Arts*, and *Skunk River Review*. They also played a large role in the London Study Abroad Program* by serving as many of the advisors who accompanied students for the experience. A group of teachers decided to bring the world to DMACC by initiating the International Week Program which later became the International Year Program*. The faculty instrumental in forming that program were Don Irwin, Dick Wagner, Jane Roberts, Tom Beck, Don Palmer, and Rick Chapman. Many adjunct faculty over the years have been extremely important to reaching the goals of the discipline and to serving DMACC students. Faculty from the DMACC campus worked together with district-wide faculty at in-service and other institutional meetings to create and update course objectives, complete course assessment procedures, and share teaching practices.

The method of delivery for courses has changed over the years starting with only face-to-face classroom settings in a quarter system to face-to-face classes, online classes, and learning communities in a semester system. Summer classes were offered from the beginning and continued to be offered.

Chapman was not a fan of online classes preferring the interaction with students in the classroom. He had concerns about students not doing their own work and about online courses being held to the same rigor of classroom courses. Chapman and Dave Palmer worked together to team teach one of the first of such courses with Hum 133 – Film as Culture.

Technology's role in education has changed drastically. Chapman remembers using mimeo machines, film strips, and VHS tapes. Now the computer can be used to post assignments, report grades, post syllabi, communicate with students, teach entire courses, and connect with the world.

Challenges faced by the faculty included properly placing students into the writing class best suited to their abilities. Students would be evaluated during the first week of classes and then moved to the appropriate course. Meeting with students was often difficult since faculty offices were in cubicles. The cubes created a false illusion of privacy. The openness of the cubes sometimes led to faculty taking students outside for personal conversations to protect their privacy and to maintain trust in faculty. A third problem faced by the department dealt with determining how and if college credit could be given for life experiences. This especially related to those who had served in the military. Finally, Chapman remembers that it was emotionally difficult for faculty to see the physical and emotional struggles of students returning from Viet Nam and trying to fit into a culture very different from the military.

A favorite memory of faculty who taught with Chapman would occur during finals week. Don Irwin in the Psychology department shared an office with Chapman. The two men would find humorous errors that unnamed students had put in papers or on exam questions and then share them with colleagues. Laughter during the stress of finishing a semester was always appreciated.

*See article on this topic in the on-line Pioneers History Project.

**As of May 2018, the Ankeny Campus English and Humanities department has the following full-time faculty: Lynn LaGrone, Group Chair, Alan Hutchison, Will Zhang, Eden Pearson, Rose Toubes, Darwin Pagnac, Sharran Slinkard, Judy Hauser, Mark Dickinson, Maria Cochran, Andrew Neuendorf.