Ken Weisner, Chair Regarding Program Reduction: English Department Creative Writing, Reading Journalism December 2, 2012

English has been asked to respond to the following from your November 20th document: “IPBT recommends an examination of all creative writing courses such as EWRT 41 which has a low fill rate) and recommends moving FTEF saved from these courses to EWRT 1A, 1B, or Speech where there is higher student demand.” We’ve been offering four creative writing courses per quarter, one section each, for decades. The program as a whole is sustainable cut 25% to three courses per quarter (fall/ winter/ spring)—I’ve provided you with details in my letter. You’ve recommended cuts as high as 10% in music; I hope you see the good faith in our willingness to understand what’s at stake and trim as much as 22% or 29% (3 or 4) of our fourteen courses per year under certain circumstances. We can get by without fall EWRT 65, winter EWRT 41, and spring, EWRT 40, for example. We could still serve most students and retain an annual journal and creative writing culture under those circumstances. Our two summer sections are also both productive, but we could cut one in favor of comp course although this would be painful since the EWRT 42 we offer in summer is a powerful workshop for Latino high school students taught be Jesus Quintero, and the summer EWRT 30 fills and is popular. In sum, we could sustain, then, a reduction (including summer) from 14 to 10 or 11 courses annually, remain viable, presumably be more productive per section due to lower supply and equal demand—plus donate the other three or four sections back to division “core curriculum.” A more draconian cut or “shift” of courses away from creative writing (say for example cutting 5 or 6 courses)—down to retaining 8 or 9 per year (including summer)—puts us in a synergistic spiral downward for the program as it is currently constituted. An annual student magazine and awards program, for example, needs student work to be generated for it. A fiction or poetry writing program is hardly accessible if taught only once per year. And we would probably have to bury the national magazine altogether (we’ve already cut it in half in terms of proposing eliminating the fall course offering), a part of De Anza’s identity for 40 years. The spring student edition should surely be held onto; it’s a bastion of diversity and interdisciplinarity; it greatly serves its many student editors and student contributors (how do we calculate the monetary value of the latter?)—and in terms of production cost, it pays for itself, through DASB and sales. In addition to the students we directly serve, we also serve this multicultural constituency/ community we create together: we publish all these students passionately speaking out from dozens of cultural identities. This is one of the less invisible factors of how we serve the diversity mission here at De Anza—a bit harder to quantify. CREATIVE WRITING—BROADER CONTEXT • Foothill has slashed its creative writing program—taught zero creative writing courses this fall and I see now has reinstated a mere one online offering in the winter. Should our district as a whole be entirely opting out of caring for the incredible students who sign up for these kinds of classes? We’re already newly mandated to slash repeatability in programs like La Voz and Red Wheelbarrow, where repeatability is actually logical. If the district or our own leadership buckles under now under the current stress in this way—basically zeroing out creative writing—we’re one step closer to a kind of unwitting capitulation with those who oppose not so much poetry or having a few small classes—but the spirit of community education itself. • Importance of the creative writing program can’t easily be quantified. We serve students who are at risk, marginalized, alienated, highly creative, and often silenced. Newspaper and magazine programs allow students to find their own voices. Creative writing courses are authentically diverse in terms of those we serve—look over the magazine roster of contributors, editors, and prize-winners—including national prize winners through the annual league of innovation prizes. Read the student magazine. You find vets, transgendered environmentalists, gay Filipinos, nerdy introverts, bicultural sensitives, slammers and rappers, a brilliant young woman saddled with cystic fibrosis, a lost boy from the Sudan, a Latina single mother—a boy throwing down as a beatnik, another as a new kind of feminist—a survivor of mental illness, coping in words, finding her power and those who will listen—incredible expressions of love and joy and praise, earnest declarations of rage. Our diversity, like that of the Euphrat student shows—is fully human, heterogeneous, and inclusive. For the magazine reading each June, these varied students are all there reading and listening to each other—and friends and family members also pack the event—the printing fully supported by DASB. This is a core embodiment of our diversity mission.

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