

Program Assessment and Review Committee  
**Review and Recommendations Concerning  
The English Program**  
May 8, 2009

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## I. Introduction

Context. The English Program initiated its Program review in November of 2007, completed its self-study report in April 2008, had its visiting team of external reviewers in October 2008, who submitted their report. In February 2009, the subcommittee task force named above began its summary review in accord with *Guidelines for Program Review*.

- A. Review each program's self-study, external review, and responses to that review, and
- B. Evaluate all recommendations and send its report to the Program Chair, Provost, Dean of Faculty, and AVP for Academic Programs.

This report is a summary response to the results of a two-year learning process.

Overall Summary. The summative evaluation of the English Program is a very positive one. The program is effective and successful. The external reviewers' offered profuse praise, as exemplified by the following representative phrases found throughout their report.

*" the program contributes at all levels to the mission of the university ...exemplary. The spirit of work and scholarly, educational, professional, and scholastic commitment ... are exceptional...intellectual rigor and scholarly generosity...a sense of trust and honesty...work earnestly and openly with one another...highly engaged... "student-centered" ... work closely with students in courses and in advising/mentoring... constitutes... "best practice" of assessment in programs where writing is such a major component of pedagogy...members play a crucial role in the governance of... program/university...faculty members pool money out of their own pockets to provide awards and recognition for students. Research shows that students who feel like they belong here are better motivated and, consequently, graduate at a higher rate."*

## II. Summary and Responses to the Site Visitors' Suggestions.

The site visitors' suggestions are cast into two categories

- (1) suggestions that are specific for the program and
- (2) larger scale suggestions that involve the university.

The latter numbered more than the former. Although we initially wondered whether or not a program review team might overstep in going beyond the program focus, in the end we found the comments useful and valuable. We extracted thirteen concerns expressed in the reviewers' report and responded to all of them. These are numbered and referred to by number in our summary recommendations.

### A. **Program Level Comments**

1. *The proposed MA will again create these opportunities/pressures. We suggest that faculty and administration keep an open line of communication on the benefits and constraints.*

Response. This is a concern with which all here agree. It is desirable to add an MA program only if resources are available beyond those that are now needed to maintain the baccalaureate program.

2. *... professors must be encouraged to discuss the significance of their field, at the least, within their own department. This kind of behavior should be supported...*

Response. Such conversations do occur within the English Program, and we also recognize the necessity for all humanities disciplines to articulate their value for students, other disciplines, administration, and the general public.

3. *...syllabi for the English Program reveal some potential weaknesses in the application or authenticity of interdisciplinary thinking*

Response. We felt that the report here may have derived from visitors' preconceptions that all syllabi should reflect interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity is one emphasis of the program, and it is practiced and taught in many ways. However, it is just one of the program's goals, so the emphasis need not appear in every syllabus of every course. The program and this review team do recognize that there is a lack in general of 200-level interdisciplinary courses in this University as a whole.

4. *Program Chair is doing an amazing job of managing two departments, English and Theatre/Performing Arts. But we think this should be the work of two people.*

Response. We concur. This situation is currently the nature of a university in our stage of development. There are fewer chairs for individual programs than optimal.

## **B. University-Level Recommendations**

5. *We encourage the administration to support curriculum-sharing exchanges with other programs...*

Response. English faculty already frequently and regularly engage in team teaching with faculty in other programs. We agree that collaboration with other programs has the potential to create possibilities for integrative learning for both students and faculty.

6. *...department members ... run programs outside the English Program ... at cross purposes*

Response. The fact that the English program members manage programs outside of English is seen here as a strength rather than a detriment. Obligations/contributions to other programs admittedly stretch faculty thinner, but they support the University Mission. The benefit of having these programs managed in this way seems well worth the stretch. There appears to be no real conflict of interest, even though the wording "at cross purposes" might imply this.

7. *Curriculum as Conversation: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning. ....it would be good if the Administration provided this text for wide dissemination on campus*

Response. Faculty Development will add a copy to the Faculty Resource Room and purchase an additional copy for Broome Library if the library does not already own a copy

8. *...students are to understand interdisciplinarity as a conceptual, ideological, and theoretical framework for study; they need to be taught about interdisciplinarity earlier in their progress toward graduation.*

Response. We need to explore ways to facilitate acculturation of students to both the special nature of this campus as well as to expectations in a college-level environment. The comment echoes comments coming from sources other than just this program.

9. *...an introductory course as early as the sophomore year... introduce students to the basic agendas of theoretical movements as they influence educational, social, and cultural practices, not just literary practices*

Response. This ties somewhat to the comment above and also to the University level vision of what we want our graduates to look like, the best ways to produce this, and the best ways to assess whether we are producing what we want. Furthermore, efforts to develop lower division courses are often hampered by our high percentage of transfer students.

10. *Channel Islands administration and faculty should ...promote this program as a democratic and rigorous approach to academic literacy.*

Response. This comment by reviewers generated some of the best discussions about how the program can best serve as a resource to the University, for example, in the area of helping to develop sound writing pedagogy across disciplines and helping faculty in other disciplines knowledge and tools to teach writing effectively.

11....*university could make more efficient use of tutors in class if the Writing Center Director had more support for training tutors....more effective and efficient if the Writing Center Director were to report directly to the Provost*

Response. Although the Provost, not external reviewers, should determine the reporting structure, the wording seems really aimed at the fact that the Director is perceived as a staff person rather than as a professional and a resource for faculty and programs. An alternate structure that increases status and visibility of expertise of the Writing Center Director with faculty could likely bring broader benefits to the institution.

12. *There seems to be evidence that the concept and the value of interdisciplinarity is unevenly received across campus... There doesn't seem to be ongoing space or provision for these kinds of issues to be worked out at a university level. There seems to be a need for a recurring conversation among faculty that both supports and explains interdisciplinarity.*

Response. We are not certain whether an expectation of uniformity is realistic or desirable. The current unclear role of the centers probably contributes to this impression. Interdisciplinary contributions occur organically between individuals. Notable interdisciplinary collaborations have occurred consistently through Center for Integrative Studies stipends that encourage this.

13. *Faculty need to be given time to work on inventing and developing new classes.*

Response. This ties to the comment above. Overwork subdues creativity and leads to getting into routines to manage obligations. In this program in particular, the need to develop classes for the forthcoming MA program perhaps makes such time of greater importance than to other programs.

### **C. Summary**

Resource Availability and Needs. Human resources are the major concern here. Items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 13 express the visitors' concerns that this Program's chair and faculty commitments are at or approaching a place at which they may be unsustainable. Because the program serves the

greater University in many ways (as noted in items 4, 5, 10 and 11), overstretching these particular faculty members can have repercussions beyond the English program.

Curricular Issues/ University Mission. There is no problem with alignment of the Program's curricula and University Mission Goals. The visitors' report noted: *The English Program's curriculum is designed to meet these goals. Moreover, student learning outcomes and various assessment implements and procedures are all cued to these institutional goals. In short, the program contributes at all levels to the mission of the university and provides valuable service for other programs to achieve them as well.* The visitors hold this particular program as exemplary in several ways in how a unit that supports this mission should function.

Interdisciplinarity is both a signature trait of the Channel Islands Campus and a major area of activity of this Program. Items 1, 3, 5 and 7-12 apply mostly to the interdisciplinary aspects of curriculum at the University level. Visitors' notes reveal that CSUCI's details of enactment of interdisciplinarity across the campus remained unclear to them (Item 12), so indeed these may not be obvious to students, at least lower division students (Items 8, 9 and perhaps 7). Our experiences indicated that this might reflect part of a broader issue to consider in whether the current efforts we employ to acculturate newcomers to our campus, and to college in general, could be tuned to be more effective.

Program Assessment. The review team described the English Program's assessment plan and practices as exemplary and worth emulating. The Program's Mission Statement and Outcomes help assure that students receive the preparation necessary to achieve university and program goals as reflected in both mission statements. The program uses three assessment strategies

1. ongoing assessments of students' success in self-placement in composition courses and in the subsequent courses students elect after further holistic evaluation and assessment of students' attitudes toward writing;
2. portfolio students keep during their time at CSUCI and submit prior to being admitted to the senior capstone class;
3. and a post-graduation alumni survey.

Although only 59% of incoming freshman at Channel Islands are "proficient" in English and ready for college level writing, the Channel Islands composition program has helped roughly 95% of first year students to succeed. The chief causes of that success are: student self-

placement, small classes of 20 students, and moderate teaching loads for composition faculty, who therefore have time for individual consultations with students.

English majors keep a portfolio of work produced in each of their required courses and electives. The student works closely with his or her advisor in developing the portfolio, which is reviewed by the instructor as a prerequisite to the capstone course. At the end of the capstone, when all course requirements have been fulfilled for the major, there is a review of the final portfolio, and students complete an assessment survey of their experiences in the English: Literature, Writing and Culture.

Structure and Organization. The visitors' concerns with structure and organization were not about the English Program but rather the additional organizational demands that came from Performing Arts (Item 4) and other programs managed by English faculty (Item 6). These have been addressed above under the Resources subheading. The suggested change in structure of the Writing Center (Item 11) is addressed below.

#### **D. Recommendations**

1. The Program should inventory the time demands caused by its unusual commitments to be certain that the important work that it does is sustainable. Academic commitments might be balanced in the short term through formal reduced service loads and in the long term by hiring of sufficient faculty. Contingencies in the form of "If we do X, then we need Y before taking on X commitments" are likely beneficial.
2. The University should provide more thorough acculturation to this unique campus. The short student orientation programs may not be sufficient.
3. The Program's exemplary approach to assessment should be shared in visible ways with the rest of the campus. Resources and support to do this should be provided.
4. A professional whose services can be valuable to both faculty and students manages the Writing Center. A way to improve the director's ability to serve the greater University by providing more visibility is desirable. This may or may not require the visitors' suggested changes in reporting structure.

Respectfully submitted by the English Program Review Sub-Committee:

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