

Program Review Committee Report

Department of English

Spring 2009

Mission

The Department of English mission statement is clear and comprehensive. It aligns well with Washburn's mission.

Unit Description

As the largest department in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of English serves a variety of roles. The unit oversees the writing requirement for all Washburn students (EN 101 and EN 300); provides general education offerings, meeting the Humanities requirement, for many students (literature, film, creative writing, and business and technological writing); and provides curriculum for English majors (literature emphasis, writing emphasis, and secondary education).

Currently, there are eighteen (18) full-time faculty members in the Department of English: thirteen (13) who are tenured or on tenure track; and five (5) who serve as lecturers. All full-time faculty, including lecturers, have terminal degrees. Approximately ten (10) adjuncts are hired each semester to facilitate learning in EN 101. The Department currently has 113 identified majors and has averaged 100+ majors in the last five (5) years.

Summary of Success in Meeting Previous Program Review Goals/Objectives

Fifteen (15) objectives were identified in the previous report. Most of these have been completed. Some objectives were eliminated or altered due to change in leadership and change in direction for the Department. Those not completed but still considered to be important are as follows: 1) reducing the cap for EN 101 to 20; 2) increasing the budget line for Visiting Writers Series; 3) increasing the budget for *Inscape*; and 4) hiring a Director of Expository Writing.

Objectives that were met include the following: 1) increased EN 101 student interest/involvement in the writing community; 2) increased support of under-prepared students by re-instituting EN 100; 3) established a rotation for period courses; hired a tenure-track professor for creative writing, non-fiction; 4) examined the ETS exam and its effectiveness; 5) encouraged student growth and development; 6) participated in strategic planning for the Department; 7) revised the advising process; 8) created and utilized rubrics for student learning outcome assessment; and 9) considered future hiring needs based on retirements and maturing of the faculty.

Summary of Success in Responding to Program Review Committee Concerns

The Department of English has been successful in clearly documenting changes to its programs and offerings. Most faculty members now advise students in course selection and go through “refresher” training annually. The Department regularly sends information about offerings to students who have expressed interest in English.

While the number of majors has remained consistent, the Department has increased outreach and efforts to increase numbers.

Historical Data for the Past Five Years

The lower division hours have declined (high of 6,279 in 2004-2005 to 5,067 in 2007-2008). At the same time, upper division hours have increased (low of 3,799 in 2006-2007 to 4,390 in 2007-2008).

The number of majors has remained consistent, currently at 113.

The Department has been cost effective despite the fact all faculty, excluding the lecturers, are tenured/tenure track.

Learning/Effective Teaching

As mentioned previously, all faculty members in the Department of English have the terminal degree; most are tenured/tenure track. Many are seasoned faculty, having provided many years of service in the classroom as well as having established themselves as scholars

Specific goals have been identified for all composition courses. In addition, students are judged on specific, clearly identified qualities/skills. EN 100 has returned and is available to students who need additional work to enhance their writing skills. All faculty members teach some sections of EN 101. Approximately 10 adjuncts are hired each semester to assist with the EN 101 classes. There is a pre-test/entrance exam for EN 300. Students who do not pass this enroll in EN 200. The Department is exploring the possibility of allowing students to self select in the future.

General education offerings are assessed internally on knowledge and skills. Again, these courses are taught by experienced, credentialed faculty. Skill sets and knowledge are generally measured through essay.

The major requirements are clearly outlined. Due to other University requirements, course selection is often quite prescribed. There are different expectations depending on the focus of the major. These are outlined in great detail in the program review document.

Acquisition, Discovery and Application of Knowledge

Most members of the faculty have seasoned careers and have established themselves as scholars in their field. Newer faculty members have begun to establish themselves in scholarly/creative endeavors.

Engagement and Service

Department of English faculty members have provided numerous hours of service to Washburn University and the surrounding community.

Unit Strengths, Weaknesses and Status

As reported by the Department, strengths include the following: a stable, mature faculty; a collegial unit; a commitment to scholarship; a dedication to enhance the writing skills of all Washburn students; EN 300 (unique); business and technical writing offerings; on-line offerings; reinstating EN 100 (self-directed placement); a commitment to General Education course offerings; a solid foundation for majors; and the opportunity for a writing-emphasis major to attend the Iowa Writers Workshop.

Weaknesses, as identified by the Department are as follows: little coordination among the three areas of Freshman English, the Writing Center and EN 200/300 placement; under-utilization of the Writing Center; time consumption and unwieldiness of the EN 200/300 exam; current cap of 22 for EN 101 (preferred cap is 20); little flexibility with English major due to other University requirements; and underfunding of Mabee Library, affecting research efforts.

Students

The Department serves an array of students. Currently, some high school students are receiving credit for English courses taught at their schools. Others are concurrently enrolled at Washburn and their high schools. Many 65 + audit students are enrolled in Department of English offerings. Courses are offered on campus and on line.

Outreach efforts have been enhanced. Students expressing interest in English receive additional information about programs. In addition, they receive regular communication from the Department. The website has been revamped. Currently, scholarships are not being used for recruitment. They are offered to majors already taking courses on campus.

With a few exceptions, full-time faculty members advise students about course selection. A refresher advising session is provided to the faculty annually.

Majors (and others benefitting from English offerings) have had success in finding employment and/or being accepted into graduate programs. They have also been the recipients of numerous awards/honors.

Unit Summary

The Department of English serves the entire University through its writing courses. In addition, it meets the general education needs of many students. Moreover, it serves 100+ majors annually. The Department is represented by well credentialed, experienced faculty who are teachers and scholars.

Future Goals, Objectives and Assessment Methods

As identified by the department, future goals include the following:

- Reduce EN 101 cap to 20
- Become more efficient in the placement of students in EN 200 and EN 300 (standardized test; offer exam more frequently; design a lower-division course as writing intensive as a way to gain entrance to EN 300; self-placement; restore name “Junior” composition)
- Combine Writing Center with Math Help Center and locate in Mabee Library
- Hire a Director of Expository Writing
- Increase number of hours of observation for secondary education students

Proposals for Change

Proposals for change are identified as future goals above.

Program Rating

The Department of English is operating at an acceptable level.

Recommended Action(s)

Continue at current level of activity and resources.