

Department of English Five-Year Program Review  
**Program Review Evaluation Team Report**

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After reviewing the Self Study and Executive Summary, the Review Team visited the English Department on March 16-17, 2016, and met with the department chair, program directors, staff, advisors and a number of faculty and students. What follows is a report of the department's strengths and challenges respecting the university's standards for program review. Recommendations have been numbered consecutively throughout the report.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*Strengths*

The mission statement is clear and concise. It articulates the department's emphasis on the study of language and literature. It also supports the University-wide need for students with strong reading and writing skills. The curriculum not only supports the

The statement might be revised to include the various programs within the department and how they contribute to the skills mentioned in the mission statement.

**STANDARD B CURRICULUM**

*Strengths*

Although some changes are in progress, the department's curriculum is the result of

maintaining unity. In spite of some disagreements among faculty members, the department has for a long while produced majors and minors in each area of study, a sign that it is functioning as it should. It is impressive that the English Teaching major faculty have, for many years, cooperated with the College of Education.

Major courses are offered in regular rotation and service courses are consistently available in all areas. In addition, courses are offered on multiple campuses, online and through concurrent enrollment; this scheduling flexibility enables the department to respond to enrollment pressures.

The Composition Program, until recently, had a long-term director who instituted a successful and uniform approach (TICE) to ENGL 1010 when taught by adjunct faculty,

We were impressed by the dedication, pedagogical understanding and excellent completion rates shown in the Developmental English program.

### *Concerns*

Students and faculty expressed concern over the Composition Program's curriculum; two issues emerged: 1) the extent of curricular flexibility for individual courses and 2) the new TICE protocol, its implementations and goals. With the increased use of adjuncts and VCE and part-time instructors (tenure-track, tenured and instructors) in composition with potentially negative effects on recruiting students into the major. The TICE format is not necessarily embraced by full-time faculty who would like the opportunity to teach different genres, including literature, as part of composition.

We note that educational research has shown that removing the stigma of special labeling and numbering for students having low placement scores increases their chances of advancing to graduation without compromising academic integrity. This would be a change from the current situation at WSU.

### *Recommendations*

- 1. a.** Rethink the structure of the Composition Program, using a more inclusive decision-making process that helps the department recruit majors and at the same time fulfills the general education mission. Though all sections of ENGL 1010 and ENGL 2010 needn't be identical in terms of materials, readings

geared to curricular offerings and to the incremental level of building skills. Evidence exists that the faculty are being apprised of the outcomes and are making adjustments.

An example of the response to outcomes and to curricular needs is se2( )-22a

**STANDARD E ±FACULTY**

*Strengths*

### *Recommendations*

4. The 4/4 teaching load needs to be reduced if research is to be valued and if the department is to develop. A goal of a 3/3 for the department (and the College of Arts and Humanities) would be appropriate. This may involve a "teaching track" of 4/4 or 4/3 for faculty who prefer not to do more than minimal scholarly work and who do not wish to work with the MA program.

In the meantime, policies should be created to award release time for research and not just administration. Faculty should not shy away from showing the concrete results of these kinds of reassignments; the most productive researchers could be given reassignments first in order to demonstrate their value.

5. Consider the job security of instructors, hopefully with a move to longer term contracts.
6. Continue to develop effective practices to mentor junior faculty. Mentoring groups may be more effective than one-on-one assigned mentors.
7. Rethink the "Teaching College Writing" course for new instructors and graduate teaching assistants. It might be more practically oriented, both in terms of pedagogical suggestions and of classroom management (e.g., interactions with persons with disabilities, behavioral problems, etc.). At some institutions this course is divided into one-credit modules, each having a different emphasis- for example, one for new instructors of business/ technical writing, one for new instructors of rhetoric and composition, one for new instructors of introductory creative writing, etc.

## **STANDARD F - PROGRAM SUPPORT**

### *Strengths*

The department has good long-term staff support; the administrative assistants have been with the department for a long time and "know the ropes." There is strong support from the college with respect to marketing.

Staff has asked for development opportunities external to those provided by the university, such as attendance at a professional conference.

The university and college have provided superb facilities, especially the department office.

## **STANDARD G - RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES**

### *Strengths*

The department interacts with the community in a wide variety of ways; among these are:

- A robust concurrent enrollment program in area high schools
- Coordination with the College of Education for practicum and student teaching
- The National Undergraduate Literature Conference
- The Wasatch Range Writing Project
- Weber: The Contemporary West*
- Metaphor*
- Alerus*

Mention was made of the possible establishment of an external advisory committee. Given the history of the department and activities the new chair is undertaking; this lack is not a concern. The many connections within the community now in place may already provide adequate feedback.

## STANDARD H - PROGRAM SUMMARY

### *Strengths*

The undergraduate English programs at Weber State University are healthy and thriving. The faculty are committed, appropriately educated, and hard-working. The department is also responsive to national changes in the discipline; the faculty has demonstrated creativity and flexibility in meeting them.

The change in leadership over the past two years presents challenges. The current effectiveness and efficiency. This will take time and cooperation among the entire faculty as things stabilize.

The report indicates that substantial efforts have been made to address previous review recommendations (from 2011). An outcomes assessment was completed in 2015 and plans are in place to collect additional data and disseminate assessment results.

The department offers a substantial number of service courses as well as courses in a wide-ranging discipline at the baccalaureate and the master's level. A coherent, broad mission statement instills cohesion, and efforts are underway to streamline some program offerings in order to meet student needs and increase course enrollments.

A process for mandatory student advising is in place at the college and department levels.

### *Concerns*

The issue of pre-requisites has been addressed and valiant efforts have been made to modify the pathways for students. Pre-requisites are double-edged sword; they may disallow some working students from enrolling in required courses with resulting enrollment decreases. How students progress through the curricula is probably best left with advisors rather than with a blanket institutional or computerized enrollment policy. Offering required courses online may better serve the students.

There has been a dramatic decline in enrollments, particularly within some programs, over the past several years.

### *Recommendations*

8. We strongly recommend the adoption of a set of departmental bylaws. This will remove considerable pressure from the department chair and aid in the efforts at transparency. The process of writing and adopting bylaws or policies should be a departmental-wide effort.
9. Gather the CVs of all department faculty (not just MENG faculty). Make these available in future outside reviews of the department. It would be a good idea to put highlights of all CVs on the department website as well, so that prospective or current students (and others) can see their interests and accomplishments. This will boost the advocacy of the department at many levels.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *College and University Recommendations*

These recommendations are not numbered, since they do not purport to describe changes that the Department of English can accomplish on its own.

There is need for a career services advisor at the college level to inform students of career opportunities and help them prepare for the job market or graduate school.

Faculty in the MENG program and others who are required to engage in regular scholarship should be allowed a reduced teaching load. If contract faculty teach 4/4, the college should consider reducing assignments for tenure and tenure-track