April 23, 2021

TO: Anja Wanner, Professor and Chair, Department of English

FROM: Eric M. Wilcots, Dean, College of Letters & Science

RE: Completion of L&S Portion of the Review of English Academic Programs, including:

- BA/BS Major, including the approved option in Creative Writing
- Doctoral Minor, English Linguistics
- Doctoral Minor, English
- MA-English
- Doctor of Philosophy, English

NOTE: L&S completed the review of the MFA-Creative Writing in Spring 2019. A separate review of the programs in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies will be completed by Spring 2022.

ATTACHED: Review Committee Report

CC: Elaine M. Klein, Associate Dean for Academic Planning, L&S
Lisa Martin, Associate Dean, Graduate School
Shirin Malekpour, Associate Dean for Teaching & Learning Administration, L&S
Jocelyn Milner, Vice Provost and Director, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
Parmesh Ramanathan, Associate Dean, Graduate School
Emily Reynolds, Academic Planning Specialist, Graduate School
Susan Zaeske, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, L&S
David Zimmerman, Professor and Associate Chair, English

On March 9, 2021, the L&S Academic Planning Council discussed the materials submitted for the review of academic programs in English, as enumerated above. Associate Dean Susan Zaeske led the council’s discussion, and as expected, we learned that like many L&S programs, the programs in English appear to be performing well and students are satisfied. In particular, the council would like to commend English for its efforts to increase the diversity of its faculty through innovative recruiting and hiring strategies. The review committee lauded steps taken to “de-territorialize” the curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, which have supported diversity hiring efforts and the department’s ability to better serve an increasingly diverse student body. We can only urge you and your colleagues to continue these efforts, which are instructive to all of us in the college and university as we look to models for this
important work. So, too, do we urge the department to continue in its efforts to understand concerns related to climate, and to intervene wherever possible to improve that climate. Attention to diversity and to climate are, of course, different demands and each should support and sustain success in the other.

The department is actively engaged in assessing student learning at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Although not all elements of planned assessment strategies have been implemented, the review committee expressed no concern about the degree to which the department is engaged in this work in an active, ongoing, and useful way. At the undergraduate level, this work relies on evaluation of majors’ proficiency on designated assignments (direct assessment) as well as on instructors’ observations of student behavior in the classroom. In general, the department provided ample evidence of making curricular changes that are informed by data used to monitor the program, working to address retention in the major and to address pressure points and bottlenecks in the program. In addition, despite the declining number of majors, the department has worked to create courses that meet general requirements and increase enrollments overall. This appears to be an effective strategy, though, as the department’s responsibilities for offering general service courses increase, this assessment strategy may also need to be revised to include components that evaluate effectiveness in this part of the curriculum.

At the graduate level, an assessment plan has been approved and is in early states of implementation. As a result, no changes have been made based on assessment results, though a number of program revisions to align and clarify requirements have been drafted in “Lumen Programs” for discussion.

The APC discussed the review committee’s concerns about time to degree at the graduate level. Data comparing completion time and rate to AAU peers (available here) does reveal that while the most recent graduating cohort was aligned with peers, prior cohorts have taken longer to complete the program than graduate students at peer institutions. This suggests that efforts to decrease time to degree and to improve the student experience may be beginning to yield results. It is worth noting that other data reveal that a larger proportion of UW-Madison students take longer within a ten year period to complete their degrees, but that, overall, a significantly higher proportion of UW-Madison students complete the degree within ten years. We suspect that the issue of pace and proportion of degree completion will continue to require attention. Some committee recommendations (e.g., completion of the Graduate Student Handbook, establishing clear milestones during dissertation) should help reduce the time needed to complete the program.

The review committee offered a number of other suggestions, some of which have since been rendered obsolete by reorganization of units within the department such as the ESL program and the Writing Center. Other recommendations should be considered in consultation with colleagues in L&S Administration and the Graduate School, who can offer guidance on program revisions.
In sum, the council agreed, on the whole, with the review committee’s conclusion that the programs are functioning well and that the department is managing them appropriately. I am happy to report that the L&S APC unanimously approved a motion to consider the L&S portion of this review complete. The next phase of review will involve discussion by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee, which may offer advice from its perspective.

We wish you, your colleagues, and students continued success, and have confidence that you will continue to be ranked among the best English departments in the nation.
This report deals with the following programs offered by the English Department:

1. English Major (BA, BS) with a general track, an Emphasis on Creative Writing Named Option (CW), and an "Emphasis on English Language and Linguistics Named Option" track in Language and Linguistics (LL) (which has since been approved as a “Named Option”)
2. PhD Program in English with tracks in Literary Studies (LS), Composition & Rhetoric (CR), and English Language & Linguistics (ELL)
3. MA Program in English with a non-admitting track in Literary Studies (LS) and an admitting track (terminal degree) in Applied English Linguistics (AEL)
4. PhD Minor in English (with a general track and a track in Composition and Rhetoric), Ph.D. Minor in Creative Writing, and PhD Minor in English Linguistics
5. Program in English as a Second Language (ESL)
6. Programs of the Writing Center

I. A summary of the activities of the review committee and materials reviewed

The Committee read the English Department’s Self-Study, the previous report from Spring 2010, and conducted interviews with faculty, academic staff, and students. We interviewed
- Anja Wanner (Chair) and David Zimmerman (Associate Chair) on September 23, 2020;
- Sandra Arfa and Joe Nosek of the English as a Second Language Program on October 23, 2020;
- Christa Olson (a faculty member in Composition and Rhetoric) on October 29, 2020;
- Monique Allewaert (Director of Graduate Studies; advisor for PhD track in Literary Studies), Eric Raimy (advisor for PhD track in Language and Linguistics), and Morris Young (PhD track in Composition and Rhetoric) on October 30, 2020;
- Nancy Linh Karls and Emily Hall of the Writing Center on November 5, 2020;
- graduate students on November 6, 2020;
- Undergraduate students on November 12, 2020;
- David Zimmerman (Director of Undergraduate Studies), Karen Redfield (Interim Undergraduate Advisor) and Ron Harris (Instructional Coordinator) on November 12, 2020;
- graduate students from the Diversity and Inclusion Student Committee (D+ISC) on November 20, 2020.

II. An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.
A. Broadening of the scope of English

Our initial discussion with the chair, Professor Anja Wanner, and the associate chair, Professor David Zimmerman, focused on the changes implemented in the curriculum over the past ten years and the current trends in the development of various academic tracks. One of the major ongoing trends is the broadening of the field of English as an academic discipline, which partially reflects a general trend in literary studies. While the literary canon (English and American) continues to occupy a proper place in the curriculum, the department’s “identity” rests as much on newly developed thematic courses (encompassing topics from sci-fi to ecology to digital media) as well as courses on a variety of regional and cultural subsystems of literary production in the English language. The general education segment of the curriculum promotes a “deterritorial” view of the department’s mission. The curriculum at all levels now includes courses that emphasize literature from minority groups, including Afro-American and Asian American literature. English is thought of as a transnational field, committed to the study of human experience in its diversity. The above strategy of remapping English as a discipline has been successful both in terms of enrollments and the quality of education. This is one way, in which the department responded to the call for diversity and inclusion. The review committee believes that this is a major achievement that affects all academic programs the department offers. The Diversity and Inclusion Student Committee (D+ISC) that the English Department supports through small stipends to its graduate student leaders is an excellent model for including students in this area of discussions.

The subsequent sections of this report will further highlight the department’s achievements as well as areas for improvement and those that currently undergo transition.

B. Undergraduate Studies

The English Department has a thriving undergraduate program. We spoke to three undergraduate students, one from each "track" (Literature, English Language and Linguistics, and Creative Writing) and they unanimously praised the program. They mentioned the richness of the curriculum, flexibility of the major requirements, and excellent quality of teaching. After some of the curricular changes in 2014, students have greater flexibility to choose courses in accordance with their interests and career goals. For example, we spoke to one student who was interested in modernism, and he is pursuing a course plan that looks at modernism around the world. He is able to do this because courses in the English Department include a rich comparative component. Students become English majors for different reasons, and the English Department now acknowledges this and helps students pursue their individual goals. All students acquire certain skills and abilities, including critical thinking and openness to diversity, which will be helpful to them regardless of what career they end up pursuing.

Students praised the quality of academic advising in the department, and they noted that there is a strong sense of undergraduate community in the department supported by faculty and academic staff.

In the realm of general education, as noted in section A, the department has significantly diversified its 100-level course offerings, which resulted in increased enrollments. This helps the department to sustain its overall enrollments at the time when the number of English majors is in decline, which has been a national trend. Professor Zimmerman, director of undergraduate
studies, pointed out that increasing the number of majors as well as rebuilding “honors in the major” track is among the priorities for the department leadership. The Department sees the diversity of the student body as an important goal. The department has made diversity training a priority for instructional staff, but they believe that they could improve in this area.

Professor Christa Olson, whose primary area of teaching is Composition and Rhetoric, indicated that one direction for undergraduate curriculum development in that area could be the development of courses in technical and professional writing, potentially leading up to the creation of an undergraduate certificate in this area. This will increase the participation of the faculty in Composition and Rhetoric in undergraduate instruction.

C. Graduate Studies
The Department of English has a vibrant graduate program. It is important to English that their three PhD tracks exist semi-autonomously. However, English Language and Linguistics (ELL), Composition and Rhetoric, and Literary Studies are collectively committed to offering the necessary advising and mentoring significant to the needs of students enrolled in their programs. Through our discussion with Eric Raimy, Monique Allewaert, Morris Young, and Christa Olson we learned that the Department is actively promoting diversity through the Afro-American Bridge Program, which is an academic partnership between the MA in Afro-American Studies and a PhD in English. This strategy also affirms the trend to “deterritorialize” English as a field noted in section A. The Department has been actively recruiting minority students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities around the country in addition to Lantinx institutions in Puerto Rico. Literary Studies has had the most success with these recruitment efforts because they are able to recruit students immediately after their BA.

PhD tracks in English Language and Linguistics and Composition and Rhetoric have greater difficulty ensuring diversity of their application pools because they require Masters degrees for admission. For this reason, as well as in order to generally increase the pool of applicants, the department considers rethinking these tracks to allow admission of BA degree holders.

MA in Applied English Linguistics primarily attracts applicants from abroad who pursue careers in teaching English to speakers of other languages. This is the only graduate track in which students are not funded and have to pay for their education.

Graduate students in the three PhD tracks are funded through fellowships and teaching assistantships, and funding equivalency between the three tracks is observed. Admissions packages offered by the program include significant top-offs that come from departmental resources and bring cumulative stipends to $25,000 for the first two years. In subsequent years, students typically can combine 38 to 40% “main” TAships with supplemental 20% TAships at the Writing Center. Graduate students pointed out that they do not receive 50% TA appointments (which would be a minimum acceptable income) and, consequently, need to look elsewhere for additional income, if they do not have supplemental TAships at the Writing Center.

Some students, especially those in Composition and Rhetoric, also hold TAships with significant administrative responsibilities at the Writing Center, which gives them an excellent opportunity to develop skills in program administration.

From our conversation with graduate students, we understood that they feel secure about the continuation of their funding beyond the guaranteed five years of support. This sense of security may contribute to the slowness of dissertation completion, although we cannot claim
that this reason plays an overwhelming role. What came across pretty clearly in our conversation with graduate students is that they do not feel pressured to finish their dissertations within a set timeframe. According to faculty, students in the Composition and Rhetoric track have a shorter time to degree than the average for English, thanks to a better job market situation in that subfield.

One area of funding about which graduate students expressed some concern and frustration is conference travel funding. They pointed out that, at the campus level, application processes for conference travel support (which, depending on the field of study, may be administered by more than one entity) aren’t easy to navigate, and they receive little guidance about those processes. At the departmental level, these processes seem sometimes opaque, too. At the same time, they acknowledged that the DGS took steps recently to make the awards more equitable. Perhaps, this is one area in which clear written guidelines and policies (preferably in the Graduate Student Handbook) will help remedy these concerns.

Students in Literary Studies also pointed out that they would welcome additional (or more systematic) opportunities for professional development, in particular preparation for the job market (interviews, job talks). The committee’s recommendation would be to develop a plan in this area, including publishing workshops, mock job-talks and other such activities.

Finally, all of the students hoped that the Department could provide more information on non-academic professional trajectories. The department has indicated that they are also interested in pursuing this path, though admittedly, the purpose of a PhD program in English is to train people for academic careers, so it is not clear to what extent this is the job of the department.

D. English as a Second Language (ESL)
Sandra Arfa, who is the current director of ESL, will step down at the end of this year. We talked to her and Joe Nosek, who teaches ESL in the department. An open search will be conducted to replace the director of ESL. Through our conversation with the two of them, we learned about the contribution of the ESL program to our campus along with some of the challenges they face. The ESL program is essential for our campus, since without a strong command of the English language, students at UW would not be able to successfully pursue studies in any subject. Moreover, the ESL program contributes to the English Department’s “deterritorial” or trans-territorial mission: this program brings the department in contact with students from various parts of the world and from different cultural backgrounds. ESL courses provide a gateway to all other learning goals for international students who do not have adequate command of English at the time they arrive on campus. The program has changed over the years. When the program was first founded in the late 1950s, it was primarily geared towards training graduate students. However, in the past twenty years there has been a significant increase in international undergraduate students, and this led to a restructuring of the ESL curriculum. The program administers English language proficiency tests for international undergraduate and select graduate students as well as the SPEAK test (an oral proficiency exam) for international graduate students. They also train their own TAs, who may be graduate students from the English Department but may also come from other programs on campus, such as Second Language Acquisition and Curriculum and Instruction. Their fundamental courses are the ENG 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118 (though the first two of these have almost vanished). Most students begin with
either 116 or 117, prior to taking 118, which fulfills the Comm A requirement. Often students put off taking 118 till the last semester of study, which is a concern for the program leadership. This course is intended to ensure that students can write adequately in English, and it is too late to take such a course in one’s last semester of study. In addition, the ESL program offers courses at the 300 level that cater to the needs of graduate students focusing on academic writing and oral skills, the latter specifically meeting the needs of new international TAs, who do not pass the SPEAK test at their first attempt.

The ESL program also offers an undergraduate and graduate certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which prepares students to teach English as a Second Language. This certificate qualifies college graduates to teach English in a non-English speaking part of the world.

Finally, ESL runs an Intensive English program for foreign students who, primarily, wish to prepare for the study at a US university. Enrollments in this program have declined due to external factors that affect language programs across the US and Canada. (The program has been cancelled for the current year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.)

The ESL program members have been involved in international projects and outreach. They have been an integral part of the UW collaboration with Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, providing consultations on setting up an ESL program there. They have also collaborated with the Japanese and Korean governments to train teachers of English. Inside the university, the program provides “on-demand” instruction in ESL to international participants in collaborative projects; Influenza Research Institute, the Biotech professional degree program, and the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies were among the campus entities who have recently requested such instruction for international members of their research teams. With respect to community outreach, members of the ESL program partner with community organizations like the Literacy Network and the Catholic Multicultural Center, where TESOL certificate students volunteer to tutor and teach refugees and immigrants. They would like to increase their outreach and continue to contribute to the Wisconsin idea.

One entity on campus, itself part of the English Department, with which the ESL program wishes to develop a more structured and systematic collaboration, is the Writing Center (discussed in section E). Including a TA or instructor with ESL expertise in the team of the Writing Center seems sensible, because, in the process of developing writing competencies, the needs of students who are not native English speakers differ from the needs of native speakers. It seems that the Writing Center leadership is in agreement with this and would welcome a closer collaboration.

Finally, the ESL program is looking for an ESL Office Manager and we suggest that the possibility of reclassifying this position as an upper level administrative position be discussed. The person who occupies this post becomes the public face of the ESL program and takes care of numerous administrative functions, from greeting international students and communicating with them to proctoring exams to dealing with the finances of the program. Upgrading this position would allow hiring someone with skills and talent to do this very important work.

Overall, the committee was impressed with the direction in which the ESL program is developing; we have a sense that the change in leadership will go smoothly.
E. The Writing Center

The Writing Center is an important institution at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, since it serves not only the English Department, but the whole University and even the broader community. Students in all subjects at our University must effectively communicate in English and they go to the Writing Center to master and improve their writing skills. Besides offering individual tutoring and group workshops, the Writing Center coordinates the Writing Across the Curriculum Program by training faculty and TAs who teach Comm B courses and sections. For PhD students in English, the Writing Center provides crucial funding and teaching opportunities. It also trains undergraduate students to become Writing Fellows, tutors in academic writing for their peers. Every semester the Writing Center employs 45-50 graduate students in TA positions that range from 10 to 60%, and the same number of undergraduate Writing Fellows.

The previous director of the Writing Center was Brad Hughes and, in Professor Anja Wanner’s words, “Brad Hughes was the Writing Center.” Now that he has retired, the Writing Center’s leadership structure is being discussed, and this discussion is beyond the timeframe of our current review or scope of our report. We talked to the two interim co-directors of the Center, Nancy Linh Karls and Emily Hall. They are building on Brad Hughes’s monumental legacy, adding to the Center’s educational mission in important ways. Perhaps the most important area of change concerns the awareness of the diversity of student backgrounds, social, racial, and cultural, in teaching writing. Karls and Hall advocate for teaching that promotes “social justice” and diversity, including the creation of a 50% TAship for a Coordinator for Multicultural and Social Justice Initiatives as well as revising the Madison Teaching and Learning Excellence writing module to reflect commitment to inclusivity in teaching and writing. Bringing social justice into teaching writing needs some explanation. Karls and Hall explained that it refers to recognizing the diversity of backgrounds as affecting students’ writing practices. Specifically, teachers of writing have certain standards, including proper use of grammar, syntax, and writing style, which could be unfamiliar to the student seeking help. All staff at the Writing Center are trained to assist students with questions of grammar and style. At the same time, the “social justice” approach advocates for respecting the ways in which students from different social and cultural backgrounds might express their ideas. The staff at the Center continues to use a student-centered approach, where they first ask about the student’s goals. For example, if acquiring strong writing skills in English is not critical for a student, the focus of the staff and tutors may be not on perfecting their style and grammar, but on making sure their message or idea gets across, even if not in a grammatically flawless shape.

Broadly speaking, the current Writing Center initiatives can be best understood as promoting an inclusive pedagogy. They mentioned micro-aggressions that can be embedded in evaluative statements about someone’s language skills, whether in reproach or in praise (such as asking an Asian American why their English is so good), but that often appears in student writing as well in the form of broad generalizations on any subject. Hall and Karls summarized their position best when they said that the Writing Center is working on developing an more inclusive dimension to their pedagogy. It is evident that the Writing Center is motivated to do their part in changing the often exclusive culture here on campus. This is important for the English Department overall, as they strive to make curricular and programmatic changes to attract a more diverse range of students.
In addition to their work on campus, the Writing Center does a considerable amount of outreach. For example, they teach writing to Madison residents from all walks of life, helping them to write resumes, cover letters, and assisting in more mundane forms of communication. In this way, they clearly realize the Wisconsin idea.

Just like the ESL program, the current leadership of the Writing Center believes that creating permanent ties with ESL, as discussed in section D above, would be beneficial for them.

III. Advice to the program, dean, and/or provost for improving the program

The committee has already noted some of its recommendations in the narrative in section II; a number of these recommendations coincide with the ongoing discussion and planning in the Department. We reiterate the main points here, taking the Self-Study into consideration:

General

● For the Department’s instructional mission, having control over more properly equipped classrooms is imperative, as is the availability of additional space for TAs and STS instructors (p. 21 of the Self-Study);
● granting academic staff voting rights and incorporating them into departmental governance is strongly recommended;
● efforts to increase diversity among undergraduate majors and graduate students must continue; to that end, the possibility must be further investigated to remove the MA requirement for students who apply to graduate tracks in Composition and Rhetoric and English Language and Linguistics.

Undergraduate Program

● Increasing the number of English majors and rebuilding the honors track in the major remain the areas in which continuous efforts are needed;
● a possibility of introducing new undergraduate courses in technical and professional writing, and an undergraduate certificate of the same profile can be further explored by the Department's leadership.

Graduate Program

● Completing the Graduate Student Handbook must be a priority;
● time to PhD degree in English must be revisited; expected timeline for completing dissertations (after reaching ABD status) must be clearly communicated to students; we suggest limiting the number of years ABDs can continue to receive funding;
● we recommend including information on how to apply for conference travel grants in the Graduate Student Handbook and in individual advising and maintaining transparency of the conference travel award process at the departmental level;
• opportunities for job market preparation (mock interviews, job talk) must be regularly offered to students in all PhD tracks; we recommend having a routine plan in that area, adjustable at the start of every academic year for the needs of a concrete group of students;
• organizing events and making information on non-academic careers available to students is recommended.

ESL and Writing Center Programs

• For successful operation of the ESL program, we recommend that the possibility of reclassifying the position of their Office Manager as an upper level administrative position be further discussed (section II-D above);
• for enhancing student experience with various programs of the Writing Center, it is essential to establish a permanent collaboration between the ESL program and the Writing Center (section II-D above); it may take a form of the inclusion of a dedicated staff member with ESL competencies in the Writing Center team, or other mutually acceptable form;
• Questions arose about the TESOL certificate program. The Dean might consider initiating an independent review of the program.

IV. Recommendations for future directions

V. Specifications for any necessary follow-up action