

Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics
Program Performance Review, 2012-2019, English and Comparative Literature
Program Response to External Review Team Report

The Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics is grateful for the thoughtful review of its English and Comparative Literature programs prepared by its external review team: Dr. William Handley, Associate Professor of English at the University of Southern California; Dr. Elaine Lewinnek, Professor of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton; and Dr. Kathryn Rummell, Professor and Chair of English at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

It was our pleasure to host our three warm and engaged reviewers on February 28, 2020. During their visit, they met with full- and part-time faculty, a group of graduate and undergraduate students, the department staff, Dean Sheryl Fontaine and Associate Dean Jessica Stern, and the Department Chair.

In addition to their commendations, the review team identified several challenges facing the department along with some recommendations. We share our response to those recommendations below.

1. We strongly agree with the reviewers' observation that there is "an overall shortage of tenured and tenure-track professors" in the department. The reviewers recommend "at the very least three new tenure-track faculty, including at least one in composition/rhetoric and one in global Anglophone literature." In addition to the subdisciplines identified by the reviewers, we are also discussing T/TT hires in Children's/Young Adult Literature and Creative Writing. The review team notes that professors of Composition and Rhetoric "once numbered 4.5 FTEF," and while there are in fact currently 5.5 full-time-equivalent faculty allocated to that subdiscipline (Drs. Brannon, Bruce, Fontaine, Westbrook, Williams, and Zhao), we agree that an additional hire in the field is necessary, given that many of those faculty members' time is assigned to other duties. We have requested a tenure-track hire in Composition and Rhetoric for the 2020-2021 academic year. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Dean's and Provost's offices to augment our T/TT ranks while increasing faculty and disciplinary diversity.

2. We also agree with the reviewers' encouragement to continue diversifying our curriculum by reexamining the "Single Author" requirement. The Single Author requirement has endured in part because we are required to offer those courses as a component of our state-approved Single Subject Matter Preparation Program (SSMP), and in part because it has a secondary purpose of increasing our majors' exposure to historical literatures. That said, the reviewers are correct that this part of our curriculum may conceivably be diversified in several productive ways while still maintaining its secondary benefit of augmenting students' pre-1800 historical knowledge. We will renew our ongoing conversation about this aspect of our curriculum.

The reviewers also encourage the Dean's office to consider a "diversity cluster hire" to further diversify both faculty ranks and curricula. We would be interested in collaborating with the Dean's office on such an initiative, and note that diversity is already a foundational value of our normal curriculum-development and T/TT-hiring processes. During the period under review, we have

continued to evolve our curriculum and to diversify our T/TT faculty ranks. Indeed, every T/TT hire in the past ten years has furthered the racial, gender, or LGBTQ diversity of the department.

3. We appreciate the reviewers' attention to the issue of available and appropriately sized classrooms, as well as the significance of classroom availability in meeting FTES target. Although the students with whom the reviewers spoke expressed interest in more evening classes, in our experience there is not a large and unmet demand for additional undergraduate evening classes. We encourage the Dean's office to advocate for additional appropriate classroom space for the college. Yet we also find the Dean's office's current space allocation policies, coupled with its generosity in recognizing that limited classroom availability shapes departments' ability to make their FTES targets, to be fair.

We also appreciate the reviewers' encouragement to monitor the impact of our student-success improvements in the areas of advising, freshman cohort-forming, and the Senior Seminar, focusing in particular on how these practices work to narrow the achievement gap. We intend to incorporate discussions about the successes and challenges of these changes into our regular "closing the loop" assessment conversations.

4. We will continue to look for ways to better cultivate a sense of community and professional camaraderie among our part-time faculty. While the reviewers urge the college to provide professional development funding for part-time faculty, we note, and very much appreciate, that the Dean's office already provides a triennial allotment of professional development funds to each 3AY part-time faculty member. Even so, we will continue to examine other ways of creating informal professional development opportunities among the part-time faculty. For example, one earlier innovation that had gone fallow from lack of interest, a regular part-time faculty Pedagogy Roundtable, will be revived in the Fall.

5. We strongly agree with the reviewers' conclusion that class enrollment limits are high across the department. As they observe, our class sizes exceed the recommendations of the Association of Departments of English for writing as well as literature courses. We especially appreciate and agree with their recognition that all of our courses are, on some level, writing courses. As they framed it in their report, "the teaching of writing—something that occurs in every single course in the department—brings with it particular requirements of faculty time." As the reviewers acknowledge, the issue of class size is interwoven with the issue of workload generally, as there are currently no "structures to reward faculty mentoring of students" that are translatable into FTES. We are open to working collaboratively with the Dean's office to find ways to, as the reviewers put it, "recognize the additional burden of writing instruction on English faculty by decreasing the overall number of students they are expected to teach each semester."

We wish to extend our thanks to our reviewers for their thoughtful report and their genuine desire to improve our department and our university. In our view, their report accurately captured the accomplishments and challenges of the department. It was a pleasure hosting such gracious and collegial reviewers, and we warmly thank them for their service.