

Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics
2010-2011 Program Performance Review
Response to the External Reviewer's Report

Sheryl Fontaine, Chair

The Department is grateful that the Dean's office secured for us such an engaged, professional, and thorough External Review team. There is little to disagree with among the recommendations (or commendations) that were offered. The observations of the reviewers align with our own. Furthermore, since the reviewers' visit, we have received funds from the offices of the Dean of H&SS and the Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness to employ the SSRC in conducting a survey of current and former English majors. We are eager to use what we learn to inform decisions we make in the areas of interest identified by the reviewers: hiring, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and support services.

Between changes in the budget and mandates from the Chancellor, it is impossible to predict whether we will be able to hire tenure track faculty in the next few years. Such unpredictability makes it all the more important that when we do hire, we do so with careful planning. We will need to consider our current curricular and administrative needs as well as those that we anticipate in the future. The reviewers note two faculty positions: one to fill our immediate need for a faculty member in Composition and Rhetoric who can teach upper division and graduate courses in the discipline and serve as an administrator to coordinate our lower division writing courses and a second, more long term need to fill a Creative Writing position. While we intend to search for the former next year if allowed, we are unlikely to request the latter. Several years ago we conducted a tenure track search in Creative Writing. Rather than "settle" for an individual who did not fit our needs or expectations, we did not make any offers. Since then we have established an ad hoc committee on Creative Writing that is balancing faculty expertise with curricular development. We are also in the midst of a campaign to raise funds for a visiting scholar in Creative Writing.

While we would like to have a lineup of part-time instructors available who can cover classes in the major when tenure-track faculty receive assigned time, our budget for hiring PTF is already strained due to the ongoing need to offer a sufficient number of sections of lower and upper division writing courses. Nonetheless, we can certainly advertise generally and collect appropriate CVs in anticipation. It is also worth noting that if we extend the TA program beyond one year, as the reviewers recommend, graduate students' time-to-degree could potentially slow and the PTF budget would be drained to pay for TAs who are not qualified to teach upper division courses in the major. As a way to provide graduate students with more professional opportunities, we appreciate the advice to offer tutors more hours of work in the Writing Center and will also continue to look at ways graduate students can gain instructional experience by assisting faculty in high-enrollment

sections in the major. In the next fiscal year, we can look at ways to stretch our OE budget in that direction and, if necessary, talk to the Dean about additional funding.

Our department curriculum contains with both disciplinary and program-based matters that we are in the process of examining. Both Comparative Literature and Linguistics need curricular attention. Our recently established ad hoc committee on Comparative Literature is considering the implications of moving from a focus on Comparative Literature to one in Comparatist Studies (PPR, p. 11). Having successfully hired two Linguistics faculty members this year and anticipating the Linguistics Program's PPR next year, we are poised to improve the articulation among English, Comparative Literature, and the Linguistics Program.

We have already begun to discuss the external reviewers' recommendation regarding a requirement in cultural or critical theory at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. While we appreciate the need for students to understand and apply theory, we believe that this can be most effectively accomplished in the context of existing courses that integrate theory into the study of literature, rhetoric, and writing and in extra-curricular opportunities such as hearing from guest lecturers in the field and providing students with teaching and tutoring positions in which they can apply theory to instructional practice. We will work to make more explicit the existence of theory in our curriculum and its application more explicit in our extra-curriculum.

Curricular concerns also raise questions about pedagogy and assessment. We will continue to monitor the financial and pedagogical impact of faculty's 3/3-course distribution. For instance, by developing an e-portfolio for majors (PPR, p. 15), we would have a means of assessing the impact of our curriculum and of providing a capstone experience for students. While senior seminars are common in departments across campus, we are reluctant to add another feature to our already complex curriculum (writing classes, graduate seminars, English Education, etc.) The goals and outcomes for the graduate program (PPR, p. 7) can easily be tied to the new graduate portfolio and project. We will provide these outcomes to the University for the assessment website and add them to our own website as we migrate to Omni Update, the website management program that volunteering departments from H&SS will adopt this summer.

Support services are provided by our staff and by an infrastructure of committees and support materials. Our current student assistant will graduate this semester, providing us with the opportunity to look for two qualified students when we advertise for her replacement in late summer. Perhaps one of these student assistants can have time dedicated to assisting English Education or, if the budget allows, an additional student can be hired for this purpose. The temporary office position is about to be posted as a permanent (albeit fiscal-year renewable) position. In addition to relieving some of the work overload from current staff, the new full-time staff and/or student assistants may also provide assistance toward our goal of developing a department handbook. Creating a means to integrate 50 or

more part-time faculty into the department is a challenge due to contract restrictions on their time and the lack of funding to hire a writing program administrator to coordinate the writing courses taught by PTF. Nonetheless, we recognize the need to provide our part-time colleagues with the chance to participate in the life of the department and to recognize them for their professional skill and the important work they do for us and for the University. In light of this, we are providing stipends for part-time faculty members to coordinate the summer writing courses and, in the fall, to assist a tenured faculty member with supervision of the Writing Center.

One final note: The external review team reminds us of the role we have beyond our departmental boundaries in contributing to the academic literacy education of all CSUF students. At their encouragement, we will pursue, with the Dean and Vice President, the possibility of hiring a University Director of Writing who would be an active member of our department and also serve to administer the upper division-writing requirement and facilitate writing across the curriculum for the entire campus.