

# Précis

Program Performance Review

*English, Comparative Literature and Linguistics, BA, MA*

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

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## **Background**

The Department of English, Comparative Literature and Linguistics conducted a program performance review during the 2010-11 academic year. Linguistics will be reviewed separately. The department provided a self-study which was reviewed along with other documents by the Visiting Team. Members of the Visiting Team included, Dr. George Uba, Professor of Asian American Studies and English, California State University, Northridge; Dr. John Holland, Director of Writing Program, University of Southern California; and Dr. Craig McConnell, Associate Professor, Liberal Studies, Cal State Fullerton. The team visited campus and interviewed department faculty, staff, students and college administrators including the college dean. The team report included commendations and recommendations. Also, submitted were the *Dean's Summary and Recommendations* and the Chair's Response.

## **Key Data**

The Department of English Comparative Literature and Linguistics is a large and complex entity. Aside from providing courses for graduate and undergraduate majors it offers general education courses, teaches freshman and upper division composition and operates/staffs the Writing Center. The Writing Center serves an average of 7,000 students annually. The number of English majors continue to grow in 2004-05 there were 587 students in 2010-11 the number was 605 a 3% increase. There has been a decline in the number of graduate majors from a high of 109 in 2008-09 to 74 most recently 2010-11. The MA in Comparative Literature was discontinued in 2006. In 2009-10 there were 154 BA in English degrees awarded, the Comparative Literature enrollments are low 8 in 2010 and few degrees awarded. There were 40 degrees awarded in the MA program in 2009-10. Almost 56% of full-time first-time Freshmen English majors graduate in 6 years or less. This percentage is slightly above the College average for the same period of time which is 54%. And equal to the College, an average of 77% of upper division transfers into English major graduate in 6 years or less. Sixty percent of new MA students graduate during the 6 year or less time frame which is on par with the College. There are 20 tenured-tenure track faculty members and 50 part time faculty (lecturers) per semester.

## **Key Issues**

A key issue is better incorporation of linguistics in the department structure and scope. As mentioned above there is a lack of critical mass of students majoring in Comparative Literature. Given the department's emphasis in writing consideration should be given to hiring two specialists in rhetoric and composition and establish the position of Director of Composition along with a Director of the Writing Center. The issue of assessment is an issue for the department (more details to follow below), and consideration might be given to providing a capstone experience for undergraduate majors if not a course then develop at minimum an entry and exit assessment strategy which might include a portfolio. How to better incorporate part-time faculty into the overall life of the department is an issue confronting the department leadership. Because this department has such a large enrollment and multiple degree programs its structure should be reviewed with the possibility of adopting a *division* model.

## **Outcomes Assessment**

For sure the department is increasingly engaged in assessment activities which include both direct and indirect assessment measures and strategies. Much has been accomplished in the assessment of writing with the development and implementation of rubrics. What is needed however is a more unified coherent assessment concept and plan for both undergraduate and graduate programs. The department has aligned the undergraduate learning goals and outcomes to the curriculum and assessment strategies have been implemented but there is no indication when outcomes/goals are introduced, developed or mastered. There is little discussion of assessment in the MA program; it is stated that there will be a new curriculum introduced in fall 2011 and faculty are considering replacing the examination with portfolios to better reflect anticipated student professional direction. Presently, master's examinations are scored holistically using a shared rubric by a faculty committee who must first complete a calibrations session. Like in the case of the undergraduate program the master's program needs more clearly articulated learning outcomes linked to assessment strategies.

Alluded to in the self-study the department has conducted a major student survey of present undergraduate and graduate majors as well as alumni. Analysis of the results continues and findings will provide a rich source of data which the faculty will use in its ongoing educational effectiveness efforts. In addition, the department has also identified several quality indicators as a way to determine effectiveness and success. Such indicators include number of graduate students teaching in community colleges, number of students who enter Ph.D. programs, and the number of students who present papers at local and regional conferences. Currently there has been only informal data collected on these indicators but a goal is to collect and analyze data more systematically.

## **Outlook**

It is clear that the Department of English, Comparative Literature and Linguistics has utilized the program performance review as mechanism to take stock of its present and begin to plan its future. Accordingly there has been a shift in focus "moving away from a literary field coverage

model and toward a more expansive and flexible paradigm based on desired learning outcomes that combine rigorous scholarly inquiry with practical career preparation”. The department has modified its MA with the addition of the Professional Certificate in Writing and Teaching and this change has gained national attention/applauded in a scholarly journal. After their visit the Visiting Team concluded “from all available accounts, this is a superior department whose faculty and staff work together collaboratively and selflessly.” The team also underscored the role the department plays beyond the departmental boundaries in contributing to the academic literacy of all CSUF students. There are challenges on the horizon including improving outcomes assessment for all degree programs, faculty and staff needs/hiring, enrollments in comparative literature major, and improvement of articulation between English, Comparative Literature and the Linguistics program. The department’s leadership has demonstrated a proactive approach in addressing the challenges of the department and these issues will be a part of the conversation/focus at an upcoming faculty retreat (February 3, 2012).

Gerald W. Patton

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