

Academic Affairs Council Response to the English Program Review (2018)

I. Introduction

The English Program at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay offers a major with 3 emphases (Literature, Creative Writing and Education) and a minor. Half of the majors have a Creative Writing emphasis. There are currently 6 faculty (with Dr. Rybak serving as interim Dean) for 136 majors and 22 minors. The number of majors has been relatively consistent since the last program review, with a peak of 155 majors in 2013. The number of minors has dropped a bit in recent years, from a high of 39 minors in 2011. The number of graduated majors and minors has been relatively stable over time (31 to 41 majors), with an increase for graduated majors in the past year (51). This is despite the high turnover the program has seen in its faculty, where half of the faculty are different than the last program review.

Program Chair, Rebecca Meacham, provided the Academic Program Review on November 8, 2017. Dr. Meacham discussed the program and answered questions on December 19, 2017 and the AAC reviewed and discussed the document on January 23, 2018. The English Program has excellent faculty and has been increasingly involved in community outreach, developing new courses and curriculum, and learning how to operate with “great economy and efficiency”.

II. Assessment of Student Learning

The English Program has student learning outcomes for the major. The learning outcomes have been revised to focus more on real world application. In addition, learning outcomes for the creative writing emphasis were created since the last program review. Assessment has varied throughout the years since the program review. For example, one year students were assessed on their ability to define and identify various terms across different classes. However, other years faculty were asked to reflect on their courses in narrative form. In addition, an idea summit is referenced in the 2016-2017 assessment report. Did this occur and what were its results? While the program is working on providing more real world application for its students, more could be done around discussing the assessment data as a program and “closing the loop”.

III. Program Accomplishments

- Engagement with community: Untitledtown Book and Author Festival, The Packers Project, Oral history course
- Impressive enrollment initiatives, including the Pulaski Partnership with high school teachers aligning their curriculum and students taking the challenge exam as a cost-effective way to receive credits.
- Received one time grant for UWGB Teaching Press to produce limited edition books
- Created novel writing classes where students write and subsequently revise a 50,000 word novel draft. Excellent hands-on professional experience since must also pitch their books to booksellers and literary agents.
- New coursework in digital and public humanities, medieval women, and LGBTQIA literature. Hands-on experience as researchers and editors who digitally encoding various works (English 364).

- Proposals for certificate in editing and publishing and BFA in writing and applied arts.
- New efforts to engage majors and build identity as a program (e.g., English Game Night and the UWGB Creatives).

IV. Program Strengths and Areas in Need of Attention

Strengths:

- The current faculty are high quality. All have been nominated for some sort of teaching award, including the prestigious UW-System Regents Teaching Award, and half the department has won a Founders' Award. Students recognize this quality in the graduating senior survey, as well as reporting excellent in-class faculty student interaction.
- Faculty are active scholars, attending conferences and publishing articles and books, with 2 being promoted to full professor since the last program review.
- Students are very satisfied with the major overall.
- Have shown flexibility by re-sequencing and adding new courses for the creative writing emphasis requirements to make things smoother for December grads.
- Efforts to engage their majors in study abroad experiences with London travel course and Sheepshead Review (their own literary journal)

Areas in Need of Attention:

- Work more on the "articulation gap". Students could also be coached in making the connection on what skills they developed in English that they would be able to offer future employers. Develop more connections with employers while still at UWGB based on graduating senior surveys. For example, English alumni are more likely to report leadership and management skills as important than other UWGB alumni (84% vs. 76%), but feel like they have less preparation in this area than other students (45% vs. 58%).
- More documenting of student successes (e.g., grad school admissions, future jobs) to show current students possible pathways
- Alumni report that they are not being encouraged to be involved with community affairs in the alumni survey and that they have fewer chances to apply their learning to real situations.
- More internship experiences, even though English majors are more likely to report having done an internship than other graduating students.
- Use assessment data more in curricular changes.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The English program offers a vital contribution to its majors, minors, and general education. Its talented and engaged faculty are finding further ways to involve their students.

The AAC recommends

- Finding ways to continue to operate efficiently, given low staffing and high number of majors. The proposed English 104: Page tuners class sounds like an interesting course. A great way to get more students excited about English as well as free up faculty and reduce number of preps.

- Incorporate more opportunities for real world application in classes and in the community
- Continue pursuing certificate in editing and publishing and BFA in writing and applied arts
- “Closing the loop” with collected assessment data
- Continuing community outreach efforts