Date: April 6, 2011

To: Brian Vescio, Chair English

From: Scott Furlong, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Re: Report on the English Program Review

The English program at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay has a talented, productive faculty. The faculty has an impressive scholarly/creative record with some of this being national known and/or award winning. The program and its faculty are all connected to Humanistic Studies. Enrollments in the program have ranged 148-179 during the five years of the review. There has been a slight decrease in the number of minors. The program is also very important in the general education program on campus and particularly addresses the communication and critical thinking components of the mission most directly. In addition, almost all of the English lower level classes also serve as general education classes. The program provides a publication outlet for students with its publication of Sheephead Review and is also working on an online journal entitled MEGAzine. The program is also involved with community program including College Credit in High School program.

Enrollment Trends/Resource Issues:
As noted above, enrollments within the English major and minor have been strong and averaging 165 per year. The number of minors has been decreasing recently (still average around 37). This is likely due to some changes to the Education program. Enrollments in classes remain healthy with lower level classes enrolling nearly forty (40) students on average and upper level enrolling nearly thirty (30). Both numbers are significant given that all the courses have significant writing requirements associated with them.

There have been minimal changes to the English faculty since the last review. The retirement of Professor Dee Sweet led to the hiring of Chuck Rybak, who is working closely with the Creative Writing emphasis/students. Current student demand and enrollments likely constrain the English program to some extent in its interests to offer a wider curriculum particularly at the upper level. This issue is similar to many of our larger disciplinary programs on our campus.
Assessment:
The English program is in the process of developing a new assessment process. They no longer administer the ETS standardized test. As part of a change in their curriculum, they added English 290, a general overview of methods common to English studies as a requirement. The plan is to use a portfolio process that uses one paper from this course and a second paper written for an upper level course. The assessment plan is currently being phased in as part of the curricular change, but when implemented fully should allow for the English faculty to use their expertise to assess student work and improvement. They will also continue to use senior student survey for other indirect measures.

Curriculum Development/General Education:
The AAC notes that the English curriculum has a somewhat unusual structure but that upon hearing the description and reasons from the Chair was confident that it made sense. There are three emphases within the major: Literature, Creative Writing, and English Education (largest). Since the last review, the major change, discussed above, was the addition of English 290, Literary Studies. This theory/methods course was added when it became clear that students wanted this type of course earlier within the curriculum in order to use it at the upper level. The program also created two lower level survey courses in World Literature to address growing interest in literature from cultures other than Great Britain and the United States. The courses have allowed the program to continue to balance the traditional English program vis-à-vis literature from a more diverse perspective. As noted earlier, all of the lower level English classes also meet some form of general education requirement.

In the future English ideally would want to increase its offerings in the World Literature area, particularly at the upper level. This would require an additional faculty member. The program has also been considering participation in a minor in Film Studies. I would support the exploration of these ideas but the program needs to be careful about stretching existing too thinly. Some of the faculty within the English program will be participating in a proposed American Studies emphasis within Humanistic Studies. The previous dean noted in his program concerns about a faculty that is prepping too many distinct courses. The program’s response to this has been that the faculty are more interested (and in fact energized) by the teaching of different subjects. At this point I would support their stance, but caution them to be cognizant of these issues.

In summary, English is a large program that has a good sense of their strengths and direction. The program provides strong support for our general education program and a unique but well defined curriculum for its majors. The faculty are well engaged in their scholarly/creative activities and a number of them serve (or have served) in important leadership roles on campus. The faculty is working on an assessment program that should yield good results in terms of measuring student learning outcomes.

If you would like me to come to a meeting of your faculty to discuss this more, I would be glad to do so.

Cc: Steve Dutch, Academic Affairs Council
    Tim Sewall, Associate Provost