

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST BAY**

Designation Code: **2006-2007 CAPR 11**

Date Submitted: May 10, 2007

TO: Academic Senate

FROM: Committee on Academic Planning and Review (CAPR)

SUBJECT: Five-Year Program Review of the English Degree Programs

PURPOSE: For Action by the Academic Senate

**ACTION**

REQUESTED: Acceptance of the Five-Year Program Review of the English Degree Programs and approval of the continuation of the programs without modification

**1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

• **Overview Description of the Program**

As is common among such departments in universities, the mission of CSUEB's English Department is multi-layered, offering the following degrees and programs: a B.A. major (with five optional patterns), a general minor in English, a special minor in creative writing, Single-Subject-Matter Preparation Program for prospective secondary school English teachers, a disciplinary option within the Liberal Studies major, a general M.A. program, and an M.A. TESOL program (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). In addition to its disciplinary studies in literature and language with various options in literature, language, and creative writing, the department provides writing and composition programs for all students, regardless of discipline. These include critical reading and writing skills, preparation for the writing skills test, writing across the curriculum, developmental writing, writing related to the learning clusters, and close collaboration with the Student Center for Academic Achievement. Faculty to accomplish this include the following official count: 13 FTE tenure-track and probationary faculty (including the department chair) and 15 FTEs of lecturers. The actual numbers for teaching, however, are less, as is described in greater detail in the report.

**2. CAPR Recommendation for Continuation of the Program**

CAPR recommends the continuation of the English degree program without modification. The date of the next Five-Year Review is 2011-12.

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- **Overview Description of the Program**

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- **Overview of the documents submitted to CAPR**

The documents include a preliminary comment from the department chair, an extensive summary of the 2003 review and the department's response to the recommendations of that review, a comparison with other English Departments, the department plan outlined in the 2003 report with accomplishments, the department's objectives for the next five years, the external reviewer's report and the department's response to the recommendations therein, and a series of appendices that contain the following: in-depth reports on assessment, composition, and the MA in TESOL; a library resources report; the external reviewer's curriculum vitae; a selection of the English faculty's publications and presentations; the latest accomplishments of English Department graduate and recently-graduated students; and a series of department statistics.

## **2. FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM REVIEW & SELF-STUDY**

- **Summary of key areas of the 2003 self-study**

This 2007 report is very clear about what was and was not implemented from the 2003 review. A recommendation regarding the administrative structure of the department, for example, was not implemented because faculty shortages made such a recommendation essentially meaningless. The current self-study highlights the many administrative responsibilities assumed by various faculty members, who receive limited or no release time. Eight of the thirteen members of the department are currently serving

in such “important, decision-making positions.” This issue of faculty shortages is a continuous theme extending from pre-2003 through today.

The 2003 study made recommendations regarding scheduling which also proved impossible to implement for reasons of faculty shortages, the complications of juggling student and staff schedules, and classroom availability. There was a clear understanding of the difficulties students face when trying to complete the last course or two of their majors with limited course availability and the recognition of the “ingenuity” advisers display in finding workarounds. The department’s new “bookmark” describing courses and course substitutes (print and e-versions) does help somewhat, but the core problem remains.

The primary concern and recommendation in 2003 was the need for a plan to increase tenure-track faculty to twenty in the intervening five years between these reviews. The department currently has thirteen tenured and probationary faculty plus three faculty on FERP. One of the thirteen is now Chair of Liberal Studies; eight carry administrative responsibilities, and there is the possibility that another tenure-track faculty member may assume a role elsewhere on campus that will require further release time. It was noted that for the last four years, CLASS has been awarding tenure lines for “critical need” only and also on the basis of substitution. In other words, if a tenure-track position was granted, an equivalent number of lecturer lines would be forfeit. While tenure track positions are important to program development, if English had received any positions, the subsequent loss of lecturer positions would be impossible to absorb while retaining both discipline specific courses and composition courses. The department is managing, but has laid aside “dreams of new initiatives” until the budget improves, which later in the report is suggested to be unlikely.

Other recommendations from 2003 have been implemented or not, depending on resources, philosophical beliefs of department members, or the practicalities of this particular campus. Major new initiatives, e.g., creating a full-blown technical and professional writing minor, have been desired, but put on hold.

The resulting department plan and implementation from these recommendations include the following key changes: the addition of a senior seminar (the “capstone” course) to the core requirements of the major; the addition of a popular beginning workshop in poetry, required with its counterpart course in fiction; a new technical writing course (in lieu of a complete program); more integration of literary theory throughout the major courses (an outcome of the assessment plan); and increased public presence for the creative writing program through grants for two prizes and a distinguished writers series, plus readings and slams. Many other items are on hold.

- **Department Objectives for the Next Five Years**

In light of the former Dean of CLASS’ perspective on the provision of tenure-track faculty, the department deferred the idea of asking for new tenure-track positions, even to replace the creative writing professor who has chosen to FERP. They are

challenged just to maintain their expert staff of composition lecturers and their very successful graduate teaching associate program in light of ongoing cuts that must come from non-tenured faculty.

As a result, their objectives for the next five years are modest. Some objectives include: continued discussion of possible revisions to the major, minor, and graduate programs; elimination of the daytime major courses at Concord and the consolidation of their major in the evenings through a two-year rotating cycle of required courses; additions to their list of lower-division and upper-division courses certified for general education credit; continued design of a new version of the Single Subject Matter Preparation Program for prospective secondary-school teachers to replace the current program, which will be retired in 2009; re-design of undergraduate and graduate advisement; review of undergraduate courses for consolidation and streamlining; work with University Advisement to develop a reliable alumni list for purposes of feedback in assessment, publicity, and fund-raising; and an examination of the possibility of reviving the Graduate Writing Associates program and integrating that program with the freshman clusters program. [NOTE: Since this report, CAPR has learned that temporary funding will permit the GWA to be renewed temporarily.]

- **External Reviewer's Report**

The external reviewer's "general impression was of a well-run, well-organized department stretched very thin due to lack of resources." He had praise for the richness of the program and its offerings, making minor recommendations to help the department adjust its already-solid program. He further praised the faculty for their enthusiasm, engagement, concern for students, general approach to key areas such as TESOL, Composition, Writing Across the Curriculum, Assessment, and their willingness to take on many duties without release time or recompense. The reviewer's concerns, as was true of the previous review, basically focused, once again, on resource shortages (budget and faculty). He noted that most recommendations concern problems due primarily to this lack of resources, and that, while this is the general situation across the CSUs, this campus' department is stretched even thinner than most.

- **Reviewer Recommendations and Department Response**

1. The department needs to hire more faculty to address the concern that not enough courses are offered, extending students' time to degree. To quote the reviewer, "13 full time faculty are simply not enough to implement a program of this size."

Response: The department responded at length to this recommendation, indicating that under normal circumstances, a request for *four* tenure-track positions would be reasonable. Following that, there was an explanation of the complications of balancing tenure-track positions with lecturers who teach numerous composition courses, and the former CLASS requirement that there be substitution for rather than an increase in positions. Because of its unique nature, this department cannot afford to secure tenure-track positions at the expense of much-needed lecturers. Also expressed was an awareness of the needs of other departments, and a subsequent reluctance to call the need of the English department "critical." A "positive" in the

report describes is to wait for a retirement in the next year or so in order to hire a new tenure-track position without losing badly-needed lecturers. The department looks to this position to provide some flexibility for change.

2. The reviewer suggested scheduling major courses at least two years in advance to enable students to plan based on knowing when required courses would be taught.

Response: The department intends to address this issue coincident with an upper administration requirement that a full annual schedule be established well in advance of the new academic year.

3. The reviewer recommended streamlining course offerings, with a recognition that with the current faculty complement, this would be difficult to implement.

Response: The challenges to this recommendation include: the quarter rather semester system; and the constraints of the department's particular situation. For example, there is an annual gift for two courses in Dante, a course in Petrarch and Boccaccio, making consolidation in that area difficult. Beyond that, the department intends to consider "prudent culling," particularly in light of the continuous attrition in the department that they believe is unlikely to reverse in any significant way.

4. The reviewer suggested modifying the required courses in the "New Voices" option in the major. Enrollment is low, partly due to the confusion between Black Literature I and II. An idea is to reduce the core to one African-American course and offer other ethnic literature options.

Response: The department is grateful for the reviewer's insightful suggestions as they move to clarify the nature and structure of this option.

5. The reviewer recommended that the university direct additional resources into the cluster program. The reviewer saw this program as exemplary, but "fallen on hard times." In the department, he suggested creating opportunities for collaboration between the composition and the discipline faculty. Tenure-track faculty should be encouraged to include cluster participation in their PTR materials and more advantage should be taken of faculty development and writing across the curriculum activities inherent in the learning communities program.

Response: Although the provision of support to the cluster program is outside the department's capability, the faculty is in agreement with the reviewer's recommendation that the clusters program be supported and strengthened. In addition, the faculty will consider the suggestions to improve the intersection of the writing courses in the clusters with the content courses and to determine how to use the Writing Across the Curriculum program to help improve the success of the clusters program.

6. The reviewer recommended that the Graduate Writing Associate program be restored.

Response: The department is grateful for the suggestion of using Graduate Writing Associates, once trained, in the content courses of the freshman clusters program.

[NOTE: As was mentioned above, it has since been learned that the program is funded at least temporarily.]

7. The reviewer recommended that lecturers be permitted to elect a representative to attend departmental meetings to improve communication and a sense of departmental involvement.

Response: The department will implement this in the coming year.

- **Comparison to Other CSU and similar Universities**

These include a comparison to the B.A. major programs at the following institutions: San Francisco State University; University of California, Davis; Sonoma State University; San Jose State University; Oregon State University; Eastern Illinois University. Three are nearby and, to some extent, competition. Some CSUEB graduates have gone to U.C., Davis for doctoral work. The last two are out-of-state institutions of a size and/or status somewhat similar to CSUEB. The most obvious difference in CSUEB's program is the continued inclusion of a foreign language requirement, a condition that has been discussed in depth by faculty and purposely retained.

- **Supporting Data**

The required data tables are supplied in the review. The tables referenced in the discussion at the CAPR meeting were the English Program Enrollments (included in the self-review), plus two additional tables: the faculty, their course load, and their release time (as applicable); and the number of classes taught by which type of faculty (tenure-track, lecturers, etc.). As will be seen in the enrollments table, total FTE enrollments are slightly diminished, with particular decline in the writing skills composition at the 3000 level. Much of this change is outside the department's control, being dependent on program and policy shifts in liberal studies, teacher education, etc. As was noted in the external reviewer's report (p. 40), the number of graduate degrees awarded is rising as a percentage of total English degrees during the past five years and these percentages are above the system average for each year.

- **Other Supplemental Reports**

There are separate reports of note. As the external reviewer mentioned, the Assessment Program is particularly notable, with three variant measures to assess the effectiveness of the department's offerings. A detailed description is given on p. 52-62. Assessment addresses critical thinking skills, research-based writing, knowledge of critical theory, and an ability to use MLA writing guidelines. Outcomes and the use of data to improve the English major are discussed in detail. The cycle of process, results, and improvement is clearly in place.

The success of the Composition Program is highlighted by continuous review, extensive communication (both inside the department and with writing programs throughout the country), and the efforts to create stability and collegiality among a

diverse group of more than 30 Graduate Teaching Associates and Lecturers. While the program continues to be successful, there are elements of it that are under strain due to budget. The condition of the cluster program (manifested by lower scores on the WST) was discussed above. There is also a rising cap in the developmental courses from 12-15 up into the high teens or low twenties, threatening the individual attention these students need for their success. From 1995-2004, Writing Across the Curriculum evolved into a very successful program; however, it was suspended in 2004-2005 for fiscal reasons. The report does not discuss the temporary re-instatement of this program (presumably unknown at the time of writing), but it is a successful and important program that needs to be funded on a less tenuous basis. Also discussed in this report are the Mentor program, the Faculty Development program, the compfac listserv, the assessment process for program instructors, and outreach. Other information related to this program includes the Articulated Assumptions for the Intensive Learning Experience for Basic Writers program, and the Evaluation form for lecturers and graduate teaching associates.

The M.A. TESOL program serves a diverse student group, native- and non-native speaking, with varied teaching experience, even ranging in age from twenty-two to seventy! The program is organized around a cohort system and includes teaching apprenticeship activities. Students also engage in professional development activities. Surveys indicate that graduates are successful in finding employment. The M.A. TESOL coordinator works closely with the various composition coordinators and also conducts quarterly observations of TAs. Efforts to recruit qualified applicants are being increased and the course offerings are being reviewed with the intent of addressing “gaps.”

The library report addresses the small size of the budget for information resources, a condition that has been in effect for several years and is manifesting itself in an aging collection. With the growing need for media resources and electronic formats, which cost more, the situation is growing more critical. While some compensation is available through consortial borrowing and interlibrary loan, the balance is tipping. Services are provided to the department through the library’s liaison program and information literacy courses.

Finally, there are reports that provide the curriculum vitae of the external reviewer and an impressive list of faculty and graduate student publications, presentations, and accomplishments.

### **3. CAPR COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The self-study is to be commended for its depth of content; its readability (what else would one expect from an English faculty!); and its thoughtfulness, particularly in its inclusion of ongoing questions as well as reflective discussion. The department clearly spends time in lengthy consideration of the various issues it faces.

That said, it is also clear that the department has resigned itself to its current situation. Much “waits” for budget constraints to be addressed. The 2003

recommendation that faculty be hired was not only not implemented, but the numbers of faculty diminished between then and this review. Now, the recommendation has again been made, this time by a different external reviewer. As a result, it was the primary discussion point at the in-person review held during the CAPR meeting of March 15, 2007.

The department's collegial recognition that other programs have critical needs does not diminish the needs of the English department. It is clear that they require both an increase in their lecturer complement and in tenure-track faculty. In the March 15 discussion, the department chair indicated that one of his biggest concerns was the retention of essential lecturers and the ability to cope with a growing first-year student population. Unlike most other departments, this department serves the entire campus through teaching fundamental reading, writing, and composition skills and providing students in all disciplines with a foundation for their work. Ensuring that this foundational work is appropriately supported is important not only to all students, but also to other departments and their faculty.

CAPR, therefore, recommends:

1. That the department request and be given two 1.0 lecturer positions, starting in 2007-2008 to address concerns regarding the increase in the number of writing students in first-year classes and the growing size of classes that require significant individual attention.
2. That the Writing Across the Curriculum program be given a more stable financial footing, rather than being suspended, then funded on a temporary and tenuous basis, thereby essentially functioning in limbo.
3. That the department be encouraged to manage the majors and the programs so that tenure-track lines are justifiable and indicate its needs to the dean and administration, regardless of other departments' situations. This will enable an equal consideration of all needs and ensure that the department's needs are noted and considered as part of the overall planning in CLASS and the university.

### **CAPR Recommendation for Continuation of the Program**

CAPR recommends the continuation of the English degree program without modification. The date of the next Five-Year Review is 2011-12.