

September 9, 2009

To: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean, The Graduate School  
Ana Mari Cauce, Dean College of Arts and Science  
Edward Taylor, Dean and Vice Provost, Office of Undergraduate Education  
James Antony, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, The Graduate School  
Robert Stacey, Divisional Dean of the Humanities, College of Arts and Science  
Cc: David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School  
Douglas Wadden, Executive Vice Provost, Office of the Provost

From: Ad Hoc Review Committee for the Department of English  
Stephen J. Majeski, Professor, UW Political Science (Chair)  
Ronald Carlson, Professor, Department of English, University of California,  
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Julie Ellison, Professor, Department of English, University of Michigan  
Anthony Geist, Professor UW Spanish and Portuguese Studies  
Douglas Hesse, Professor, Department of English, University of Denver  
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Re: **REVISED** Final Report on the Department of English

## **Background**

The English Review Committee (denoted the Committee from this point forward) was formally constituted by Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Gerald Baldasty on December 3, 2008. Members of the Committee were provided copies of the Department self-study and other materials relevant to the review. The Committee met (a number were “present” via telephone) with representatives of the University for the English Charge Review meeting December 3, 2008. University representatives included Robert Stacey from the College of Arts and Sciences, James Anthony from the Graduate School, Ed Taylor from the Office of Undergraduate Education, and Professor Gary Handwerk, Chair of The Department of English, who was present for part of the meeting. The English Department is very large with many relevant constituencies, making it impossible to meet with all in the two day site visit. Therefore, the internal members of the Committee met with a number of faculty and staff across the unit [see Appendix A for

a list of meeting participants] in three sessions [January 12-16, 2009] prior to the site visit.

The site visit occurred on January 22-23, 2009. The site visit schedule which includes information about whom the Committee met with can be found in Appendix B. The whole Committee met in a working dinner session on the evening of January 21st. The Committee met with faculty, graduate students, staff, and undergraduate students of the Department of English from 8:30-5:15 on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, had a working dinner on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and continued meetings on the 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9-12:15. Following a working lunch, the Committee met in executive session from 1:30-3 and formed its preliminary findings. The Committee held its exit interview with University and departmental representatives from 3-4 and then continued the exit interview without departmental representatives from 4-4:30. The report that follows contains the Committee's collective and unanimous assessment of the Department of English and our recommendations to strengthen an academic unit that is already very good in the areas of teaching and learning, research, and service.

### **Overall Assessment**

It is no accident that the Committee report begins with the theme of collective effort--work. The most important words in the mission statement of the Department of English at the University of Washington are "together, we seek." These three words convey the tone of the Department's achievements over the last five years and the palpable change of tone that is both a cause and an effect of those achievements.

The difference between the experience of the 2008-2009 Review Committee and that of the 2002 Review Committee is palpable. The two reasons for the positive changes that we observed are not hard to find: first, significant investment in faculty salaries by the College aimed at countering endemic morale and retention problems and, second, impressive bootstrapping and self-organizing by the Department itself. This is a department that has learned how to tackle issues of the utmost intellectual and practical consequence and to move through well-organized deliberation to thoughtful action.

It felt to the Review Committee as though a genuine shift in departmental culture is in the works--and we stress the word "works." The labor of process and policy, driven at every stage by rigorous self-examination through strategies like "the grid," generates clarity *within* programs and interest groups and, most crucially, generates a functioning republic *of* programs and interest groups. We commend the Department on its collective achievement to date, acknowledging also the critical importance of strategic support from the College. Even given the present budget crisis, we cannot stress enough the urgency of remaining committed to the departmental project as a vital, ongoing labor of organizational change, discursive creativity, and professional citizenship.

The External Committee commends the Department for the quality of the self-study process, even though, perhaps tellingly, the report's conclusion was sent as an addendum in January 2009. The Self Study, in 2005-2006, became "a process of departmental self-

reflection on our intellectual and institutional identity," and the process was at least as important as the report itself. A Working Group appointed by the Executive Committee undertook "a project of self-description [that] aimed to recognize and articulate our interdependencies without imposing any overly homogenized or exclusionary concept of the Department." The group developed a "collective heuristic" known as the GRID, a 3x3 table that mapped creation, analysis, and instruction by objects, methods, and contexts. The intention of the GRID was to enable faculty to "recognize affinities." According to the Department Self-Study, it "increased the visibility" of familiar commonalities and "uncovered others." To a certain extent we agree with this assessment and urge the department to continue working in this direction.

The Department is still negotiating part/whole relationships, however. This is particularly true of perceptions surrounding the strong cohort of faculty in literature and culture. The language of "othering" persists. We heard faculty in language, rhetoric, and composition refer to their sense of being "other" relative to the literature and culture cohort. We also heard faculty in literature and culture refer to themselves as "other." "Other" takes on two different meanings. One meaning of "other" refers to being marginalized in forming the intellectual identity of the Department, especially through the graduate admissions process. Another meaning of "other" refers to the internal coherence and esprit de corps of intellectual cohorts and degree programs. Thus, while the literature and culture hiring plan is an excellent strategic document, the comprehensive forward-looking "Language and Rhetoric Program Development Plan" is an exemplary model arising from an unusual degree of group effectiveness. The Literature and Culture cohort might move ahead in a similar direction.

In the sections of this report that follow, we will look at the different domains in which the work of the Department and its efforts at change have taken place: the major clusters of scholarship and creative work, governance, public engagement, diversity, the graduate and undergraduate degree programs, and the various writing programs,. Here, at the beginning, we want to emphasize the way in which successful bootstrapping leading to consensus decisions has occurred across almost all of these domains, though with inconsistent results. The Department has been able to move--at times simultaneously, at times sequentially--to effect changes in multiple domains, such as:

- governance (executive committee membership and terms of service, new by-laws, consistent and more frequent meetings, changed relationships between the chair and the program directors, the additional office of associate chair);
- curriculum (a new undergraduate curriculum and ongoing investment in shaping and assessing key undergraduate courses, such as English 202 and 302); and
- Planning for faculty growth in Literature and Culture, Creative Writing, and Language and Rhetoric, grounded in "the grid," a productive mapping exercise that illuminated "transversals." Several areas of current or potential scholarly strength were identified around which intellectual collaborations can form).

The fact that progress is evident across these domains and across program and interest areas is powerful evidence of strong leadership. Gary Handwerk's collegial, consultative, yet decisive leadership as chair has been remarkable. He is the single most important driver of the Department's turnaround and he deserves continued College support.

### *Recommendation*

*Based on the self-study and on what we saw and heard during our campus visit, the Review Committee is unanimous in recommending that the next external review of this department take place in 2018, restoring the standard ten-year interval.*

### **Intellectual Character and Community**

The Department presents a unique and interesting profile. Gary Handwerk's characterization of the Department, as articulated to the External Committee, is a good place to start: "We focus on language with a kind of intensity in its concrete materiality from many different directions--individual words in writing, innovative speakers, close reading, historical documents, and deep cultural contexts... Our linguistic sensitivity really is different from people in other areas.... It is the common thread." We have more to say about the importance of common threads below.

One faculty member noted that "English Studies is tending in many directions" and that "the center will cool as the margins become more interesting." This is a valid point. The interdisciplinary intersections, or "margins", are crucial to the current intellectual liveliness of the Department and are even more important to its future vitality. We hasten to say that these are not all "marginal." Innovation and interdisciplinary 'edges,' furthermore, are not just to be found in areas perceived as "new." This overall situation is true, we believe, of English departments everywhere. The challenge for the University of Washington English Department is to discover, build, and convincingly articulate the particular strengths and priorities of this department. The quest for a "center" may well yield to a more "federated" model energized by "attractive force of interests" (still quoting the same faculty member). But this means that the Department more than ever, needs to specify the finite set of interests that carries the most "attractive force" here, to foster these interests in intentional ways, and to make the Department's particular emphases clear to students and faculty alike.

The Department's mission statement should work as a statement of intellectual strengths and to some extent it does. The mission statement should build on its lively beginning to encourage boldness through a well-articulated statement that tells a coherent story about the Department. Even as the Committee apologizes for trotting out the hackneyed "tell your story" advice, we believe that the labor of finding, and telling, that story will be a productive continuation of the non-stop self-study process of recent years.

Thus the Committee encourages a more powerful 'naming and claiming' of intellectual transversals. First, this department has exceptional strength in textual studies, and we encourage the development of projects in this area. This will only add to the existing

transversals that link writing, language, rhetoric, and literature and culture. Second, this is a department with the capacity to be historically rigorous from soup to nuts. With its strength in the history of the language, its commitment to sustaining and studying "sponsors of literacy" as these are socially experienced over time, and its distinction in literary and cultural history (and the critique thereof), the Department stands out as having the potential to be historical in a particular and different way.

Clearly central to the Department, to the field, and to the humanities at large are the performative, institutional, aesthetic, and political effects of colonialism/postcolonialism, empire, structural racism and the "intersectional" formation of the racialized, gendered, and ethnic subject. Faculty in literature and culture are particularly focused on these issues, but these topics offer intriguing potential intersections between cultural studies and rhetorical studies (for example) or between the history of print culture and the politics of language instruction, or within the fluid dynamics of new communities of writing (including digital communities) both locally and globally considered.

Finally, we think that this is, with some exceptions, an exceptionally engaged department. More focused attention to strengthening and validating the network of the faculty and graduate students who pursue some form of socially committed scholarship--public scholarship—could foster an initiative on local and translocal studies, or something similar. The growing prominence of ethnographic methodologies and critical discourse analysis in a number of different domains might be a way of connecting community-engaged people through practice and method. Interest in the natural and material world, including environmental studies, ecocriticism, and the intersection of poetic and scientific ways of knowing, could tie other areas of the Department together, again, emphasizing the importance of engagement in place and region. These suggestions are quite speculative. But we hope that they will stimulate productive networking and coherent 'theming.'

### **Departmental Climate and Social Structure**

Although there is evidence that departmental climate has improved in the last six years, it is clear that the Department is still working through inter-area tensions. These are presently manifest in a lack of clarity about the Department's intellectual "center," about whether there should be a center or some other kind of organizational model (e.g., a federation of programs), and who should have the power to decide the intellectual directions the Department takes (in hiring, publicity, etc.). Some faculty affirmed that the uniqueness of the Department lies in being "rigorously invested in exploring a diversity of methodologies," while others found it deeply disheartening that the Department did not appear to have a center. Among those in this latter group were faculty who felt that "literature and culture [are and should be] at the heart of the Department." Addressing this issue appears of paramount importance to improving and sustaining the health of the Department.

This question, "where is the center?" is not unique to this department. Scholars of the literary humanities everywhere are debating the nature, status, and future of a profession

that continues to be under duress, not least because the forms of literacy, the literary, and cultural reproduction are changing so rapidly. Literary and cultural history are more vital than ever to understanding the economies and institutions of language. Dealing with these issues is not easy anywhere. The College needs to understand that the Department, especially in the area of literature and culture, is experiencing systemic challenges and broader paradigm shifts common to the discipline. At the same time, faculty in literature and culture may find that this is an opportune moment to join forces with colleagues in Rhetoric and Language in order to pursue both intellectual questions and policy questions, such as those raised by the MLA task force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion, which challenged the normativity of the monograph and made space for more diverse forms of scholarly production in, for example, the digital humanities.

The Committee paid particular attention to the articulation of the subunits in terms of several central functions of the Department: undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, service teaching, and governance. The picture emerging from the site visits is that of a department structure that resembles a social network of differentially interconnected units. The Committee noted several of the resulting perceptions, emerging from interviews and data provided in the 2002 Self Study. These perceptions are offered here in order to demonstrate that the disparities in interconnection of subunits are not obvious. Considering these disparities might provide additional clarity as the Department crafts a plan for advancing in its vision. First, it is clear that all intellectual arms of the Department connect in some way with each of the core functions. However, there are significant differences in where the intellectual areas are situated relative to these functions.

The Creative Writing and Literature and Culture faculty appeared to be situated closer to the perceived intellectual heart of the Department, and to administration (in terms of consistent, ongoing representation on the executive committee). The Literature and Culture faculty struck us as deeply identified with upper level undergraduate teaching and with graduate teaching, less so with pedagogy aimed at non-majors or entering students.

The Literature and Culture faculty--an impressive group both individually and collectively--tended to repeat the message, "we're not really a group unlike those other programs like Creative Writing and Language and Rhetoric." We heard language such as "really miscellaneous....not a field; it doesn't have the specificity." Faculty in this group, reiterating the Department's sense of itself as a whole, described themselves as "an example of methodological diversity." "We are more rigorously invested in our difference," one faculty member commented, than in our similarities. We debate "visions for the future for literary and cultural study as a profession." Well, the Committee thought, why shouldn't Literature and Culture think of itself as a "group" or "field"? Literature and culture's thoroughly persuasive hiring plan could be the beginning of a program development document such as the one Language and Rhetoric produced. Among other things, such narratives as 'we are miscellaneous' can block the cohort's potential to arrive at firm, clear mentoring in the MA and PhD programs, complete with a graduate handbook with policies geared to degree completion that everybody buys into.

Language and Rhetoric offers a process model that arises from a sense of shared intellectual excitement that translates clearly and coherently into research, teaching and advising--all of which is very good for student morale.

The Committee noted that these units tended to most favor the idea of sub disciplinary autonomy in departmental organization and governance. The faculty that most frequently articulated concerns about representation in voting were from among the Language and Rhetoric and IWP. The Expository Writing Program (EWP) is perceived by many to be positioned closer to the service teaching, undergraduate and graduate teaching functions of the Department (as a function of carrying a disproportionately heavy burden in lower level undergraduate teaching), and sits more distantly from the administrative functions of the Department. The Interdisciplinary Writing Program (IWP) is also closely situated in relations to these departmental functions. It was repeatedly noted that these units are “under the radar” of the Department at large—many of their programs and projects were unfamiliar to members of other sub disciplines. Similarly, the MATESOL program appeared to be situated more closely to the administrative, undergraduate/graduate and service teaching functions of the Department, than to the perceived intellectual center in terms of knowledge production. We noted, however, that there is a high level of student satisfaction with the internal organization of the MATESOL program, and that advances in compilation of a graduate handbook for students in the MATESOL program are likely to feed back into the larger department efforts for writing a graduate handbook. The faculty that most frequently articulated concerns about representation in voting were from among the Language and Rhetoric and IWP.

In the Committee’s view, the intellectual work of some scholars--most notably those in language and Rhetoric, EWP, CWP and IWP--is undervalued: they are valued for their citizenship within the unit, as well as for their labor in service teaching, but their scholarship was not typically described in summaries of the intellectual products of the Department. This was evident in worries regarding the national rankings of the Department. For example, the view was articulated that the Department’s position in the NRC rankings, which may result in an inability to compete for strong student applicants, is likely due in part to the fact that “40% of faculty are occupied with activities other than research. Writing, Rhetoric and Composition absorb much department time because this is service and applied work, and won’t look strong (i.e. count) in the NRC rankings.” Nor does there appear to be clear mentoring regarding the publication and dissemination of this scholarship in ways that support professional advancement (i.e. promotion).

Thus, one challenge facing the Department moving forward appears to be how to valorize the scholarship of faculty engaged in socially responsive projects and in pedagogy (e.g., Rhetoric and Composition, Writing Across the Disciplines). The ongoing efforts to create policy and staff positions responding to the Provost’s initiative regarding language learners may provide one example. At present, there is one composition course (taught by a PhD student) linked to a course in Educational Outreach, with a plan to supplement with a third position focused on institutional leadership and research that might enable connections between second language pedagogy, race, and globalization studies. Scholarly research would be at the center of this enterprise.

The Committee noted that it may prove unrealistic to expect that all faculty develop a high level of familiarity with the research of colleagues in other intellectual areas. However, there are clearly gains to be made in improving the valorization of “nontraditional” research areas so these may become more salient in the Department’s self-characterization and foregrounded in the vision of itself that the Department conveys to the College, University and peer institutions. This disparity has had impacts on the promotion of non-literature faculty, on faculty retention at the associate professor level, and on graduate student morale. A second challenge relates to what some faculty characterized as a still-simmering tension between theoretical fields and historical periods. Some faculty considered this the biggest leadership issue facing the Department: that a vision, clarified and communicated from the highest levels of department administration, needs to take root; a vision in which these intellectual areas are not competing but foregrounded as part of a coherent set of strengths that characterize the Department. The Review Committee agrees that this is one of the biggest challenges facing the Department, but one it is capable of meeting.

### *Recommendation*

*Overall, there appears to be strong, mutual investment in maintaining the Department’s existing units (as opposed to spinning off certain programs, for example) and in figuring out where to allow for autonomy. We strongly support this view.*

### **Public Spheres: A Departmental Commons, Public Scholarship, Engagement, and Outreach**

We asked ourselves, “where is the intellectual public sphere, or commons, or crossroads, of the Department?” New learning communities within the Department provide clear evidence of healthy activity related to reaching across sub disciplines. Models for interdisciplinary collaborations include the “Modern Girl” project, environmental studies, critical race studies, and the early modern research groups.

We note the vital role that the Simpson Center for the Humanities, under the leadership of Professor Kathleen Woodward, has played in fostering these undertakings. The Center, indeed, has provided an intellectual public sphere for the Department. It has provided material resources, physical space, and an array of imaginative programs that support individual and group enterprise across all academic generations (faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates). The Center is at the forefront, too, of a dozen humanities institutes around the country that are defining and supporting public scholarship, seeding campus-community cultural projects, and advancing the digital humanities and translocal/global networks. The annual Public Humanities Institute for graduate students is a nationally influential example of the Simpson Center's innovative approach. (A Public Humanities Institute for faculty would be a great idea too.)

As terrific as the Simpson Center is, however, the Department should not delegate the work of the intellectual commons entirely to it. The Department needs its own intellectual public life. The Self-Study process may point the way here. The GRID map revealed



intellectual transversals that generated the hiring plans, but the same transversals can generate other activities as well. Taking on the relationship between the research mission and the pedagogical mission could be a productive challenge. Linkages between creative writing and literature faculty appear to constitute another such positive intradepartmental relation. The new gateway course (ENGL 202) provides a third example.

The Department has an impressive public and community presence, and this civic temper appears 'across the mission': in pedagogy, scholarship and creative work, outreach, and development and fund-raising. A number of graduate students have participated in the Simpson Center's annual Public Humanities Institutes and faculty have connected with other campus-community programs based at the Center. The High School Program of the EWP and the Department's relationship to the Puget Sound Writing Project (a National Writing Project site) are just two of several programs that involve relationships with K-12 schools. Almost 350 students in English 121 alone are involved in community service learning activities. The Department has deftly used fundraising and the Newsletter to build relationships with alumni/ae in the region.

### *Recommendation*

*Given the quality and quantity of engagement, the Department of English might want to identify this as a defining attribute. The UW Department of Communication, which, on its web site, has a page devoted to "Public Scholarship in the Department of Communication," including a "Faculty Statement on Public Scholarship." The Department of English may want to consider following this lead.*

### **Governance**

One key charge given to this Committee was attention to issues related to departmental governance. The External Committee was posed the following question: Is this Department governable? Our answer is, yes.

We noted that a series of changes in Department policy and administration were instituted after the 2002-3 review, including:

- Revision of departmental bylaws and voting procedures
- Clarification of committee roles and responsibilities, lines of authority and responsibility for departmental administrators
- Establishment of clear protocols regarding regular assessment of department programming
- Establishment of the associate chair position
- Institution of two-year terms for Executive Committee members
- Faculty retreats

The most deeply perceived improvements in governance have been attributed to the effectiveness of the current chair, Gary Handwerk. He is to be congratulated for his

exceptional leadership. Establishment of the associate chair position, currently occupied by Professor Silberstein, has brought improved departmental recordkeeping, which has increased transparency of department policy and yielded improvements in documentation of decision-making processes and institutional memory. Additional improvements in leadership are attributed to recent senior hires, as new faculty have stepped into administrative roles and brought healthy diversification in field representation. Also important have been the development funds generated by the departmental endowments, the intellectual and monetary support of the Simpson Center for the Humanities, and two unit adjustments which reduced the disparity between the salaries of UW English faculty and those of similar rank in peer institutions.

The Review Committee noted areas where governance needs continued attention. The voting guidelines, while enabling greater representation of the various intellectual streams of the Department, are not broadly perceived by faculty to ensure equal representation on the executive committee. Several faculty put forward suggestions intended to improve representation, including: 1) allow for faculty members representing each intellectual area to sit on executive committee, 2) disallow after-the-fact absentee voting, 3) consider introducing negative consequences for non-attendance at faculty meetings in which votes take place. Attendance at faculty retreats and faculty meetings continues to be at lower levels than desired. Faculty engagement and participation in the civic activities of the Department remains crucial. It is the External Committee's view, however, that the Department cannot simply legislate its way to governance by specifying program representation on key committees. It cannot legislate a sense of complementary but distinct strengths.

### *Recommendation*

*We recommend that representativeness be mandated without strict percentages or by-laws, but rather as a principle of governance (that is, faculty from all major areas of the Department shall be represented on the Executive Committee). There are no shortcuts. The Department needs to keep looking into how to do the work of representativeness day by day. Our one exception to this recommendation--the graduate admissions process--follows.*

### **Graduate Admissions**

Program areas (creative writing, literature and culture, MATESOL, and Rhetoric and Composition) should be represented on the graduate admissions committee and in its labors. The Committee discussed two possible approaches; there may be more. One option would be for the admissions committee as presently constituted to have a first pass at screening applicants and then to send the short list to faculty in specific program areas for review. It is important, with this model, for the admissions committee members to be aware that people in a particular subfield might tend to float to the top because they would get more votes if there is an area bias on the admissions committee. Another option would be simply to extend the current model. Since MATESOL and Creative Writing already handle their own admissions, Rhet/Comp could have the same autonomy.

A process of identifying best candidates in all areas is important. There should be a group looking at the whole pool for balance, strength, diversity, and cross-connections, but areas should have a say in their own selections. Students would specify area(s) of interest. Files could be read by more than one group for students with interest in more than one area.

## **Hiring**

The perception persists that the Department suffers from the 'farm team' problem of having excellent assistant or associate professors 'stolen' by private universities. It was the Committee's impression that, at present, this very real effect of structural differentials in American higher education was not afflicting the department too disproportionately, unlike in past years. At the same time, losing these faculty continues to be a real concern, and the College and University need to address it. Salary matters here but so do other things. Talented, multiplex people are going to get worn down, as lots of service, done well, leads to lots of service. The mentoring burden on faculty of color, especially at the associate professor rank, is overwhelming.

This Department does really well in hiring, empowering, and tenuring assistant professors. (It is a minor point, but an important one: faculty should *not* be listed according to rank on the department's web page, but rather alphabetically, by program, and/or by research interests.) Recent corrective salary adjustments by the College, over three years, have made retention of associate and full professors more feasible, and the Department has continued to recruit and promote terrific junior faculty.

Because a great deal of departmental momentum was built on reaching consensus around future hiring, Handwerk believes resuming the hiring plan will be critical to continuing to build cohesiveness around a departmental vision, solidifying links between diverse intellectual interests, and building faculty morale. The External Committee concurs that the Department's approach to hiring was highly effective and that the outcome--the plans for future hiring--was very good. This demonstrated that the department functions and can find common ground. This should be rewarded by the College with the earliest possible support for hiring in key positions.

The Committee further recognizes and supports the Department's efforts to promote associate professors who have been in that rank for a long time to full professor. A focused effort has resulted in a number of promotions to full professor. This effort should continue. Finally, there is the issue of training future Department leadership. The Department should take a close look at how it undertakes leadership development in ways that build continuity in direction. When the present chair steps down, he will need to be replaced by someone equipped to continue the gains of the past six years.

## *Recommendations*

*While we strongly endorse the Department's hiring plan, we believe that the Department may need to look at those plans again when hiring resumes at the University. It would be*

*a mistake to be too firmly wedded to them in every detail; we recommend keeping some flexibility in the process.*

*We also recommend that the Department not concentrate on reconstituting the 'lost generation' of associate professors and hire instead at the mid-assistant professor level. This will move new hires into the tenured ranks more quickly and ensure good teaching and evidence of scholarly productivity. We further recommend that the department focus and build on its strengths in emergent areas and in targeted areas in earlier historical periods, instead of being driven by coverage of traditional areas.*

### **Work Load/ Teaching Equity**

The distribution of workload and the equity of teaching load remains a significant issue in the Department. In the 2002 Ten Year Review faculty teaching load and course release was singled out as a problem. At that time the chair relied heavily on course releases to compensate for unusually heavy administrative work or PhD committee service, as well as part of negotiated counteroffers. The report at that time urged the Department to find other means of compensation, such as summer salary.

Most recent data show that the Department still relies on course releases though to a significantly lesser degree. The figures for 2007-08, for instance, show that the 50 tenure track faculty on duty taught an average of 3.2 courses (averages for Assistant and Associate Professors is 3.0 and Full Professors 3.4). The normative teaching load in the English Department is four courses per faculty per year (as compared to the normative load of five in all other Humanities departments at the University of Washington).

The average enrollment per course taught, including graduate courses, is 23.4. The range in average enrollment per course across the faculty is a low of 7.75 students per class to a high of 88.5. The median is 18.5. These figures seem reasonable for a Humanities department, given the wide range from large undergraduate lecture classes to graduate seminars. However, this is a one year snapshot and one would expect that the number of students taught per course by faculty would be more equitable over say a five year period. It is worth noting that 12 faculty taught two graduate seminars each, while nine taught no seminars. Finally, over the last five years, the Department typically offered nearly 60 graduate seminars per year. Additionally, nearly all 200 level instruction is delegated to graduate teaching assistants.

### *Recommendation*

*Given impending budget cuts and lingering issues of morale around teaching equity, the Committee recommends the Department articulate a clear and transparent policy on work load that will rationalize existing and future teaching loads across the three distinct units (Literature-Cultural Studies, Writing Programs, and English Language Programs), across ranks, and across the curriculum. In our judgment this will achieve a fairer distribution and may well allow the Department to meet its teaching commitment.*

## **Diversity**

A great deal of the Self Study, including a good deal of the discussion of the burning issue of the recruitment and retention of faculty, deals with diversity issues. The Department is to be commended for taking the issue of diversity seriously and making real progress both in diversifying its faculty and creating a more diverse curriculum.

The Department of English currently serves students from underrepresented backgrounds at similar levels to those reported college-wide (30%). Section XIII of the Self Study prioritizes seeking college-wide collaborations to increase enrollments and improve retention. The most important issue pertaining to diversity relates to a clear imbalance in mentoring of graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. Minority faculty in the Department legitimately feel that they bear the entire burden of serving students from underrepresented backgrounds. This problem is not unique to this department, and may in some instances be an understandable consequence of overlap in faculty and student interests. Nonetheless, the Department has identified the goal of increasing shared investment in the diversity mission of the Department. Second, concerns regarding diversity were also expressed regarding the intellectual coverage of the Department. The Department has lost high-profile faculty in African-American studies, and seeks replacements in this important area.

### *Recommendation*

*The Committee concurs that a scholar in African-American Studies is a top-priority hire.*

## **Staff**

The staff is terrific; staff members should be recognized and rewarded. Together, under the leadership of Susan Williams, they have built a culture of professionalism, strong inter- and intra-unit communications, and mutual support. The Department chair and other faculty administrators are the beneficiaries of this staff culture. Sustaining it is an important component in attracting effective chairs and associate chairs in the future. Don't take them for granted. The External Committee agreed with the staff's conclusion that their single greatest need is for an enhanced level of tech support. The one person who covers this area now is stretched too thin even to fully document current systems. The External Committee recognizes that this will be a challenge given looming budget cuts.

## **Academic Programs: Graduate Programs**

### The MA/PhD Program

*Recruitment and Support:* The Committee was impressed with the energy and commitment of graduate students on the MA/Ph.D. track. We were particularly impressed with their pedagogical confidence. These students may be making a virtue of necessity, due to their relatively heavy teaching loads. Nonetheless, adventurous teacher/scholars

are going to continue to enjoy an advantage in a highly diversified academic job market (comprehensive and metropolitan universities, research institutions, elite and non-elite liberal arts colleges, community colleges). We strongly urge the College and the Graduate School to support doctoral fellowships in a way that would allow the Department successfully to enroll a higher percentage of the doctoral students that it admits. At the same time, the Department also should understand that its doctoral students are distinguished teachers and should claim that as one of the real virtues of the doctoral program.

It is clear from the Self-Study that the Department is having trouble competing for the students that it admits. Applications have risen, and most significantly applications from students from historically-under-represented groups have risen. This is an important signal that the intellectual profile of the faculty and the emphases and flexibility of the program are on the right track. The Committee sees this as part of a larger effort throughout the Department to recruit and retain faculty and students of color--an effort that the institution needs to stand firmly behind. At the same time, successful recruitment increases the advising burden of faculty of color working in areas that draw large numbers of graduate students. This makes hiring in, for example, African American Studies especially important. Student-to-student recruiting has been effective, as well as energetic attention to putting together somewhat more compelling funding packages (including some support originating from donors). GO-MAP and the fast tracking of applications, and support from the graduate school in making these two strategies work, have been helpful.

### *Recommendations*

*The Committee recommends setting up an early screening process for doctoral students. Such an evaluation process serves both as an early warning system for students who are struggling and as a vehicle for more informed advising that could benefit all students by providing direction and counsel. Also, in the interests of encouraging timely progress toward completion, the Committee recommends that the reading lists and the written and oral exams be more firmly linked to the development of the prospectus, which should be defended and approved earlier, before the start of the fifth year.*

*The Graduate handbook for students in the Ph.D. and MA programs, alluded to at the time of the Committee's campus visit, needs to be produced and distributed. Graduate students offered convincing and at times distressing, examples of mixed signals from faculty on matters relating to exams and language requirements, for example. The Committee strongly urges the Department to produce an effective handbook--and then to use the handbook actively as a guide to faculty advising and mentoring. Faculty members need to know what the handbook says and to apply it clearly and consistently. Having a useful handbook and using it to inform a coherent and vigorous mentoring effort is part of what distinguishes the collective efficacy of MATESOL faculty. This approach has also resulted in a robust ethos of peer mentoring in that program that could be a model for the PhD/MA.*

## Graduate Student Placement

The Department produced on average just over 10 PhDs per year between 2001 and 2008, though the average rose to 15 in 2007 and 2008. In a struggling national job market, they have achieved a respectable job placement record: 53% have landed tenure track positions, while 19.7 % have secured non-tenure track employment, and about 15% are still looking. Of the total of 71 PhDs produced in this period, the fate of 10 (14%) is unknown.

Just as significant as the numerical breakdown, however, is the nature of the job placements. Over the eight years data provided, only five doctoral graduates of the English Department found jobs in peer State institutions, while two secured positions in prestigious R-1 private universities and three went to highly regarded private liberal arts colleges. The department recognizes this problem and has stated as one of its goals to “improve the competitiveness of PhD students for research-oriented academic positions.” Students surveyed expressed satisfaction with mentoring and preparation for job searches.

One answer, to the question of competitiveness in both recruiting and placement, of course, lies in greater resources for students. This will have significant recruiting benefits in attracting the strongest students, but will also allow *all* students to pursue more ambitious programs of research and to do less teaching and more writing and conferencing. A targeted development campaign might prove effective in this, although we acknowledge the difficulties in fundraising for support of doctoral students. This is best done at the departmental level under the rubric of fostering ‘the faculty of tomorrow.’ The support of the College and University development offices is critical in coordinating such efforts.

Also, given the enthusiasm of these graduate students for excellence in teaching, developing a more robust, supportive and innovative Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program in the UW Graduate School (which over the years has been the site of much innovative thinking about, for example, "The Responsive Ph.D.") could benefit these scholar/teachers and could also benefit doctoral students in other programs. PFF programs across the country support the transition from graduate school to faculty jobs, especially in helping students to understand the diverse kinds of colleges and universities and the variables associated with faculty jobs in different settings.

### *Recommendation*

*When the Department takes up Graduate Curriculum reform, it should focus on realistic revisions that will enhance the quality of graduate placements.*

## **The Creative Writing Program**

The Creative Writing Program at the University of Washington has had a long and distinguished history. The University has had outstanding, widely acclaimed writer-

teachers in place for more than sixty years, and it is currently highly ranked nationally (tenth). Such rankings have many components; most essential among these are the quality of writing and the quality of teaching of the faculty. In both areas, the University of Washington's creative writing program is superlative and looks to be superlative into the next decade. The faculty demonstrates not only a real commitment to their ongoing writing projects, but also to the quality of their teaching, the future of teaching, and to the nature of the community.

With all of the features of an excellent program in place, one issue is a partial impediment to the program's success: how competitive can it be in admissions? The Program is up against many peer institutions with more funding for incoming graduate students. The program attracts a large field of applicants; they admit 13 percent of them. This should translate into terrific incoming classes. However, because many of the top candidates are offered full funding elsewhere, only **41** percent of the admitted students actually come to UW. Attracting the highest quality graduate students in creative writing has become increasingly competitive in the last ten years as university-based creative writing programs in America have taken off. Institutions throughout the country are focusing on underwriting their graduate students' careers. The Review Committee was heartened to hear that the notion of fully funding incoming graduate students was the number one priority for the Creative Writing Faculty, when this becomes financially feasible. It will allow this consummate program to work more exclusively with the top young writers in the country. It is the key to taking this program to the very top tier.

The morale in the program seems high and we had a large number of faculty come in to talk to us specifically about their place in the English Department at UW. They seemed well integrated into the life of the Department, and they felt enfranchised and represented in the Department. The ongoing working relationship of the writers in the English Department proper is a significant issue for large institutions. The University of Washington is fortunate to have a creative writing faculty that has collectively assumed a larger, proprietary involvement in the culture and commerce of the Department.

In an ideal world, with a healthy economy and the chance to hire, the Creative Writing Program would like to expand their offerings to include a fully functioning literary non-fiction segment. Literary non-fiction is the growing tip of creative writing pedagogy in this country, and the development of new forms and variations (including and beyond memoir) is a field getting more and more national attention. The UW faculty now has people interested and working in this area, but to make it a fully featured element of the creative writing degree, equal with poetry and fiction, there will have to be another hire at some future date. The Committee recommends, at the appropriate time, one line in creative non-fiction.

### *Recommendation*

*The Committee recommends that the CWP make graduate student funding a priority and, when feasible, add a faculty line in creative non-fiction.*



## **MATESOL**

The MATESOL program is well-focused and admirably organized. The 15 students annually admitted to this program find its requirements and objectives clear, and they convey considerable enthusiasm about their course of study and their prospects upon graduation. The program is staffed leanly (we understand a search for a third professor in the area was suspended) and led by a scholar with national visibility in the field whose administrative strengths are reflected in her serving as the Department's associate chair. This strong degree-granting program, which addresses a societal need that grows ever more important with shifting American demographics and the globalization of English, should be maintained.

## **The Language and Rhetoric Group**

The Language and Rhetoric group is a strong and coherent subset of faculty whose scholarly, teaching, and organizational efforts intersect productively and purposefully. Several relatively independent programs, each under a director, operate within this group and, of course, the larger Department.

In addition to the MATESOL group, a second subset within this group is faculty in the broad field of Rhetoric and Composition studies. The four senior scholars in this area (Stygall, Bawarshi, Dillon, and Guerra) have nationally recognized profiles in composition studies. Together with Webster and with recent hired assistant professor Rai, they constitute a solid core of graduate faculty well-qualified to direct dissertations in this area. We note that Guerra's responsibilities have shifted almost completely to administration outside the Department and that Bawarshi has significant administrative duties. Each year an average of three or four PhDs are awarded in Rhetoric and Composition studies and all students secure tenure track positions. (Such openings continue to be ample within the profession and promise to continue so for some time.) The MA/PhD program tends to attract students who change their emphasis from another area (most often, from literature and culture) after discovering new interests. Adjustments in the graduate admissions process should help the program admit students more directly and intentionally.

## **Undergraduate Program**

Overall, this is a successful undergraduate major though with over 800 majors it is a bit unmanageable. Other departments in the College manage to handle similar numbers of majors with fewer faculty so any decision to scale back the major ought to be considered in conjunction with possible plans to reduce the size of the graduate program and/or future possible reductions in tenure track or tenured faculty. The Department has invested considerable effort over the past several years in revising the undergraduate curriculum. The recent curricular innovations, including the focus on assessments that provide a continuous feedback loop to faculty and administrators, are thoughtful and effective. They have also served to create an important pedagogical 'commons' for faculty who work in different areas. We commend the direction of the curriculum revisions and,

based upon our meeting with a group of engaged and impressive undergraduates, we see initial dividends. The new gateway course, ENGL 202, is an important part of this revision. We heard that there is real variation in how ENGL 202 is received by undergraduate majors. The subjective reading choices of faculty are sometimes bewildering to students. The course is a step in the right direction, but we suggest that the Department create a cluster of 200-level large section courses, taught in a predictable rotation by faculty who become adept at and comfortable with these courses. Establishing a 50% common core each time a course is taught and stressing the importance of setting a clear direction for a large survey course taught in a single quarter is also advisable. When the Department is once again able to hire, ascertaining a faculty candidate's capacity to teach 200-level courses would not be amiss. The ENGL 202 learning outcomes are fine but perhaps not sufficient; for example, they can be applied in radically different ways with varying results. Nonetheless, for the Department's first close encounter with 'outcomes,' this course, on the whole, has been a positive experience for the department. We also note that, while the 400 level capstone courses are well received, students seem to experience disconnects between the new 202 and 302 courses and the array of other 300 and 400 level courses they take to fulfill major requirements. The Department's undergraduate advising is splendid. This was confirmed by a chorus of undergraduate voices and demonstrated amply to the Committee. Especially impressive is meta-level analysis by the director of advising, tracking trends in student interests and post-graduate careers, and thus ensuring a continuous feedback loop into more effective advising. It's important that the chief undergraduate advisor's deep knowledge about trends in the undergraduate program be regularly shared with faculty, so that it can inform the broader curricular discussion.

### *Recommendations*

*We recommend that the Department continue its assessment of the learning outcomes of that English 202 and also explore whether better connections between 302 and other upper level course can be developed.*

### **Undergraduate Writing Programs: EWP, IWP, and the English Writing Center**

Serving some 5000 undergraduates each year, the Expository Writing Program employs a number of nationally recognized best practices in the teaching of writing. Through this program and others, the Department provides an enormous amount of service teaching for the campus. The Committee believes that the Department, supported by the College, may need to pull back on some of its service work for the sake of research--including research on pedagogy and writing. The College, which reaps the benefits of this service, may perceive little incentive to correct it; nonetheless, it must.

The program's goals and outcomes, updated in 2005-06 and met through four primary courses, are clear and consonant with national outcomes established by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Students complete an extensive amount of writing, especially for a quarter system, including well-designed assignment sequences

culminating in portfolios of polished writing. There is an effective and detailed rubric for evaluating the final portfolios, with the whole process well poised for program assessment. EWP courses are taught exclusively by graduate student TAs, which means that this crucial general education operation turns over consistently, creating real challenges in terms of program administration and sustained teaching quality. The English TAs receive as much professional training (through the required 5-credit English 567) and supervision as one could expect under the circumstances. The EWP Director receives a tenth month of salary and reassignment from teaching two courses, but this compensation trails that of peers at many comparable institutions. The presence of an associate director, a coordinator, and six TA's serving as assistant directors mitigates the load somewhat (and provides the assistant directors with valuable and highly marketable experience); however, even organizing and mentoring such a staff, which additionally includes the Director of the English Department Writing Center, means an extremely full professional role, especially for someone extensively involved in dissertation advising.

The English Department Writing Center is one of many departmentally-based centers on campus, an array that may well serve specific needs of individual departments but does create complexity, especially given the presence of the Odegaard Writing and Research Center as part of the College Writing Program, about which we say more below. The English Department Writing Center features specific tutor training of a type that is a crucial part of best practices nationally. Other centers on campus would do well to emulate this level of training and support. We also encourage the English Department to reconsider its policy of the English 474 course not counting for major credit; students wrote persuasively about the legitimacy of this course. The Center's policies and practices are sound.

The Interdisciplinary Writing Program (IWP) is a venerable and nationally known initiative that links writing sections to content courses in departments across the College, although the social sciences and the humanities are disproportionately represented. About 2000 students annually complete their writing requirement through this 10-credit option. As the Department's self-study acknowledges, the IWP and the EWP are underpinned by differing philosophies, the former asserting that writing skills are best learned in specific, sustained academic contexts and content areas, the latter cultivating general strategies and analytic skills transferrable to various rhetorical situations. Both philosophies have empirical and theoretical support within the profession. Offering two paths for satisfying the writing requirement should generally be considered a strength, meeting needs of different kinds of students and departments. The program offers a valuable form of teacher training for TAs across the disciplines.

The IWP program has operated for 30 years under the direction of lecturers, including its founding director. This faculty is well qualified and dedicated, and they do conduct research, though perhaps not in the quantity that tenure line faculty would. Lecturers in this program need to be recognized as doing remarkable work. They are connecting with other departments. They are responsible for much of the public service work of the Department. The Department is getting a lot of traction from the "writing ready program." But the lecturer's profile is too low; no one really knows what they're doing or how they

are getting students channeled to them. This is a budgetary issue but also is an issue of morale. Job security for lecturers needs to be addressed as well.

In addition to the EWP, IWP, and English Writing Center, there is a fourth locus for writing in the College, the College Writing Program. This program seems to function primarily for faculty development and student support, and while its director happens to be tenured in English, befitting the site of campus expertise on writing, the person in this role wouldn't have to be. While we heard the director of that center characterized as the campus "Writing Czar," the relationships among these operations do not appear hierarchical. Reporting lines cross (variously to the College and to the English Department), and the areas seem to operate more as convivial independent operations than as centralized efforts. For the most part, this seems to be working, although we noted some minor tensions. However, this informal structure relies to some large extent on the personalities and congeniality of the faculty involved, and budget pressures or personnel/philosophical changes could challenge these informal relationships. Our task was to evaluate the English Department, not structures beyond it; we simply note that this relatively decentralized approach to writing is unconventional and that the writing programs in English are well placed and doing fine work.

Finally, the Committee wishes to underscore the research potential of the work done by faculty members who sustain the undergraduate writing programs. The writing array is complex and varied, and it is very rich both pedagogically and intellectually. Its scholarly potential for studying different pedagogical models, so far mostly untapped, is considerable. After hearing about innovative pedagogy and its evaluation, we found ourselves asking, "Where's the book? Or the article?" In our view, these committed faculty should have their work regarded as having a product value, useful for promotion. The category of service is insufficient to do justice to the intellectual and scholarly potential of their contribution.

## Appendix A

### English Review Pre-Site Visit Meetings

30 minute meetings with the following groups:

<b>January 12-16</b>		
Mon, 1/12 (032 COM)	1:00-1:30	Key writing program faculty Bawarshi, Webster, Graham
	1:30-2:00	Sonenberg - creative writing program director
	2:00-2:30	Melissa Wensel – Undergraduate Adviser
Tues, 1/13 (032 COM)	10:00-10:30	Key language program faculty - Silberstein and Stygall
	10:30-11:00	Key faculty -Allen, Guerra, Reed, Burstein
Fri, 1/16 (032 COM)	10:00-10:30	Former Chairs - Wong and Lockwood
	10:30-11:00	Key faculty - Chrisman, Staten, Modiano, Weinbaum, Harkins

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON**  
**The Graduate School**  
**Department of English**  
**January 22-23, 2009**

**Wednesday, January 21**

6:30 p.m.

**Review Committee working dinner:**

Wild Ginger (1401 3rd Ave, 206-623-4450) [confirmed, billed to GS credit card]

**Thursday, January 22**

**202 Communications**

8:00– 9:00 a.m.

**Gary Handwerk**, Chair, Department of English

9:00 – 9:30

**Kate Cummings**, Director, Graduate Studies

**Brian Reed**, future Director, Graduate Studies (Autumn 2009)

**Eva Cherniavsky**, Chair, PhD Placement

9:30 – 10:00

**Miceal Vaughan**, Director, Undergraduate Programs

**Mark Patterson**, Scheduler

**Melissa Wensel**, Director, Undergraduate Advising

10:00 – 10:15

**BREAK**

10:15 – 10:45

**Maya Sonenberg**, Director, Creative Writing Program

10:45 – 11:30

**Open Session for Creative Writing MFA Faculty**

11:30 – 12:00

**Staff:**

**Susan Williams**, Administrator

**Kathy Mork**, Program Supervisor, Graduate Office

**Carolyn Busch**, Assistant to the Chair

**Rob Weller**, Senior Computer Specialist

12:00 – 1:00

**lunch with graduate students**

1:00 – 1:30

**BREAK**

1:30 – 2:15

**Open Session for full professors**

2:15 – 2:45

**Joan Graham**, Director, Interdisciplinary Writing Program

2:45 – 3:30

**Open Session for language and rhetoric faculty (all ranks)**

3:30 – 4:00

**BREAK**

4:00 – 4:30

**Louisa Peck**, Director, Writing Center

**Kimberlee Gillis-Bridges**, Director, Computer Integrated Courses Program

**Bob McNamara**, Director, Puget Sound Writing Program

**Janine Brodine**, Puget Sound Writing Program

4:30 – 5:00

**Anis Bawarshi**, Director, Expository Writing Program

6:30pm Review Committee working dinner:  
Ponti Seafood Grill (3014 3rd Ave North; 206-284-3000) [confirmed]

**Friday, January 23  
Communications 202**

8:00 – 8:30am	<b>Sandra Silberstein</b> , Director, MATESL
8:30 – 9:00	<b>Open Session for Associate Professors</b>
9:00 – 9:30	<b>Open Session for Assistant Professors</b>
9:30 – 10:30	<b>Open Session for literature/culture faculty</b>
10:30 – 10:45	<b>BREAK</b>
10:45 – 11:30	<b>Open Session for Lecturers</b>
11:30 – 12:00	<b>group meeting with undergraduate majors [with pizza]</b>
12:00am – 2:00pm	<b>Review Committee executive session/lunch</b> (Boxed lunches catered to room)
2:00 – 2:30	<b>BREAK</b>
2:30 – 3:30	<b>Exit Interview (Communications 202)</b> James Antony, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Graduate School Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost, Office of the Provost Ed Taylor, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences Robert C. Stacey, Divisional Dean for the Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences Gary Handwerk, Chair, Department of English David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
3:30 – 4:30	<b>Exit Interview (Communications 202)</b> As above; no program representatives.
4:30 – 5:00	<b>Review Committee Debriefing Session (review committee only)</b>