UCC Program Review Committee summary of review

Program – Department of English

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- B.A. English – Literature & Writing
- B.A. English – Creative Writing
- B.A. English – Prelaw
- B.A. English – Cultures, Rhetoric, & Theory
- The Writing Certificate
- M.A. Literature
- M.A. Creative Writing
- M.A. Rhetoric/Composition
- Ph.D. Literature
- Ph.D. Creative Writing
- Ph.D. Rhetoric/Composition

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable, see the report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY 2008

Date of this review – January 2015

This review has been sent to program chair, she has commented on the review, her comments are attached at the end.

This review has been sent to program college dean. His comment is attached to this report at the end.

This review has been sent to graduate council. They have no concerns with this review.
University Curriculum Committee  
Academic Program Review  

English  
Ohio University – College of Arts & Sciences  

Introduction & Process Overview  
The Department of English at Ohio University underwent an academic program review in January 2015. The Academic Program Review Committee was comprised of two external members, Dr. Frank Donoghue from Ohio State University and Dr. Robert Yagelski from SUNY Albany, and three internal reviewers, Dr. Aimee Edmondson (Journalism), Dr. Michael Kushnick (Health Sciences and Professions), and Dr. Judith Millesen (Voinovich School).

Over the course of three days, the team met with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the department chair, Group I tenured and pre-tenure faculty (including those involved with in themes and other interdisciplinary programming), the Admin Committee, graduate students, and undergraduate students. The team also had the opportunity to tour the facilities. Noticeably absent were members of the group II faculty cohort.

Ohio University’s English Department struck us as a strong, viable program, but one that has faced an extraordinary convergence of external challenges with which it has managed remarkably well. The challenges have all been out of the department’s control. The first was, of course, the massive economic downturn of 2008. Its effects on student populations and undergraduate choices are still being felt today, even as the recovery is ongoing. Specifically, students all over the country are far more cautious and pragmatic about choosing their academic majors. As a result, over the last several years there has been a marked downturn in the number of students majoring in the traditional liberal arts. Ohio University’s English major was not spared. Since the last external report, it has suffered a decline in undergraduate majors of 47%.

At that same time, all the universities were forced to adopt the Fingerhut proposal, mandating that any Ohio high school student who earned a score of 3 or higher on the English Literature AP Exam was exempt from college first-year writing courses. This led to additional cutbacks in Ohio University’s first-year writing program. Finally, two major institutional changes occurred simultaneously over the last two years. First, the university adopted a policy of Responsibility Centered Management (RCM), which ties, more so than in the past, the distribution of revenues to departments to the amount of revenue they bring in for the college. Given the decline of enrollments in English, this policy presented a severe setback to the department’s ability to count on resources. Secondly, three years ago the university, along with all universities in Ohio, switched from the quarter system to the semester system. This caused curricular upheaval, compounding all the other challenges the department has faced over a very compressed period of time. All in all, the department has responded to this situation with considerable resolve and admirable collegiality.

This report is divided into four key sections. The first section provides an overview of the program including general information about the department, a faculty profile, programmatic
practices, research and productivity, and information about the major. The second section identifies the major programmatic challenges. Specifically we address declining enrollments, the changing job market, adaptation to digital developments and online education, and the trials associated with integrating Group II faculty into the departmental governance structure. In section three we identify institutionally-related challenges that influence the overall operation of the English department with special attention focused on facilities and how best to assess and document student learning outcomes. The review concludes with commendations and programmatic recommendations.

PROGRAM REVIEW

The English department was formally created in 1829, but rhetoric, literature, composition, and pedagogy have been central to Ohio University’s learning experiences from the very birth of the institution. Today the department has an esteemed and award winning creative writing faculty who also shepherd several award winning literary journals. The four interrelated sub-areas of English studies—writing and rhetoric, literature, English education, and creative writing— currently form a “braided” experience in humanist experiences for Ohio University students; not only the department’s 250 undergraduate majors and 63 graduate students, but for more than 75% of the university student population.

Faculty Profile
At present, there are a total of 46 faculty members; 34 Group I (30 at the Associate or Professor rank and 4 probationary) and 12 on Group II contracts (although 1 Group II will retire at the end of the year). Current staffing at the Group I level consists of 5 in Rhet comp (although one is retiring at the end of the year), 22 in literature (although 1 is currently serving as the Dean of the honors Tutorial College and 1 will retire at the end of the year), 1 in English education, and 7 in creative writing. All faculty, with only two exceptions (both Group II), have terminal degrees.

Programmatic Practices
Teaching and Advising. The base teaching load is four course per year on a 2/2 ratio for Group I faculty and eight courses per year (4/4) for Group II faculty. The Chair, Undergraduate Director, Director of Composition, and Graduate Director and the Group II faculty who serves as Advising Coordinator are granted reassigned time in order to perform their administrative duties. Most Group I faculty serving in these positions elect, for purposes of merit review, to redistribute from 40% teaching 40% research 20% service, to 20% teaching 20% research 60% service. Historically, Group II faculty were expected to devote 100% of their time to teaching, although some are also research productive. Beginning fall 2014, Group II faculty teaching loads were renegotiated to a 7 course load (distributed as 3/4 or 4/3) with a corresponding shift in workload to 85% teaching and 15% service.

Undergraduate student advising has typically been divided equally among tenure line faculty at about 14 students each, until the recent drop in enrollments, which has resulted in fewer advisees. Graduate advising has been done by the graduate director, with some areas of the program (Rhetoric and Composition) assigning themselves as secondary advisors to their students.
**Research and Creative Activity.** During the review period, faculty published 46 books (including the first half of the current academic year). These books are as diverse as the programs the department offers, covering the many fields of English Studies. Additionally, faculty regularly publish articles and book reviews in peer reviewed journals, place poems, short stories, and essays in national literary magazines, have plays performed, and present papers at national conferences. The department has scholars who do important editorial work and translating work, as well. Encyclopedia, Dictionary, and Research Notes, review essays, and manuscript reviews for refereed journals and university presses are regularly produced.

Although the self-study reflected different numbers, the department chair explained that starting in the Fall of 2014 Group I faculty receive $1,200 for travel to conferences and research sites each year, and Group II receive $750. Assistant Professors receive a semester free from teaching in their third year in order to concentrate on their scholarly profile.

**Service.** The English Department is large with a lot of attention paid to maintaining a healthy and progressive self-governance. The department lists 40 committees or assignments that need coverage (although some more labor intensive than others). Most Associate and Full Professors have between 4 and 7 committees as part of their service profile. In most cases, Assistant Professors in their first three years are generally assigned fewer committees and less intensive service. This varies some by sub-discipline. For instance, the literature faculty is large enough to cover for untenured colleagues, but in rhetoric and composition untenured faculty have typically taken on more service responsibility.

Members of the department also serve on university standing committees such as: college P&T, college staffing, college fellowship selection, and college ethics. The department is also very active in Faculty Senate; multiple faculty members typically serve, often in positions of responsibility, such as Chair, Secretary, Executive Committee, and as Chair of the Professional Relations Committee. Faculty are regularly consulted by tenure and promotion committees at other institutions, an important service to the broader scholarly and creative communities.

**Interdisciplinary Work.** The English Department has faculty with joint appointments in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and African Studies. For those jointly appointed faculty, English is the “home department” and has full responsibility for tenure and promotion, though those programs have input on evaluations. For each of these joint appointments, the department collaborates annually on teaching assignments. Although not jointly appointed, a number of faculty are actively engaged in work with Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (committee service, collaboration, and participation in colloquia). The new themes initiative in Arts and Sciences has also sparked new relationships. Many members of the department are playing a variety of roles in these multidisciplinary endeavors, from collaborative teaching, to teaching courses in support of a theme.

**Diversity of Faculty/Students.** The current demographic profile of faculty in the English department consists of 19 tenure-line and 8 non-tenure track faculty who identify as female. One faculty member is an African American female and three male faculty member, one from Africa (Eritrea), one from South African, and one from India (Sikh). The department also has several faculty who identify outside of the heterosexual majority.
As reflected in the rest of the university, the majority of undergraduate students are middle class white students (consistently between 85-92% over the seven-year review period). Slightly more than half of the undergraduate majors identify as female (between 53-60%) and roughly 90% are in-state residents. The department consciously works to build a curriculum that will engage diverse students, and is working to create assessments that will help them to do better in this area.

**Research, Scholarship, & Creative Activity**

_Scholarship._ For a seven year period between 2007-2014, the following summarizes SCA activities of the faculty.

- Total Number of SCA: 936
- Creative: 223
- Books & Monographs: 32
- Articles, Chapters, Reviews: 177
- Presentations, Lectures, Readings, Conference Papers: 504

It should be noted that the Digital Measures data are not particularly conducive to categorizing in ways that are helpful for the Humanities. Also, the numbers reflected above are likely under representing the productivity of the department as faculty in English have been disinclined to report in this format. Often their vitae list publications from the past five years. The department chair is dedicated to more timely data collection, encouraging full faculty participation, and accurate counts of research, scholarship, and creative activity in the future.

_External Support._ Despite the relatively small amounts of money available to faculty in the Arts and Humanities, the department has been awarded $1,516,759 in internal (31), external (34), and fellowship (29) awards over the past seven years. Some of these awards demonstrate the department’s commitment to interdisciplinary work as they have been shared with investigators in other colleges and departments.

**Resources**

_Staffing._ The department has three support staff, including a department administrator, an administrative assistant, and an accounting associate. During the academic year the department also has between two and five work-study students who are supervised by the administrative assistant.

_Physical Facilities._ In Ellis Hall, there are approximately 40 offices in which to house over sixty instructional staff. Three to four graduate teaching associates typically share a single office and there have been as many as 17 part-time instructors sharing a single office. The last space audit suggested the current assigned square footage (13,162 square feet) was 6,306 square feet short of the calculated need (19,468 square feet). The general condition and appearance of the building’s interior is worrisome—torn carpeting, stained furniture and desks, dirty drapery, falling tiles, obvious signs of mold, inconsistent (or lack of) heating and cooling, and an elevator in frequent need of repair. Not only are these issues unsightly, many present ADA challenges.
Technology. There are two computer labs that seat 20 students and one walk-in lab that also seats 20 students. Although most classrooms are equipped with a technology cart, the computers are outdated and slow; as are the computers used by faculty and graduate students.

Undergraduate Program Review
Curriculum. All English majors do six courses that have been designated the “English Core.” The foundation courses in the curriculum are critical reading and analysis courses focused on particular genres: “Introduction to Prose Fiction and Nonfiction” (English 2010) and “Introduction to Poetry and Drama” (English 2020). All students also take at least one course in literature before 1800 and one course in literature after 1800, to have some sense of historical difference and some immersive exposure to older writing. The writing and research skills have returned to the junior year as English 3070J, and a topical senior seminar remains the capstone course.

To complete a major, students take eight additional classes in one of four tracks (major codes): Literature & Writing (built around courses spread over the historical span of the Anglo-American literary tradition, as well as requiring a course in multi-ethnic or crosscultural literature and either history of English or literary theory); Creative Writing (including the same major-specific requirements as the previous creative writing curriculum); Cultures, Rhetorics, & Theory (focusing on discourse within cultural or ethnic communities); or Prelaw (originally with the same English coursework as Literature & Writing, but beginning with the 2014-15 catalog replacing two requirements with a course in rhetoric and a course on the intersection between legal discourse and either rhetoric or literature).

The English department maintains the third largest cohort of students in the Honors Tutorial College. The HTC English curriculum was revised with the switch to semesters in 2012 to allow for greater flexibility in coursework during the junior (pre-thesis) year. Students complete eight tutorials, including an Introduction to English Studies course in their freshman year; a three-course sequence in British and American literary history during freshman and sophomore years; two specialized tutorials during the junior year; and two thesis tutorials during the senior year. The specialized tutorials enable students to tailor the HTC English major to their own interests, while drawing on a much wider range of faculty expertise and involvement.

Students. For a the period between Fall 2007 and Fall 2013 the headcount for undergraduate English majors ranged from a low of 198 (2013) to a high of 411 (2008), when combined with the number of majors in Arts & Sciences, the Honors Tutorial College, and the College of Education served by the department annually, the headcount ranged from a low of 338 (2013) to a high of 579 (2008). On average, for the same time period, the department averages 20 students or 5 per year.

Students Taught in Service to Other Departments. Nearly three-quarters of first-year OU students will take English 1510 Writing and Rhetoric I. Likewise, the majority of Ohio University students enrolled on the Athens campus will fulfill their junior writing requirement through courses in the English Department. Four of lower division literature courses and two Humanities courses each fulfill Tier II-HL requirements or offer Arts and Sciences students a way to meet their Humanities distribution requirement.
Courses in English beyond the Tier IE and IJ courses are required by all four major programs in Journalism as well as the three Middle Childhood programs with an area of specialization in Language Arts. Students majoring in Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies may choose from a number of English courses to meet major electives. And finally, English courses contribute to several Certificate programs including the Writing Certificate; Diversity Studies; Jewish Studies; Law, Justice, and Culture (as of Fall 2014); and Women and Gender & Sexuality Studies (including a new Queer Studies certificate).

Graduate Program Review
Curriculum. Students in Doctoral and Master’s degree programs concentrate in Literature, Creative Writing, or Rhetoric and Composition by completing a curriculum of required courses in literature, creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and research and instructional methods, as well as professionalization workshops (60 hours of coursework for an M.A. degree, and 120 hours of coursework for a Ph.D.). Students in each concentration also take coursework in the other concentrations.

Students. For the period between fall 2007 and fall 2013 the headcount for master’s level and PhD students in the English department ranged from a low of 21 (2013) and 28 (2007 & 2010) to a high of 38 (2009) and 39 (2013) respectively. The graduate program enrolls a fairly diverse group with predominately more female (approximately 64%) than male students as well as international students of various ethnicities (approximately 10%).

Students Taught in Service to Other Departments. Graduate students from other programs occasionally take English courses, but this is a very small fraction of the graduate teaching (less than 10% per year). According to data supplied by the Office of Institutional Research, students from the following programs received graduate credits in English during the past three years: African Studies, Journalism, Education-Undecided, Curriculum & Instruction, History, Modern Languages, Sociology & Anthropology, Economics, Music, Women’s Studies, Communication Studies, Political Science, Linguistics, Interdisciplinary Arts, Film, and Classics & World Religions.

PROGRAMMATIC CHALLENGES

Challenge #1: Declining Enrollments
Enrollments in the English major and in undergraduate writing classes have declined precipitously in the past several years. As noted in the introductory section of this report and in the department’s self-study, the decline in enrollments, both in the English major and in undergraduate English classes (many of which have routinely been taken by students outside the major to fulfill general education requirements), has resulted from or been affected by several factors outside the department’s control. These factors include the effects on higher education of the economic downturn in 2008, the change from quarters to semesters at Ohio colleges and universities, and the state’s adoption of the so-called Fingerhut proposal regarding AP English credit. These and other developments have had various effects on the department’s enrollments.
For example, the Fingerhut proposal, which allows students who earn a 3 or better on the AP English exam to place out of the first-year writing requirement (and which was adopted by the state in 2009), seems to have contributed to a noticeable loss of students in English 1510, which fulfills Ohio University’s Tier I requirement for writing. (The self-study reports that total enrollment in English 1510 for the 2013-2014 academic year was 3165; by contrast, in 2008-2009, total enrollment for this course was 3496.) It also seems likely that the disruption caused by the adoption of the semester system accelerated already falling enrollments in the English major, which reflects a state-wide and nationwide trend. The unfortunate timing of some of these developments has perhaps brought into relief the two aspects of this significant challenge facing the department: a much smaller number of English majors and lower enrollments in English classes that traditionally have served non-majors.

It is important to note that at the same time that these developments were occurring, the department undertook in 2012-2013 a significant revision of its major curriculum to create a set of core courses and specific requirements for each of four tracks, or “concentrations,” within the major (literature and writing, creative writing, cultures, rhetorics, and theory, and pre-law). It would be difficult to identify this curricular revision as a central reason for the loss of majors, given that the content of the revised curriculum was fundamentally the same as the previous version of the major, but we believe the revised curriculum is unlikely to attract more students to the English major, especially in a cultural climate that places a premium on “vocational” majors (which could lead to established career paths) and which has highlighted the problems associated with high levels of student debt.

Since it is unlikely that enrollments in the major will rebound or that the academic job market in English will improve, it may become increasingly difficult for the department to justify the current 2-2 teaching load for faculty who are not engaged in service initiatives or active and productive scholars/researchers/creative artists at a level consistent with expectations at Ohio University. It should be noted that the English department does have a strong history of adjusting workload distributions to appropriately recognize significant service obligations. For example, faculty members who serve as program directors are not evaluated on a traditional 40% teaching 40% research 20 % service workload, but rather a renegotiated workload that legitimately considers the amount of time needed to fulfill service obligations. In light of challenges affecting both the discipline and the institution, the English department may wish to consider embracing this same approach as it relates to teaching loads, allowing faculty to negotiate the amount of time they will dedicate to research, teaching, and service. Incidentally, during conversations with the chair, we learned that the department has recently completed a new workload policy that explicitly states teaching loads will be adjusted in ways that seriously consider service obligations and scholarly activity.

Regarding students from outside the English major enrolling in English courses, it is likely that large numbers of OU undergrads are likely to continue taking English classes, especially writing classes, to fulfill general education requirements, but the creation of discipline-specific writing classes by other programs for their own majors is likely to continue to cut into enrollments by non-majors in English classes.
Challenge #2: Changing Job Market

The job market has been changing dramatically, and increasingly undergraduates seem to select majors on the basis of employment expectations. In addition to contributing to the decline in enrollments in the major, this phenomenon has affected the department’s graduate program in several ways. First, the number of traditional tenure-track jobs continues to decline nationwide, and will not be reversed in the coming years. This holds true at Ohio University, where Dean Frank informed us that, for budgetary reasons, he foresaw an increase in the number of Group II (non-tenured) hires in English going forward, and expressed a reluctance to make the long-term investment in tenure-track appointments so long as undergraduate enrollments remained in decline or unpredictable.

With that overview in mind we revisited our conversations with graduate students, the Admin Committee, probationary and other faculty, and found an assortment of challenges that the department may want to consider. There was a wide range of opinion about mentorship (a crucial feature of any graduate program in this era). Some students felt advising was satisfactory although others were frustrated with advice offered by faculty mentors. One Ph.D. student informed us that she was explicitly told by her advisor not to publish an article while in graduate school, a decision that, almost everyone in the discipline would agree, without a publishable article prior to graduation, the student would be unemployable.

Among faculty and students alike, we sensed a general lack of urgency about the absence of a job market in literary studies (in particular). One faculty member referred to the attitude of the creative writing students as “delusional optimism.” Another faculty member defended his decision to supervise a dissertation which he deemed unmarketable because it was “the student’s choice.” Both probationary faculty as well as the Admin committee seemed particularly concerned with maintaining a “cohort” of students in order to sustain a community in each of the three concentrations in the program (literature, RCL and creative writing)—that is, admitting at least two students in each concentration—even if that means expanding the program during a time when graduate programs across the country are producing a glut of Ph.D.s in English. Only one faculty member recommended that if Ph.D.s in her field failed to get tenure-track jobs, she would recommend suspending the Ph.D. program.

Challenge #3: Digital Developments and Online Education

There is little question that reading and writing have been dramatically shaped by the development of digital technologies, and indeed communication in general has been transformed in recent decades by these developments. At the same time, colleges and universities, including Ohio University, have begun moving their courses and programs online. English departments in general have sometimes struggled to adapt to these momentous and rapid changes. The situation at OU is complicated by the relationship between the Athens campus and the regional campuses, which could mean in some cases that moving some courses online might actually undercut the effort to increase enrollments to the extent that students enrolled at the Athens campus might be inclined to fulfill some requirements (such as the Tier I writing requirement) by taking online courses through a regional campus (which would cost the student less in tuition) rather than at the Athens campus.
The OU English department is quite aware of the challenges associated with these changes and has begun to take steps to meet them. One of the most promising initiatives in the department is the creation of the new online MA program directed to classroom teachers, which has the potential to generate new enrollments in the department’s graduate program and represents a new potential revenue stream. This program represents a thoughtful effort by the department to respond to the university’s desire for online programs and at the same time to adapt to the challenging current fiscal climate. We believe the department should actively pursue similar initiatives that not only seek new student constituencies but also reflect creative efforts to develop new strands within the department’s current program offerings.

Challenge #4: Tensions between Group I and Group II Faculty
Real and perceived imbalances in workload and in representation among Group I and Group II faculty have created significant obstacles to needed programmatic changes and to departmental efforts to address fiscal pressures, and have adversely affected the departmental culture.

While Group II faculty were not provided with a separate meeting during the 7 year review process, they were represented (e.g., during open sessions, needs/challenges were discussed in a number of sessions, their physical resources were observed, and their concerns (limited direct, but more from indirect sources) heard). In general Department leadership and the Dean praised the work of Group II faculty. However, it became apparent during our review that Group II faculty do not have any involvement in Department governance, feel disenfranchised, and, to the extent we could discern, seem demoralized.

There are currently thirteen Group II faculty (21% of the total number of English Department faculty) who fall into two different groups. Many have been teaching in the department for nearly thirty years on renewable one-year contracts. Aside from teaching, since they are not allowed to vote on departmental issues, they choose not to participate in matters of department policy. Now that their teaching load has been reduced from 4/4 to 4/3 (with 15% of their time devoted to service) that pattern may change. A smaller number of Group II faculty fall into a more unfortunate category. They were originally hired as Group IV (Visiting Professors, usually essentially placeholders for Group I faculty on fellowship or administrative leave). They had a slightly higher teaching load than Group I faculty and regularly taught courses in their area. They were then subsequently reclassified as Group II, and required to teach four writing courses per semester. Understandably, they felt they’d been demoted.

INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

Challenge #1: Assessing Student Outcomes
University mandates resulting from the university’s implementation of the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) require the department to develop viable assessment practices for its programs. The AQIP is one of the Higher Learning Commission's pathways to accreditation. HLC developed AQIP to help institutions like Ohio University retain institutional autonomy and academic freedom by providing a structure to demonstrate what it does to achieve academic excellence. Of specific relevance to the English department is criterion four which requires that all academic programs assess their student learning objectives. Each academic program has been
asked to update student learning objectives; identify sources of systematic evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative); and develop an action plan to improve teaching and learning based on the evidence gathered.

The department notes that formal assessment will require a shift in disciplinary culture. The department is also behind schedule in creating direct and indirect measures in assessment as charged by the college. The review committee acknowledges the difficulty of creating such assessments given the fact that there is no external accreditation body for the English Department. With no accreditation pressures in this area, the department has been faced with starting fresh in assessment amid curriculum changes and Q2S challenges. Also challenging has been the turnover of the undergraduate committee and a lack of willingness on the part of individual faculty members to oversee such a massive undertaking. The department also struggles with maintaining communication with graduates after they leave Ohio University.

**Challenge #2: Facilities**

It will come as little surprise to all stakeholders that reviewers concur with the English Department’s self-study: the woeful state of the department’s facilities in Ellis Hall create a difficult, unhealthy, and impractical work environment for both faculty and students. Ellis Hall is a historically significant structure, a jewel of architecture on the College Green. As stewards of such an impressive edifice, of course, Ohio University administrators are aware of the need to renovate Ellis to maintain its structural integrity. It is important to note that the Academic Program Review completed in 2008 found the space to be inadequate. We reiterate that the current conditions are unacceptable. The most pressing issues are the leaking roof and the HVAC system. Most certainly, interior renovations are vital to maintain the department’s teaching and learning.

In addition, there are only 40 offices to house approximately 60 instructional staff. As noted in the 2008 external study, the importance of office space for department work and meeting with students is essential, especially to those who teach writing-intensive courses where one-on-one time is common. More suitable office space is key to complete this “student-centered” task.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

We find both the undergraduate and graduate programs in English to be viable. Despite the reduction in numbers within the major, the program delivers content to over 75% of the undergraduate students enrolled at Ohio University and is working on creative strategies (e.g., Themes), to increase delivery of English course. Graduate students are gaining invaluable experience serving as teaching assistants and in special projects such as serving as associate editors of relevant journals and co-presenting at conferences.

**Recommendation #1: Undergraduate Program:**

Although the department is likely to continue to serve large numbers of students outside the major who enroll in its courses to fulfill general education requirements (or requirements in their own majors), it also seems likely that it will continue to be a challenge for the department to maintain or increase these enrollments, given the factors noted earlier. Consequently, we recommend that the department seek opportunities for partnerships and collaborations that might
address the more specific interests of other majors that the English department is in a position to serve. For example, developing special versions of J courses in collaboration with programs outside the College of Arts and Sciences could increase enrollments in those courses, which would bring revenue into the department.

In addition to these steps, the department should continue to consider ways to shift teaching assignments to adjust to enrollment declines in areas of lower demand—in a way that builds upon what has been done already. For example, some senior members of the Group 1 faculty who specialize in literary study have recently begun teaching English 1510 and other undergraduate writing courses. Such reassignment might be necessitated by low enrollments in literature courses that these faculty have previously been teaching, but it also seems clear that some literature faculty members desire this reassignment and see it as a way to help boost enrollments in English courses and perhaps generate interest in the major among new OU undergraduates. In addition, having a greater proportion of lower-division writing courses taught by experienced Group 1 faculty potentially enhances the quality of instruction and opens up opportunities for non-English-majors to interact with senior English faculty.

We would feel remiss if we did not mention faculty role in the extent to which they prepare students for possibility post-graduation. In our conversation with students, we learned that some were a bit unsure about their future…that is other than the prospect of attending graduate school, many were unsure about what they were going to do after graduation.

Recommendation #2: Graduate Program:
The department might wish to re-examine the current admission criteria for the doctoral program and reconsider the size of the program in view of the worsening academic job market and concerns about using graduate student labor, especially with respect to traditional areas of study in English in which fewer and fewer academic positions are available.

We also noticed that the “braided” model may actually create unintended divisions among graduate students and an unequal distribution of labor among the faculty, particularly when assigning graduate classes. For example, we learned that RC and Creative Writing faculty routinely teach graduate seminars on an annual basis, whereas it is not uncommon for Literature faculty to go three years without teaching a graduate seminar. This imbalance is reflected in the graduate student population. We are not suggesting that this imbalance be addressed by increasing the number of doctoral students in the literature track. To the contrary, as we note in the previous paragraph, the sorry state of the academic job market in general and especially literature makes such an increase impractical and unsustainable, if not unethical. Instead, the department might consider revisions to the current doctoral program to integrate the three strands more fully, which might open up opportunities for faculty to collaborate across disciplinary lines in developing and teaching doctoral courses and mentoring doctoral students. Such integration might also encourage students to take courses and work with faculty across areas of specialization, which could prepare them more effectively for the changing expectations of the academic job market. (One model for this kind of integration is the doctoral program in English at SUNY-Albany, which is not structured around traditional literary periods but still allows some students to specialize in a period, if they choose. A description of the program is available at http://www.albany.edu/english/phd_program.php.)
Recommendation #3: Develop Digital Media Track
Although the department has recently revised its major, we recommend a careful review of the major to identify the development of potential concentrations that more directly reflect broader changes in the society affecting the humanities as well as changes in the academic discipline of English itself. Although it seems unlikely that the number of students pursuing the English major will grow dramatically in the coming years (either at OU or nationwide), it does seem possible to attract new students to the major by offering courses in areas of growing interest to students, such as digital media. In its self-study the department has identified a need for two new faculty lines, one in digital media studies and the other in digital literary studies, and departmental faculty have expressed support for such hires. We support these proposed hires, which we view as critical needs in the department. However, the department currently has several faculty members who are already working in digital media or related areas who could begin developing courses and/or a new track in the major that reflects current trends in the society in general and in English Studies in particular. Whatever the specific focus of such new components of the major, we recommend that the department undertake a careful analysis of the extent to which the current major in fact reflects the department’s evolving mission (as articulated in the mission statement) and also takes into account areas that are likely to be in demand by students.

Recommendation #4: Revisit the Role of Group II Faculty.
According to the faculty handbook Group II faculty are considered ≥ 0.5 FTE towards teaching, have the right to serve and vote on Ohio University’s faculty senate, are encouraged to participate in professional development, and are also eligible for a number of University based awards (e.g., University Professor, Presidential Research Scholar Awards, and the Presidential Teacher Awards). Moreover, beginning in AY 2013-14, the University adopted the policy in which Group II faculty may be considered for promotion. While not mandatory, this evaluation process also encourages five-year contracts for Group II faculty.

In an effort to improve the working conditions of Group II, it has been proposed that they become eligible for five-year contracts (and thus greater job security along with a significant pay raise). Ironically, because of the department’s declining enrollments, extending these five-year contracts, essentially promotions, is perceived as too risky.

There is a division of opinion in the department about whether Group II faculty should have limited voting rights (on everything, for example, except hiring and promotion and tenure). Yet, if the college’s hiring trends continue along the lines the Dean envisions, it’s conceivable that, given retirements over time, Group II faculty may eventually outnumber Group I. Even now, as one anonymous Group II faculty member wrote, because of their heavy teaching loads, Group II faculty already constitute “the face of the English Department to the OU student body.” Thus, we feel that the department needs to come to some accommodation in the way Group I and Group II faculty relate to one another. There are apparently positive models elsewhere in the college—Modern Languages was presented as an example. So these kinds of accommodations are clearly possible.

Recommendation #5: Develop a Comprehensive Assessment Plan;
Quality program assessment is essential if faculty and administrators are to assemble useful data that can inform decision making about student learning and development, professional
effectiveness, course changes, program quality, and future direction. Needless to say, any assessment plan should be aligned with department’s sense of mission and strategic goals. Moreover, assessments should involve input from as many of the current faculty as possible as well as student feedback.

In the 2013-14 academic year, the department plans to write a standard set of learning outcomes for English 2010 and 2020 in addition to piloting a course assessment in the fall 2014. All sections were to participate in the assessment by spring 2015, and the department planned to develop of similar standard outcomes with means of assessment for English 3070J and the senior seminars. However, progress has been slower than anticipated. In late fall 2014 and spring 2015, the department was creating a rubric to read essays for English 2010 and 2020. The pilot will then proceed. Faculty members note a culture of the department has slowed progress in this area. The review committee acknowledges the difficulty of creating such assessments given the fact that there is no external accreditation body for the English Department. Additionally, the chair noted that discussion is underway regarding program-level outcomes for each of the four majors.

The department’s current assessment strategy also calls for a portfolio system for students in the English major that will allow the department to begin to judge the efficacy of the majors as a whole. It may be useful for the department to look internally at programs and departments that require undergraduate portfolio work as well as externally at peer institutions for suggestions and guidance in developing the portfolio; particularly since the portfolio is likely to be used as a way to document student learning and whether the program itself makes a difference and what and how much of a difference that is.

The department also points to difficulty tracking English majors once they leave Ohio University. This indirect measure would be helpful to determine where graduates are employed after graduation. English undergraduates told reviewers that email would be the best way to contact them for survey data on employment, pointing to the timelessness of Gmail accounts as the most appropriate manner.

**Recommendation #6: Renovate the Department’s Facilities in Ellis Hall.**

We acknowledge that capital improvements are a College-level decision that requires significant funds at a time of diminished resources; even so, the current facilities are not only deplorable, there is a substantial threat for ADA-related complaints.
Hi David,
The Dean and I have spoken. And for the record:

Generally, the response from me and the English Dept Admin Committee about this review report is fairly measured. They recognized that there are many pressures shaping the department right now, all of which are evident to us (national withdrawal from the Humanities, economic downturn, Q2S, etc.) It was good to know that they felt we are shaping our responses to the issues wisely and appropriately.

The list of departmental and institutional challenges they laid out have merit and I am pleased to be able to honestly say that we are working on them. We are actively planning and working the role of Grp 2 faculty, the graduate program, and assessment. Much of this is new territory for us but as I said, we are trying to move from reactive positions to proactive positions.

We certainly did take note that they agree with us that tenure-line hires in digital realms are important for us. That is the second set of reviewers who have noted this.

As you know, the state of the building remains a sore point with us, and there was some perverse satisfaction that two of them nearly fell on the carpet in the English Department and that some of them felt the lung constriction that many of us have when we are on the premises.

Best,
Sherrie

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Sherrie Gradin, PhD
Chair and Professor of English
Director, Appalachian Writing Project
Ohio University English Dept.
UCC policy is that Dean and Chair have 14 days to let me know of any issues they have with the report. If I receive nothing by 5:00 PM on Monday March 9 (thus allowing for Spring Break) I will assume you have no objection to me proceeding to Graduate Council for their observations on the graduate programs and then to UCC for approval of the review. Once approved by UCC, the review is forwarded to the Provost so that it can be included as an information item for the Board of Trustees. I am told, by Howard Dewald, that the Provost is expecting deans to comment on the review of their programs, and that if the approved review reaches her without those comments she will seek them.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks
David

David C. Ingram (ingram@ohio.edu)
Chair, Program Review Committee of UCC
Ohio University

740) 593 1705 voice + voice mail
Dear David:

I have no concerns about the English review. It is thoughtful, reasonably reflects the current state of the academic programs in English, and identifies some important areas for attention going forward.

Robert A. Frank
Dean and Professor of Psychology
College of Arts and Sciences
Ohio University
740-597-1833
frank@ohio.edu

-----Original Message-----
From: David C Ingram [mailto:ingram@ohio.edu]
Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2015 6:41 PM
To: Carlson, Bruce; Frank, Robert
Subject: Review of the Department of English