

Columbus State University Comprehensive Program Review

Review Team Report

Summary

Membership of Committee

External Reviewer:

Dr. H. William Rice, Chair and Professor
English Department
Kennesaw State University

Internal Reviewer:

Dr. Julie Ballenger
Chair and Professor
Department of Biology
Columbus State University

Date: November 29, 2010

Introduction

Procedure Followed and Information Gathered.

The first step in the Comprehensive Program Review was self-assessment. Led by Dr. Barbara Hunt (Chair), the English Department examined every aspect of its programs. This procedure involved gathering data, examining program mission and goals, and finally assessing quality from a number of vantage points. The outcome was a self study that included a detailed analysis of the program from the standpoint of program quality, program productivity, and program viability. Each sub-heading within these areas was rated with an assessment indicator (categories such as Very Weak, Weak, Average, Above Average, Strong and Very Strong). In the Executive Summary of the Self Study, the Department presented its findings, listing strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for improving program quality and productivity, and providing concluding comments concerning the program's viability.

The second step in the process involved the outside reviewers listed above. Dr. Hunt provided all reviewers with copies of the Self-Study with ample time to review the document before making a visit to the Department on November 4th. Dr. Hunt hosted the visit, providing for reviewers extensive tours of the English Department and related facilities, including the Carson McCullers home owned by the

Department, visits to a class and to the Writing Center, lengthy interviews with program leaders and with the English Department faculty.

Findings of the External Review Committee

A. Assessment of Program Quality

The English Department at Columbus State has a well-qualified faculty who bring to the institution backgrounds from an array of universities from across the country. The faculty membership is balanced in terms of gender; and when part-time the faculty members are included, the faculty membership has some claim to being diverse. Since the full-time faculty group has only one member that is not white (out of 22 faculty members), the Department needs in future hiring to recruit a more ethnically diverse group of full-time faculty members. Noting that "CSU has the highest proportion of minority students of schools that are traditionally 'white,'" the Department has set "greater diversity" as one of its goals under "Program Improvement Plans" on page 11. We concur.

The Department is also aware of its heavy reliance on part-time faculty: 22 out of 44 faculty members are part time. Part-time faculty members in English are used to teach general education courses. Since the English Department provides the two writing course that are in the core, it is quite likely that many Columbus State students receive some or all of their writing instruction from part-time faculty. Though there are many excellent part-time faculty members available, they are not vetted in the same manner as fulltime faculty. Moreover, their commitment to the University and its mission will likely not be the same as that of a full-time faculty member. Thus, overuse of part-time faculty in English can have a detrimental effect on writing instruction and given the centrality of writing to any college curriculum, compromise the University's ability to achieve its mission, particularly in areas such as "preparing individuals for a life of success, leadership, and responsibility." The Department judges this aspect of its program as "very weak" and also notes this as a part of its overall improvement plan. We concur.

Despite these weaknesses in the area of diversity and use of part-time faculty, the faculty at CSU appears to be first rate in many ways. From all of the evidence available to us, the teaching in the English Department at Columbus State appears to be as it is described in the Self-Study: "very strong." Though the Department indicates an "abysmal" return rate on student evaluations since the recent adoption of an online evaluation system, the Chair's information on faculty performance in the area of teaching (19 of 22 receiving average or above average) indicates strong performance in this area. Also, the fact that the Chair does not universally award average or above is in itself a good indication that the Department values teaching and monitors faculty success in this area very carefully. Another excellent indicator of serious commitment to teaching is the voluntary peer observation system in which a number of faculty members participate. We were also impressed that the Department takes seriously its commitment to the University as a whole. The success of the Writing Center as well as the

involvement in Writing across the Curriculum (a part of the QEP) indicates a deep commitment to the teaching of not only English majors but also all students.

The Department rates itself as “average” in the area of advising in part because of a mediocre performance in this area on the Exit Survey. Indeed, 36% of those surveyed rated advisement in the Department as Satisfactory or below. We concur with the Department’s rating of itself, but recommend more than the departmental recommendations of surveying students and “strongly encouraging” advisors to attend annual advising workshops. Some attention must be given to the advising load itself. Advising 25 to 30 students in the context of a 4/4 teaching load is difficult at best. It is hardly surprising that advising might become the weak link because it is an area in which most faculty lack extensive training. Furthermore, there is no real reward for good advising, other than those rewards doled out in annual reviews. Rethinking the system could involve exploring new advising models. Perhaps not all faculty members should advise. Perhaps those who do advise should have a reduced teaching load and specialized training. The first step in this process is one the Department has already identified: a more thorough survey that will enable the Chair and any other program administrator(s) to get a clear picture of what is wrong and what is right about the current system.

The reward system that is in place in the Department is a *quid pro quo* system wherein good teachers and good advisors are rewarded with block schedules or courses in which they can choose the topics they will cover. This system is woefully inadequate to create real incentive. As many others in English, the faculty members in English at Columbus State seem committed to good work simply because they love what they do. Still, some attention should be paid to monetary rewards, which the Department discusses in the Self Study on page 15. Merit raises are likely not to be a part of state budgets for several years to come, but still some attempt should be made to recognize outstanding performance with more than a pat on the back or a desirable schedule. Supplements for advising excellence or teaching excellence might be tied to administrative activities in these areas. Excellent teachers could mentor junior faculty. Excellent advisors could mentor new advisees.

The faculty commitment to scholarship is evident from the publications listed in Appendix VI. Well over half of the faculty members are actively involved in some type of creative activity or scholarship. Faculty in the Department have received grants, published and edited books, written and published short stories, poems, journal articles, encyclopedia articles, and book reviews. Faculty within the Department are also actively involved in promoting student research through active involvement with the Student Colloquium, actively encouraging students to present papers at conferences, publish their work, and enter their literary journal (the *Arden*) in regional contests. The Department notes in its Self Study that support for faculty travel has been inadequate. Travel funds between 1990 and 2009 were “stagnant” according to the Self Study, despite the fact that the faculty nearly doubled in size. According to the Self-Study, this year’s per-faculty-member allotment is a mere \$195. During our on-campus interview, we learned that despite that figure, the travel money for this year has improved considerably. Nonetheless, the pattern of inadequate and/or inconsistent support for scholarship and professional development is something that should be corrected, particularly in

an environment wherein, according to faculty with whom we talked, scholarship expectations appear to be changing. It would also be helpful if upper administration clarified expectations in this area. Nothing is more unsettling to faculty, particularly a faculty that is actively involved in scholarship, than unclear expectations concerning scholarship. The Department notes the problems with travel funding as an area for improvement. We concur and add to that recommendation a call for clarified expectations in the area of scholarship.

As indicated by the extensive listing of service activities in Appendix III, English Department faculty members are involved in an impressive array of service activities, including activities as diverse as service on the Faculty Senate, work in organizing an AAUP chapter, work in study abroad, sponsorship of student organizations, and many other activities. Faculty members also offer impressive services to students within the English Major, such as the yearly workshop on getting into graduate school or the Early Mentoring program for the English and Secondary Education majors. Nonetheless, much as in the case of scholarship, there appears to be confusion over University expectations in this area. The Department states in its Self-Study that "service is no longer valued." We would suspect that this is not the case. Still, in an environment wherein expectations are shifting, it is easy to see how members of the Department might draw such a conclusion. Once again, upper administration needs to clarify service expectations, providing faculty with a meaningful workload model. At the very least, there needs to be some indication concerning the ways in which service activities will be recognized in evaluation of faculty and in tenure and promotion.

Both faculty and students in the English program at Columbus State appear to have won a number of honors. It is also clear from the Alumni Survey that students who have graduated from the English program at Columbus State have been successful and see their success as in part growing out of the training they receive at Columbus State. The curriculum has also been assessed and changed to help students succeed. The addition of English 2145 and 2146 in Area F is a good example as is the requirement that students receive a grade of C or better in Area F courses. There has also been a consistent attempt to meet evolving student needs with additions to the program offerings. The introduction of tracks in both professional writing and creative writing indicates a response to these needs, as does the incorporation of interdisciplinary and multi-cultural courses.

The Department recognizes the need to assess the effect of the new courses in Area F on performance in upper level courses. We concur with this plan. We would also recommend that the Department consider revising the Exit Survey (Appendix VII). Though it clearly is providing the Department with valuable information, it could be more specific in its focus, allowing the Department to gather information on particular course sequences, particularly pivotal courses, such as 2145, 2146, and 4555.

According to the Exit Survey, Columbus State English majors are not as impressed with facilities as they are with the curriculum. In particular, we note the lack of lab space and MAC computers for professional writing students, and the lack of a seminar style classroom for creative writing workshops. We concur with the recommendation that the facilities be

expanded to accommodate the needs to these tracks within the major. We also concur with the recommendation that equipment be updated and bought to address the expanding professional writing track and the plan to introduce a film studies minor. All of these changes will accommodate student needs and help the Department continue to increase the number of students on campus who are majoring in English.

B. Assessment of Program Productivity

The English Program at Columbus State is by most measures a very productive program. The majors in the areas of English and English and Secondary Education have grown in an environment where fourteen majors at the University have shrunk. The 12.7 % growth in the English major and 71.8% growth in the English and Secondary Education major are important measures of the health of the program, particularly in an economic environment that has made students very cautious about majoring in humanities fields. The retention rates within the major are indicative of a program that is not only attracting students but also retaining them. Retention rates of 92% for English and 75% for English and Secondary Education would be impressive in any institutional setting, but they are particularly noteworthy in an environment where the overall retention rate is 33%. Finally, the cost per credit hour indicates that the Department is among the most efficient in the University. One credit hour of English costs almost half of what the average credit hour cost (\$102 per hour as opposed to \$194 per hour), making the program a bargain in almost anyone's eyes.

Graduation rates (6-year) are more problematic, dipping as low as 20% for 2001 and then moving abruptly up to 50% the very next year. The Department reasons that these numbers can be explained by "the particular draw of students involved." We agree, but recommend that the Department try to explain the numbers more completely by looking at individual cohorts. Given the fact that according to the "Six-Year Graduation" chart in Appendix II these problems are shared by many majors at CSU, this could well be a University-wide endeavor.

C. Assessment of Program Viability

By every measure the English Program at Columbus State is a viable program with a very bright future. The plans the Department has in place to continue increasing the number of majors are right on the mark: involving the assistant chair in recruitment and revising the departmental brochure. We would recommend also that the Department consider developing a newsletter. This would not only help with recruiting majors, but also allow the Department to stay in touch with graduates of the program. A newsletter could also be instrumental in communicating to upper-level administration the growth, creativity, and excitement that are clearly evident in the program. With a professional writing track within the major, the newsletter could easily be a part of an ongoing course or the job of a work study student who is majoring in English and is a part of that track.

We concur with the timetable for program changes listed on page 30. The Creative Writing and Professional Writing tracks will not continue to expand without additional faculty.

Furthermore, expansions of the program in the areas of TESOL and film would take advantage of program areas that are increasingly popular in English programs across the country.

List of Recommendations

1. Recruit a more ethnically diverse faculty.
2. Decrease the number of part-time faculty by creating more full-time faculty lines.
3. Rethink and possibly reformulate the advising program based on a more effective survey of the quality of advising.
4. Create a more meaningful reward system for superior teaching and advising, including supplements and reduced teaching loads.
5. Upper administration should establish consistent and substantial support for faculty travel in order to support increasing expectations in the area of scholarship
6. Upper administration should clarify expectations in the areas of scholarship and service.
7. Revise the Exit Survey to incorporate questions that specifically address individual courses, particularly pivotal courses in the major, such as 2145, 2146, and 4555.
8. Expand faculty, facilities, and equipment to support new tracks within the major.
9. Track the graduation rate more effectively by focusing on particular cohorts.

Columbus State University Comprehensive Program Review Evaluation for the English

Section Two - Indicators of Program Quality

	Rating Category		Observations
II. Summary Findings of Program's Overall Quality			
Self-Study	Very Strong		
Review Team	Very Strong	Review Team Observations:	The English Department at Columbus State provides a very rigorous and effective program.
CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	
II A. The Quality of Faculty			
Self-Study	Above Average		
Review Team	Above Average	Review Team Observations:	The faculty members in English at Columbus State bring to the program a wide range of skills as well as a diverse array of backgrounds. Two weaknesses need to be addressed: Over use of

adjunct faculty and a lack of minority in
fulltime faculty

CPR
Committee

CPR Committee
Observations:

II
B. The Quality of the Teaching

Self-Study

Very Strong

Review
Team

Very Strong

Review Team
Observations:

From all the material the Review Team
examined the teaching faculty at Columbus
State is doing excellent work and is being
evaluated rigorously.

CPR
Committee

CPR Committee
Observations:

II
C. The Quality of Research and Scholarship

Self-Study

Very Strong

Review
Team

Above
Average

Review Team
Observations:

Members of the English faculty at
Columbus State are active in an array of
scholarly activities. However, upper
administration needs to clarify expectations
concerning scholarship and provide more
consistent funding for travel.

CPR
Committee

CPR Committee
Observations:

II
D. The Quality of Service

Self-Study

Very Strong

Review
Team

Very Strong

Review Team
Observations:

Members of the English faculty at
Columbus State are very active in service.
There appears to be confusion, however,
over expectations in this area. Once
again, upper administration needs to clarify
expectations.

CPR
Committee

CPR Committee
Observations:

II
E. The Quality of Faculty and Student Achievements

Self-Study

Very Strong

Review Team	Above Average	Review Team Observations:	Students and faculty at Columbus State have won an array of awards.
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CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	
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II
F. The Quality of Curriculum

Self-Study	Very Strong
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Review Team	Very Strong	Review Team Observations:	The curriculum is regularly assessed and changed to meet evolving student needs. The introduction of tracks in professional and creative writing is a good example of assessment followed by program change.
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CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	
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II
G. The Quality of Facilities & Equipment

Self-Study	Satisfactory
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Review Team	Satisfactory	Review Team Observations:	English majors have expressed some frustration with facilities. Changes need to be made in order to accommodate evolving student needs.
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CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	
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Section Three - Indicators of Program Productivity

	Rating Category		Observations
III. Summary Findings of Program's Overall Productivity			

Self-Study	Above Average
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Review Team	Above Average	Review Team Observations:	Program growth in a challenging environment indicates a very productive program.
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CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	
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III Enrollment in Program for

A. Past 5 Years

Self-Study

Review Team

Review Team Observations: Enrollment has consistently grown.

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations: _____

III B. Degrees Awarded Over the Past 5 Years

Self-Study

Review Team

Review Team Observations: The number of degrees awarded by the department has shown an increase, then what appears to be a leveling off.

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations: _____

III C. Comparison With CSU & USG Programs

Self-Study

Review Team

Review Team Observations: It would be helpful when comparing CSU English graduation rates with others in the USG system to see percentage of graduates that are in English rather than just the number of graduates.

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations: _____

III D. Program Retention Rate

Self-Study

Review Team

Review Team Observations: The retention rates for English majors are very high, which correlates with student satisfaction with the program and the commitment to success of its faculty members.

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations: _____

III Student Learning Indicators

E.

Self-Study	Above Average		
Review Team	Above Average	Review Team Observations:	Both the exit survey and the alumni survey indicate that students are satisfied with the program. Also, anecdotal information concerning students pursuing postgraduate study seems to confirm that students are well-prepared for a variety of endeavors when they finish the program
CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	<hr/>

III

F. Graduation Rate of Program

Self-Study	Satisfactory		
Review Team	Satisfactory	Review Team Observations:	As suggested earlier looking at graduation of cohorts will cancel some of the variation in graduation rates from year to year. In addition it will provide useful data as to when and possibly why students are changing majors or dropping out of school.
CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	<hr/>

III
G.

Cost-Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery

Self-Study	Very Strong		
Review Team	Very Strong	Review Team Observations:	Cost per credit hour is about half the average cost per credit hour for CSU. This may increase if you see a shift from 50% full time and 50% part time faculty.
CPR Committee		CPR Committee Observations:	<hr/>

Section Four - Program Viability

	Rating Category	Observations
IV A. Summary Findings of Program's Overall Viability		
Self-Study	Very Strong	

Review Team

Very Strong

Review Team Observations:

By all measures the English program at Columbus State is a viable program with a very bright future.

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations:

IV Summary Findings of
B. Program's Improvement Plans

Self-Study

Very Strong

See recommendations at the end of the report summary just above this section

Review Team

Very Strong

Review Team Observations:

CPR Committee

CPR Committee Observations:

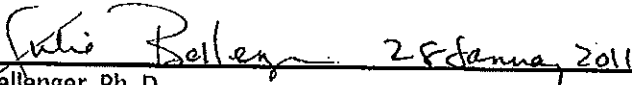
Date of Review Team Visit: November 4th, 2010

Signature of Reviews



1/21/11

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