

To: Hal Crimmel, Dept. Chair, English, WSU
 From: Program Review Evaluation Team
 Date: 11 April 2021

Re: Weber State University English Department Review

The purpose of this report is to detail the findings of the evaluation team with regard to Weber State University’s English Department and provide recommendations according to the standards from the department’s self-study report. The tables below provide the average of the evaluation teams scores for each standard listed in the self-study report as well as summative comments from the evaluative team for each standard. Ultimately, the evaluation team found no weaknesses requiring immediate action, and would like to commend Chair Crimmel and the entire department for the excellent work they do. Further questions or clarifications can be directed to the chair of the evaluation team, Dr. John Belk (johnbelk@suu.edu).

Scoring Key: *S = Strength, G = Good, C = Concern, W = Weakness, X = did not evaluate (please indicate why)*

A. Mission Statement (Avg. Score: G)

Strengths:	The Department is clearly meeting the needs of the university and its programs, courses, and initiatives are responsive to larger institutional concerns. This is demonstrated by the mission statement (which is currently under revision) and the 10 strategic goals of the Department listed in the Self-Study report.
Challenges:	The challenges facing the English Department’s mission are mostly those facing every English department: the large size and complexity of the department can contribute to mission creep without regular review and re-orientation, a challenge which has been addressed admirably through continual revision and improvement of the mission statement as demonstrated in the self-study report.
Weaknesses:	N/A
Recommendations for Change:	N/A
Additional Recommendations:	

B. Curriculum (Avg. Score: S)

Strengths:	The curriculum standard was a particularly strong category for the English Department, which maintains a robust Concurrent Enrollment program, strong emphases within the major, and excellent faculty oversight and support for those emphases. The department also maintains very flexible course offerings, with regular classes offered in both F2F and Hybrid formats for Day time (Full Semester and 7-week block), Evening (Full Semester and 7-week block), as well as Online. Even more flexibility during COVID: F2F, Online, Hybrid, Virtual Hybrid, Virtual Live- Streaming, and Flex. The individual emphases and areas have full-time, TT faculty coordinators (most of whom are untenured, but under review for tenure this year) who receive reassigned time for their coordinating work. This model has allowed
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	department administration to remain centralized, while still drawing on faculty expertise to direct individual areas.
Challenges:	The department wants to place more focus on undergraduate research, which is always a challenge for large departments with high enrollments and large general education programs under their supervision. The reassigned time for Program Directors was also uneven--this could be due to discrepancies in size and workload between programs, but a closer evaluation of reassigned time might be warranted.
Weaknesses:	None--curriculum is a true strength of Weber's English Department and it currently serves both students, the university, and the wider community well.
Recommendations for Change:	The department already maintains an effective, adaptable curriculum that is regularly reviewed and revised to maintain peak efficacy. Regular review and adjustment of reassigned time for Program Directors to maintain equitable labor distribution is also recommended.
Additional Recommendations:	

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment (Avg. Score: G)

Strengths:	The department currently has several robust and complex assessment plans in place that have the enthusiastic support of the Program Directors. Several people spoke very highly of the assessment strategies employed by Professor Panko for the literature emphasis in particular.
Challenges:	The evaluation team noted that current assessment was perhaps <i>too</i> granular complex, and might be streamlined to simplify faculty labor without sacrificing actionable information.
Weaknesses:	The largest concern raised in this area is that it is not entirely clear that assessment drives program change. Multiple faculty expressed concerns that current assessment procedures do not get actionable results, and the department as a whole has been revising their assessment procedures already. <u>It was also suggested by the faculty interviewed that the language used in reporting the assessment results can be more "user friendly" and meaningful.</u>
Recommendations for Change:	Emphases and programs under the English department might benefit from some standardization of assessment strategies without sacrificing the diversity and adaptability of such a large and complex department. As noted, Dr. Panko's colleagues spoke highly about her assessment strategies in particular, which might be a good place to begin thinking about possible streamlining.
Additional Recommendations:	

D. Academic Advising (Avg. Score: S)

Strengths:	<p>Clear structure of advising within the major (1/2 time faculty assigned to advising doing outstanding and specific work in outreach and recruitment) and also within the college. Clear collegiality and support among the advising staff, and between them and ENGL admin and staff.</p> <p>A terrific model that effectively utilizes three groups of advisors (College, Department, and Area), with (1) the three college academic advisors to declare majors, perspective students, general education requirements, the university degree requirements, and general overview of major and pre-major course requirement; (2) ½ time Department Advisor Dr. John Schwiebert to advise prospective and declared English majors and minors on program requirements, emphasis options, and opportunities within the department; and (3) Area faculty advise as-needed on course requirements and sequence within each program emphasis within the department.</p>
Challenges:	<p>The three biggest challenges advisors noted were a (1) large non-traditional aged student population, (2) many of whom have changing life circumstances during their time as students. This often contributes to (3) students running out of financial aid.</p>
Weaknesses:	<p>Only one retention advisor for the entire A&H college, but she does a great job in outreach. College advisors are overworked, and most of the evaluation team noticed a need for greater support (likely in the form of another position) in this area.</p>
Recommendations for Change:	<p>Greater advising support at the college level especially is the primary recommendation of the evaluation team, though all members were very impressed with the structure and efficacy of Weber's mixed model of advising. Also, several advisors raised the possibility of more Department and College-level scholarships to help address challenge 3 above.</p>
Additional Recommendations:	

E. Faculty (Avg. Score: S)

Strengths:	<p>Strong core of faculty, universally praised Department Chair, and good gender balance were strengths particularly lauded by the evaluation team. Department culture also seemed overwhelmingly positive: faculty (including junior faculty) have freedom to pursue flexible options, (e.g., Honors, community-engaged, sustainability, etc.) and contingent faculty feel like they are treated as equals at the department level. Overall this was another exceedingly strong area for the English Department.</p>
Challenges:	<p>One challenge noted universally by the evaluation team is the dearth of Associate Professors in the department (though this is less concerning knowing 4 Assistant Professors are currently under review for tenure and promotion).</p>
Weaknesses:	<p>There is concern that the English department has minimal racial and ethnic diversity among TT faculty. A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force has been established since 2020 with 12 full-time faculty, one student, and 10</p>

	<p>adjuncts to consider the following: student recruitment and retention strategies, hiring practices, course offerings, course content among others.</p> <p>The Department also relies heavily on adjuncts, with 50% of courses taught by contingent faculty. While the English Department maintains a pool of highly qualified adjuncts, concerns about low pay and difficulty securing sections came up when speaking with several groups. This also raised concerns about recruiting for the major, as many GE classes that serve as recruiting classes are taught by adjuncts.</p> <p>Finally, a significant concern was expressed from multiple parties about one of the great dilemmas facing higher ed: full-time NTT faculty want more recognition, responsibility, and representation on major committees, but also struggle to balance such responsibilities with heavy teaching loads, which are even more crushing when paired with low salaries that necessitate overloads to make ends meet. This prevents NTT faculty from taking on broader service/administrative responsibilities and is a significant sore spot in terms of morale.</p>
Recommendations for Change:	<p>In addition to the diversity issues already being addressed, there seems to be a great desire of the contract and adjunct faculty to have the opportunity to teach more overload classes for additional pay. In addition, it would be beneficial to consider increasing the current 2-year contract for the contract faculty to 3- year contract (tied to the 3-year review of the contract faculty) for the contract faculty to have better job security and stability.</p> <p>Improved compensation and greater job stability for full-time NTT faculty especially could solve multiple challenges facing the department; at SUU we found that increasing compensation for NTT faculty and offering a promotion structure that moves them to a 5-year review cycle at the rank of NTT Associate Professor has resulted in a near complete elimination of overload requests, greater job satisfaction, and greater freedom to sit on more demanding committees and mentorship roles for senior NTT faculty. We now have multiple NTT Associate Professors who are reviewed every five years like tenured faculty, and who as a result serve important administrative and mentorship roles for junior NTT faculty that free TT faculty for other duties.</p>
Additional Recommendations:	

F. Support (Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment, and Library) (Avg. Score: 5)

Strengths:	<p>Staff are in good spirits about the department overall. They feel department administration is extremely supportive, and they feel confident about their expertise and the support they receive for additional training (e.g., Kate was able to attend a marketing conference for MENG admin as her role evolved to take on more marketing responsibilities). We also asked specifically if staff feel comfortable communicating when they cannot handle workloads to which all answered yes.</p>
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	Overall, staff feel well-treated, well-supported, and well-respected in their positions, with several evaluation team members noting staff passion for the English department.
Challenges:	The two major support challenges raised by staff were building English degrees tailored to a digital age (e.g., online degrees, virtual classes, job placement, etc.) and continuing to convey why the department is a great place to study.
Weaknesses:	A strong desire was expressed for the need of a ½ time Administrative Assistant in the Composition Program in the department, which seems both appropriate and highly recommended for a program this size (as a Writing Program Director myself, I'd say it is a testament to department and program leadership that the program is as efficient and effective as it is without a dedicated admin)
Recommendations for Change:	<p>Department administration is already planning an audit of Kate's job to assess hours that the additional marketing responsibilities will add to her full plate, indicating a proactive responsiveness to shifting responsibilities that should simply be maintained.</p> <p>Aside from that, the most pressing recommendation is that the Composition Program would greatly benefit from (at least) a half-time admin position due to size and complexity.</p>
Additional Recommendations:	

G. Relationships with the External Communities (Avg. Score: 5)

Strengths:	<p>The English Department at Weber has one of the largest and best Concurrent Enrollment programs in the state. There is excellent monitoring and training of Concurrent faculty teaching in area high schools, and the team was impressed about the extent to which HS faculty were functioning as extensions of a collegiate department. The external CE representatives we spoke with also said English and Math were exemplar departments in terms of how they run and assess things.</p> <p>The English Department also serves the external community and the university well through: Composition Program (ENGL 1010 & 2010), 2000-level creative writing courses with Creative Arts designation (CA), 2000- and 3000-level literature and humanities courses carrying the Humanities (HU), 2000- and 3000-level literature and humanities courses carrying the Diversity (DV), High-impact practices in the Honors and the Wildcat Scholars Program, Community-Engaged Learning courses, Support students for undergraduate research, Concurrent Enrollment, and serves many other majors across campus such as ENGL 3100 Professional and Technical Writing, ENGL 3500 Introduction to Shakespeare, English Education offerings, and the Interdisciplinary Film Studies Major. Finally, the Creative Writing program organizes a robust Visiting Writers series that adds great cultural benefit to the university and wider community.</p>
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Challenges:	The English department serves 3300 students through Concurrent Enrollment. The vast majority of these courses are taught F2F by HS teachers with Masters degrees, with observations every three years. This scope in itself is a challenge, though Weber is THE model in the state for running such a large and efficient CE program. The faculty liaisons do a terrific job of setting norms for the HS English teachers, and the evaluation team noted that the <u>structure seems very tight.</u>
Weaknesses:	N/A
Recommendations for Change:	None--as with curriculum, the department is already doing great things in a sustainable and adaptable manner with regards to external partnerships and service. The English Department at Weber seems to provide invaluable and numerous external services for both the campus community and larger community as a whole.
Additional Recommendations:	Though not a recommendation, the evaluation team wanted to especially commend the Composition Program's creative and ambitious initiatives to better and more adaptably serve General Education at Weber, from integrated classes with librarians to multimodal pedagogy using Adobe Creative Suite, these initiatives demonstrate that innovative writing pedagogy can absolutely be a scalable enterprise across a large student body.

H. Results of Previous Program Reviews (Avg. Score: S)

Strengths:	The English Department at Weber State is clearly a program that strives for continual improvement. Responses to previous program reviews were thorough and well covered in the self-study, and everyone we spoke with seemed to have great positivity associated with the future directions and initiatives of the department.
Challenges:	N/A
Weaknesses:	N/A
Recommendations for Change:	N/A
Additional Recommendations:	