



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
*The Graduate School*  
*G-1 Communications*  
*Box 353770*  
*Seattle, Washington 98195-3770*

*Telephone: (206)543-5900*

*Fax: (206)685-3234*

December 7, 2009 (*revised 12/10/09*)

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost  
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean  
James S. Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the Department of English

This memo outlines the recommendations on the review of the Department of English and its Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Arts for Teachers (MAT), Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Master of Arts in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree programs. Detailed comments on the program can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Department of English self-study (November, 2008)
- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (December 3, 2008)
- Site visit (January 22-23, 2009)
- Review committee report (May 20, 2009)
- Department of English response to the report (October 29, 2009)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (November 19, 2009)

The review committee consisted of:

Stephen J. Majeski, Professor, UW Political Science (Committee Chair)  
Anthony Geist, Professor, UW Spanish and Portuguese Studies  
Alicia Beckford Wassink, Associate Professor, UW Linguistics  
Ronald F. Carlson, Professor, Department of English, University of California, Irvine  
Julie Ellison, Professor, Department of English, University of Michigan  
Douglas D. Hesse, Professor, Department of English, The University of Denver

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on October 19, 2009. After discussion, Council recommended

continuing status for the department, with the next review to be scheduled during the 2018-2019 academic year. In addition to the strengths and challenges noted below, the Council wishes to congratulate the department on its significant progress since its previous review five years ago. The Council encourages the department to continue its progress addressing the ongoing challenges it faces as a unit of substantial size and academic diversity. Specific comments regarding the department and its degree programs include the following:

### Program Strengths

- The English Department has courageously turned around what was, at the time of their last review (2002), a troubling situation--organizational confusion and low faculty/student morale. This was a collective achievement on the part of the faculty with critical strategic support from the College.
- The department's new governance structure has produced a more cohesive department by engaging members from diverse areas, increasing participation and consensus building within the program. The department chair's leadership has played a significant role in this progress.
- The department has an active faculty on all fronts—research, teaching, and service. The creative writing faculty is particularly stellar. Noteworthy is the impressive public and community presence “across the mission”: in pedagogy, scholarship and creative work, outreach, and fund-raising.
- The department has been especially effective hiring outstanding faculty and has successfully mentored associates toward promotion.
- 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 unit has recently completed innovative curricular revisions at the undergraduate level and has undertaken an effective mentoring project for TAs.
- Enthusiasm for excellence in teaching and involvement in cutting-edge pedagogy stood out in the review committee's interactions with the department's graduate students.

### Challenges & Risks

- A significant challenge for the unit is its ongoing work forging an identity from among the many complex parts of the department – a perennial challenge common to large departments. Public Engagement (Public Scholarship) might provide one focus for such an identity, and the department's hiring plan, if flexible in responding to emerging opportunities, can play a key role in departmental identity.
- A second challenge lies in the need to project the same value and respect to all areas of the department through representation in departmental governance, graduate admissions, and work load. This includes representation of all areas on the department's Executive Committee and Graduate Admissions Committee.
- The review committee noted specific challenges for the MA/Ph.D. program, from admission to placement, as outlined in the committee report. Specifically, admissions needs more input from faculty outside of Literature and Culture, particularly from

members of the Language and Rhetoric group, in reviewing applicants for admission. The training program needs greater “clarity, consistency and transparency,” and the department has taken initial steps in this process by initiating the development of a graduate training manual and by organizing a department-wide retreat on graduate training issues for January, 2010. Concerns about placement of graduates have begun to be addressed by adding a job preparation institute to the long standing Preparing Future Faculty program.

- One of the greatest challenges will be continued progress in light of shrinking budgets, including maintaining the quality of core undergraduate and graduate education. This will require making tough decisions and eliminating or suspending some well respected and valuable components such as the writing center and senior seminars.

#### Areas of Concurrence

- Both the review committee and the department recognize the importance of the department identifying its intellectual center as an ongoing process due to changes in faculty and the global intellectual landscape.
- There is a need for greater transparency in graduate training and broader area representation in graduate admissions.

#### Areas of Disagreement

- The review committee recommends scaling back the service component of the work done by the department in light of budget cutbacks. The department prefers maintaining its service role but requests adequate funding.

#### Graduate School Council Recommendation

- The Graduate School Council recommends the English Department continue in its efforts to respond to the review committee’s recommendations.
- The College of Arts and Sciences should support the department in recruiting top-notch scholars in areas identified by the Department and the Review Committee, as well as in graduate student recruitment. The department should continue to consider adjusting faculty service load if this funding is not forthcoming.
- The English Department’s degree programs should be on continuing status, with subsequent review in 10 years (2018-2019).

We concur with the Council’s comments and recommendations.

cc: 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

Department of English Review Committee  
Graduate School Council Members  
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School  
Jake Faleschini, President, GPSS