

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ACADEMIC PLAN: 10/16/08

INTRODUCTION

Encompassing old texts and new technologies, English is the study of how people use writing to understand their world and define their place in it. This task is crucial at our contemporary moment, which is witnessing titanic economic changes even as it struggles to understand the ongoing impact of terrorism and war, the unequal distribution of resources among and within nations, and the pursuit of justice in a frightened world. Understanding these struggles and their interrelationships requires the combination of cultural awareness, critical thinking, and rhetorical skills that English provides.

Accordingly, English at UW must commit to serve students through the rigorous study of old and new texts and through the intense analysis and production of writing, including the forms of electronic writing that are transforming cultural landscapes worldwide. We must examine how and why writers tell stories, the place of writing in different societies and at different historical moments, and the possibilities for writing in the 21st century. Taken together, these tasks teach students about aesthetic choice, intellectual risk, social and political responsibility, and the power of curious minds to improve the world. Engaging all these issues, English prepares students to enter society as creative problem solvers. English graduates bring their literary and rhetorical awareness to bear on complex contemporary situations, enriching their own lives and contributing positively to the multiple communities in which they live.

In this plan, English pursues objectives that strengthen our ability to share our passion for learning and our deep knowledge with our full range of students, including: those taking first-year composition (almost the entire UW student body); those pursuing USP requirements (i.e. CH, D, WB, WC); those completing the English major or one of our minors (literary studies, professional writing, creative writing); and those pursuing graduate study at the MA or MFA level. We intend as well to explore the possibility of instituting an English PhD so that students at Wyoming's flagship institution may have the option of undertaking the highest level of literary and rhetorical study.

PREVIOUS PLANNING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the period of Academic Plan II, English achieved the following accomplishments. We:

- implemented a currently thriving MFA program in Creative Writing;
- hired creative writing faculty who are pursuing interdisciplinary ties across UW;
- collaborated across UW to create innovative (though impermanent) GA positions for the MFA;
- won an endowed Eminent Professorship for the MFA;
- implemented the position of director of the MA in English;
- hired faculty who substantially bolster our strength in the teaching of writing;
- developed and delivered numerous Outreach courses;
- attracted substantial donations, particularly in relation to graduate study;
- pursued an ongoing policy of converting temporary lectureship lines to extended-term status;
- developed websites that respond to the changing contours of the department;
- supported the Synergy program for at-risk students

ACTION ITEMS (numbers in parentheses after each item indicate the year or years in the plan when we intend to pursue that item)

I. HIRING:

To help students, UW, and the state think nimbly about how to meet the challenges and opportunities of the present and the future, English will pursue new hires that improve the educational access, leadership, and excellence we can offer. As the state's flagship institution, UW must provide the best possible instruction to all the students we serve through our USP and interdisciplinary courses. English must prepare our many majors for any level of future study they might seek, including doctoral study. At the graduate level, we must guarantee excellence in our programs by delivering a strong curriculum to the full range of our students. To reach this goal, we will require new faculty lines, especially given our growing programs and likely retirements. In addition, we will seek to improve our extended-term and temporary lectureships, thereby addressing UW's "responsibility to build excellence in human capital." In return, our new and better established hires will further UW's aims of nourishing "cultural assets, arts, and humanities" and educating students for "professions critical to the state and region."

- 1: Hone responsible five-year hiring plans in literary studies, rhetoric and composition, and creative writing, and begin hiring in key fields. (Year 1)**
- 2: Convert temporary APL lines to extended term as appropriate. (1-5)**
- 3: Raise salaries for temporary faculty. (1)**
- 4: Add a staff position to support growing programs. (2)**

II. UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION:

Through undergraduate instruction, English reaches almost the entire UW student body. We are a gateway discipline, preparing students for successful study at the university; we are a pathway discipline, providing the courses students need to complete the curriculum; and we are a destination discipline, serving a growing body of majors and minors. In this plan, English seeks the resources and outlines the philosophy that will allow us to serve UW undergraduates well.

Wyoming expects UW to prepare the thinkers and writers who will become the state's newest leaders. We intend to deliver on this expectation and commit to sustaining viable and complex curricula for the many student constituencies that depend on English instruction. In particular, we focus on the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that will prepare students to shape the cultural and economic landscape of the 21st century. We intend to provide access and excellence to students across Wyoming by developing our partnership with the Outreach School and maintaining a website that connects us to the state's teachers and students. We also commit to assessing our programs meaningfully and to securing the funding necessary for meaningful assessment.

- 5: Maintain a curriculum that serves our major and minors as well as fulfilling our USP commitments and our interdisciplinary commitments (i.e. to Honors, AAST, AIST, RELI, WMST, Synergy). (1-5)**
- 6: Assess the broad curriculum and implement necessary changes. This goal includes specific courses like the newly-revised English 1010 and English 4010. It also includes responding to changes occurring due to the energy boom and possibly developing courses with environmental and regional themes.**
 - i: Assess the creative writing minor and implement necessary changes**

- in light of our expanded creative writing faculty. (1-2)
- ii: Assess the professional writing minor and implement necessary changes in light of the need to prepare students for professions, such as Energy Resources and Health Sciences, “critical to the future of the state and region.” (1-2)
- 7: Evaluate a placement assessment for English 1010, if there is an institutional commitment to providing resources for students deemed to need additional instruction in composition. (1-2)
 - 8: Work with the College of Education to design, assess, and deliver the most appropriate curriculum for English majors who will go on to teach in Wyoming schools. (1-5)
 - 9: Obtain an annual budget for assessment, i.e. for designing and evaluating surveys; transcribing interviews and analyzing focus groups; and assessing student papers. (1)
 - 10: Obtain industry standard software for at least one computer lab to prepare writing students to enter a 21st century workforce. (1)
 - 11: Secure the funding needed to deliver English language instruction to UW’s growing body of international students. (1)
 - 12: Review our commitments to the Outreach School and UW/CC and make curricular changes as necessary. (1-5)
 - 13: Maintain the articulation of our lower level courses with the Community Colleges to ensure students can take and earn credit for the courses they need. (1-5)
 - 14: Increase our presence at major American Indian Reservations statewide as part of our effort to increase access and to demonstrate our appreciation for diverse human perspectives. (1-5)
 - 15: Obtain an annual budget to create and maintain a website that includes resources for high school and community college teachers and administrators. This website will play a key role in our participation in the state’s K-16 initiative. (1)
 - 16: Connect with and provide leadership for state wide P-16 initiatives. (1-5)

III. GRADUATE EDUCATION:

Strengthening graduate education is a paramount goal for any responsible state university. In what follows, we identify the resources needed to sustain our graduate programs and nurture the programmatic flexibility that distinguishes them.

Our MFA and MA must feed the excellence and depth of English and raise UW’s reputation for graduate education. English GAs teach foundational knowledge and skills; their work is central to the success and retention of UW undergraduates. Our graduate programs help train the next generation of leaders in the humanities and the fine arts. Strengthening our graduate programs also puts us in a stronger position to consider instituting a PhD. These goals require resources in the form of good GA’ships and other funding so that we can attract and aggressively recruit strong applicants and serve them well when they are here.

The dynamic MFA in Creative Writing promotes interdisciplinarity through a flexibly designed curriculum, recruitment of students with interdisciplinary interests, partnerships with programs across campus, and investment in faculty from outside English. The MFA reaches out to Wyoming communities through the Visiting Writer’s

Series and Weather Reports. It promotes international study by supporting students' research abroad. And through the Eminent Writer in Residence, it attracts some of the finest young writers in the nation to UW and puts them into close contact with first-rate faculty and acclaimed visiting writers. Thus the MFA promotes leadership in the fine arts by acting as a wellspring of great new American writing.

The MA in English trains students in the fields of Literary Studies and Rhetoric and Composition. The MA serves a wide constituency, including teachers upgrading their skills, students preparing for PhDs in nationally-ranked programs, aspiring community college teachers, and graduates who launch successful careers in the private sector.

In addition to bolstering our MFA and MA, this plan calls for the exploration of a new PhD program, assuming adequate continuing support for our existing programs. AS we pursue this initiative, we remind the College and the University that the MFA remains the "coin of the realm," the terminal degree in creative writing.

- 17. Pursue full funding, through assistantships and summer stipends, for all students admitted to the MFA and MA programs. (1-5)**
- 18. Aggressively pursue a fundraising agenda for the MFA through the development of a coordinated fundraising plan. (1-5)**
- 19. Increase the number of applicants to the MA program. (1-5)**
- 20. Assess the MA programs in Literature and Composition and Rhetoric and institute any needed revisions. (2)**
- 21. Pursue innovative uses of already-existing private donations to English and the MFA in the recruitment of top MFA and MA applicants. (1)**
- 22. Create a research travel matching fund program for the MFA and the MA. (1-5)**
- 23. Increase the incorporation of diversity into the MFA and the MA through curricular development and visiting writer / scholar programming. (1, 2)**
- 24. Through curricular development and visiting writer programs, increase the MFA's attention to Wyoming's energy boom and the range of scientific, environmental, and human impacts associated with energy politics in the 21st century. (1-5)**
- 25. Pursue a collaboration between the MFA and the Art Museum. (1-5)**
- 26. Explore the possibility of an online MA delivered through Outreach. (1)**
- 27. Explore the possibility of teaching opportunities in undergraduate classes beyond English 1010 for MFA and MA students. (1, 2)**
- 28. Institute an MA speaker series to expose students and faculty to some of the best scholars in the country. (1)**
- 29. Explore a possible new PhD program, according to the following timetable: Year 1: Feasibility Study; Year 2: PhD Committee constructs a concrete program of study and presents it to the faculty for a vote. Contingent on the results of the vote in year 2, we would continue as follows: Year 3: Gain approval for the program and specific courses from the relevant University committees; Year 4: Seek and secure resources such as assistantships; Year 5: Advertise and recruit; Year 6: Begin the program.**

IV. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE:

Through research, English faculty and students actively contribute to and critically assess our current culture, valued activities at a time of incredible textual proliferation. In this plan, English commits to encourage and reward high levels of research and creative productivity among faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. We intend to increase

our research excellence, expand access to research, and serve as research leaders. These goals, as well as our consideration of a PhD program, require us to build the library resources that sustain humanities research and provide the structures, such as a literary journal, for synthesizing and disseminating creative work.

- 30: Build and repair library resources, including: databases such as Early English Books On-line and Eighteenth-Century Catalogue On-line; new books; important journals; and back issues of journals suspended in times of limited resources. (1-5)**
- 31: Pursue the possibility of creating a literary journal (print with an online presence) in affiliation with the MFA program. (1-3)**
- 32: Fund faculty and student travel for purposes of research and travel to local, national, and international conferences. (1-5)**
- 33: Provide competitive course releases to support faculty research. (1-5)**
- 34: Review and if necessary revise our research and creative output expectations for faculty. (1)**
- 35: Together with other departments and programs explore the feasibility of a research-based Humanities Institute at UW and, if there is sufficient departmental support, help implement such an Institute. (1-2)**
- 36: Host conferences and symposia centering on issues important to literary studies and creative writing. (1-5)**

V. PHYSICAL SPACE FOR THE HUMANITIES:

Any vibrant and synergistic academic unit requires a physical space adequate to the needs of the discipline. Accordingly, English, together with other Humanities units at UW, (Modern and Classical Languages, Philosophy, Religious Studies), advocates a new Humanities Building. Such a building would provide a needed center for humanities leadership and energize humanistic study. These goals are essential for a flagship research institution like UW.

Our vision of a new Humanities Building includes: classrooms specifically designed for humanities instruction; state-of-the-art teaching resources; meeting spaces that encourage faculty collaboration, including collaboration with faculty across the state; and excellent office facilities that support teaching, advising, and research.

In addition to the important new value a Humanities Building would create, it would also rectify a current deficiency: the woeful inadequacy of Hoyt Hall (in terms of office space, classroom space, meeting space, and technological capabilities) to support the caliber of humanities work that we must deliver.

- 37: Pursue a new Humanities Building that will encourage the best possible humanities instruction in the 21st century. (1-5)**

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

Year 1: Action Items 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 31, 34, 35

Year 2: Action Items 4, 6, 7, 20, 23, 27, 31, 35

Year 3: Action Items 31

Years 1-5, Ongoing: Action Items 2, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 37