

UGC PREPORT ON THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The English Department approaches the assessment of learning outcomes very conscientiously. It has identified a comprehensive set of learning objectives for all of its majors and additional objectives specific to each of the major's two tracks. An Assessment Committee is charged with developing the Department's tools of assessment, which include both direct (e.g., student portfolios) and indirect (e.g., exit interviews and SCEQ scores) methods.

The Department began formal assessment of its academic program in 2010. The process revealed that while 70% - 80% of its students had acquired at least "average" or "above average" mastery of assessed learning objectives, student proficiency lagged somewhat with regard to research-related objectives, such as "crafting effective research questions, conducting relevant research, using analytical methods competently, and effectively presenting research and opposing ideas." In response, the English Department comprehensively revised its major (details below) to feature a new required course for all majors, ENGL 300, that focuses on the practice of research.

In 2011, the English Department assessed ENGL 100, the composition course that all UMBC undergraduates take. As a result, concerns were raised about feedback to individual students and about "course drift," the result of many instructors whose classes reflected wide variation in terms of style, format, and nature of instructor feedback. In response, the Department launched in 2012 its Composition Redesign project.

The 2012 assessment revealed that 80% - 90% of its students had achieved its learning objectives at the "average" or "above average" level. While this marked a significant improvement over the 2010 assessment data, the 2014 assessment report indicated that once again 70% - 80% of English majors had attained satisfactory levels of learning-objective proficiency. The 2014 report did, however, show that 95% of its literature track majors met the learning objectives specific to the track.

On the recommendation of the Assessment Committee, the Department identified course-specific learning objectives for ENGL 301 and 302. These were implemented for ENGL 302 in Fall 2014. For ENGL 301, the Department was to vote on proposed objectives in Spring 2016.

B. STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE, PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS, PROGRAM CHANGES

The English Department's Self Study for the 2016 APR noted that the number of its majors remained relatively stable during the period under review, an average of 301.1 over the last five years, a figure higher than the 299.8 average reported in its 2009 APR. This enrollment stability stands in contrast to the experience of other English programs in Maryland and around the country, whose enrollments have witnessed a marked decline. UMBC's English Department credits this success to its vigilant attention to curriculum and students.

In 2011, in response to 2010 assessment data, the Department comprehensively revised its major program. To boost competencies related to research, the English Department trimmed the number of mandatory core courses for its major from four to two and mandated that all majors take both English 300 ("Communication and Technology: Analysis of Texts and Contexts") and ENGL301 ("Analysis of Literary Language"). It also created a "diversity requirement" for all of its majors. To complete the English major, students must take at least one course "that addresses issues of diversity relating to experiences of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, ability or other markers of identity." The diversity requirement aims to broaden a curriculum that has historically focused on traditional British and American literature.

C. UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

The English Department offers a 39 credit major in which students complete one of two track options, Literature or Communication and Technology (CT). For students who aim to become high school English teachers, the Department in conjunction with the Education Department offers secondary education certification. It also offers a minor with three track options (Literature, CT, and Writing) and four extended minors (Journalism, Rhetoric and Communication, Creative Writing, and Professional Writing). The English Department also participates in two interdisciplinary minor programs: Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) and Judaic Studies.

The 39-credit English major consists exclusively of upper-level courses. To begin courses in the major, students must first complete ENGL 100 (a GEP requirement for all UMBC students) and a 200-level ENGL elective, which in most cases will satisfy an Arts/Humanities or Culture GEP requirement. Students who major in English must take a 6-credit core (ENGL 300 and 301), plus 12-credits of common electives, which includes the diversity course discussed above. Majors must also take 21 credits in their chosen track.

The English minors in Literature and CT are both 18 credits. Each specifies a 2-course, six-credit core and 12 elective credits. The English Writing minor has a 4-course, 12 credit core with six elective credits. Students who pursue the

extended minors in Journalism, Rhetoric and Communication, Creative Writing, or Professional Writing must complete the same 12-credit core as the 18-credit Writing minor, but they must also complete 12 additional credits from prescribed lists for a total of 24 credits.

The English Department also provides a number of courses in service to UMBC's General Education Program (GEP), most importantly ENGL 100 ("Composition"). It also provides an array of other 100 and 200-level courses that students use to satisfy GEP distribution requirements in the areas of Arts/Humanities and Culture.

D. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

The English Department strongly encourages its students, particularly those in its Honors program, to participate in UMBC's Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD). Between 2009 and 2015, 28 students from the English Department presented their work at URCAD. In addition, during the same period, eight students had essays published in the *UMBC Review*.

In 2014-2015, the English Department took part in the Humanities, Arts, Science, Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC), an interdisciplinary program that encourages collaboration among students whose research is centered on technology. One of its majors in the CT track, a 2015 graduate, participated in the program.

E. UNDERGRADUATE ADVISEMENT

All full-time faculty members in the English Department (tenured/tenure-track, lecturers, and instructors) participate in undergraduate advising. (The English Department has 28 full-time faculty members: 13 tenured/tenure track, 2 Professors of the Practice, 1 Writer in Residence, 4 senior lecturers, 6 lecturers, and 2 instructors.) Faculty members advise both English majors and minors. Each full-time faculty member with three or more years of advising experience is assigned between 15 and 25 advisees. The Department's Advising Coordinator, Alumni Liaison, and Honors Program Director are each assigned 50 advisees. New lecturers are assigned between 5 -10 advisees and newly hired tenure-track faculty have no advising duties during their first year at UMBC. Part-time and temporary instructors have no advising duties at all as the Department is concerned with maintaining consistency in its student advising.

The Department's Advising Coordinator is responsible for assigning students to their advisors and for keeping advisors informed about curricular changes and new course offerings. The Advising Coordinator updates an advisor checklist, posted on Blackboard every semester and generally works to keep advisors current with regard to UMBC's advising software.

F. COUNCIL OF MAJORS; UNDERGRADUATE HONORS; AWARDS; RECOGNITION

According to the English Department's website, all English majors and minors are invited to participate in its Council of Majors and Minors. The website also alerts students to the opportunity to join *Sigma Tau Delta*, the English Honors Society. However, the materials made available for writing this report make no mention of either, so the topic cannot be discussed further.

The English Department reports that 10 of its majors received Undergraduate Research Awards (URAs) between 2009 and 2015. It also reports that a significant percentage of its majors go on to pursue masters and doctoral degrees at institutions across the region, the nation, and the world.

G. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHING QUALITY

The English Department keeps the enrollment caps relatively low in the core classes for its major as a way to promote quality teaching. In 200-level courses offered to a non-major population, the enrollment cap is set at 40. For the core courses of its major (ENGL 300 and ENGL 301), as well as core courses in its two tracks (ENGL 302 and ENGL 325), enrollments are capped at 24. Elective courses for majors at the 300-level are capped at 30, general topic 400-level courses at 20, and 400-level seminars at 15. In addition, all courses in creative writing from the 200-level up are kept relatively small. The Department maintains that limiting enrollment capacities encourages students to participate more in class and enables instructors to give students more individual attention and feedback.

The English Department also relies on SCEQs and peer observation to promote teaching quality. SCEQs are used in promotion and tenure processes, as well as all other faculty reviews. The Department has a Peer-Review of Teaching Policy, which recommends that junior faculty be periodically observed in the classroom and in turn be invited to observe their senior colleagues. The reciprocity built into the process offers junior faculty the opportunity to learn from experts.

For adjunct faculty, the English Department has in place a more formal observation process. A Teaching Observation Report is completed on an annual basis by the Department's UPD or Chair for each adjunct professor who teaches in the major.

The English Department's Writing and Rhetoric Division (WARD) pays particular attention to the quality of its instruction. WARD provides 60 sections per year of ENGL 100 instruction, 28 sections of Technical Communication (ENGL 393), as well as a host of writing courses for English majors and Writing

minors. WARD uses a variety of methods to evaluate teaching, including SCEQs, classroom observation, and review of syllabi. Results are incorporated into formal reviews for full-time faculty at 3 to 5 year intervals and every year for part-time instructors. In addition, as part of the annual review of adjunct faculty, the Writing Curriculum Committee reviews all syllabi to evaluate “quality, clarity, and compliance with syllabus and assessment requirements.”

Members of WARD’s faculty consider classroom observation and review of teaching materials as more than evaluative exercises. They view them as ways to encourage collaborative learning.

H. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It was made clear in both the Self–Study and the Report of the External Reviewers that the ability to sustain the Communication and Technology track in the English major was contingent on the acquisition of additional faculty resources. Delivery of the CT curriculum had been seriously compromised by recent faculty resignations. The UGC is happy to report that the Dean of CAHSS has approved two faculty hires, one in CT and the other in Digital Humanities. These hires should allow the Department to meet its immediate needs for course delivery in the CT track.

In its APR Self Study, the English Department also requested and the Dean approved a reduction in the enrollment cap for all writing courses, including ENGL 100, from 24 to 22. While the Self-Study notes that professional organizations such as the Council of Teachers of English and Council for Writing Program Administrators recommend class sizes of between 15 and 20 students, the UGC recognizes this decision as a move in the right direction.