



Catherine Zublin  
Interim Dean, Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities  
3950 West Campus Drive, Dept. 1904  
Weber State University  
Ogden, UT 84408

April 30, 2016

Dear Catherine:

The following document is the English Department's reply to the 2015-16 Board of Regents Evaluation Team Report from April 12, 2016. The reply was written by me and includes feedback from interested faculty who chose to send via email suggestions about the content of the reply.

This document is organized into four categories and follows page-by-page the feedback provided by the team.

- I. Concerns/Recommendations that the Department can address on its own;
- II. Concerns/ Recommendations that the Department may be able to address with the help of the Dean's Office;
- III. Concerns/ Recommendations that would require being addressed at the Office of the Provost level and above.
- IV. General Recommendations

### **Section I. Concerns that the Department can address on its own.**

#### **Page 1, Standard A—Mission Statement**

“The statement might be revised to include the various programs within the department and how they contribute to the skills mentioned in the mission statement.”

--In April 2016 the Department Approved a new Positioning Statement that we can use in 2016-17 to revisit the department's mission statement.

#### **Page 1, Standard B—Curriculum**

“Recommendations: 1. a. Rethink the structure of the Composition Program, using a more inclusive decision-making process that helps the department recruit majors and at the same time fulfills the general education mission. Though all sections of ENGL 1010 and ENGL 2010 needn't be identical in terms of materials, readings or assignments, the general curriculum should be comparable on campus and in concurrent enrollment whether taught by tenure-track, full time or adjunct faculty.”

--The department chair will be working with the Interim Director of Composition and the Interim Assistant Director of Composition to better communicate the goals, course structures and service that the Composition program provides to the University.

“Recommendations: 2. b. Consider combining the developmental curriculum and ENGL 1010 into a single 1000-level "stretch" course allowing enthusiastic students to take a sequence of two classes with the same classmates and the same instructor for two semesters (or perhaps two blocks).”

--Currently, the department is developing a new placement matrix with WSU IR that uses high school GPA and ACT scores to better place students into Developmental courses, ENGL 1010 and ENGL 2010. This process may lead us to benchmark our success rates in the developmental classes with those at other



peer institutions in order to see if our current developmental course structure most effectively serves students. Depending on input from the Developmental faculty, we may want to try an experimental two-semester course sequence to gauge success.

Page 3, Standard C—Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Recommendations 2: “Conversation with department faculty and within programs may help define the purpose of program and course assessment and increase participation.”

--We have been working on this all year and will continue to work on it.

Page 3, Standard D, Academic Advising

“Recommendation 3: The next step for the program is to connect with career advising at the college level. Frequently, English majors do not realize their own significance in the job market and they need assistance in order to promote themselves and realize their opportunities.”

--The Department has recently established an internship class and will use this class to help place students into appropriate opportunities. We continue to recognize the need for better connecting our students and graduates with the job market.

--The Office of the Dean, in consultation with Department Chairs, has had several discussions on this topic. Work is ongoing. See also response to this topic under “II. Concerns that the Department may be able to address with the help of the Dean’s Office.”

Page 5, Standard E, Faculty

“Recommendations 4: The 4/4 teaching load needs to be reduced if research is to be valued and if the department is to develop. A goal of a 3/3 for the department (and the College of Arts and Humanities) would be appropriate. This may involve a "teaching track" of 4/4 or 4/3 for faculty who prefer not to do more than minimal scholarly work and who do not wish to work with the MA program. In the meantime, policies should be created to award release time for research and not just administration.”

--These teaching load guidelines come from the Board of Regents and currently are not subject to change.

--However, we could establish faculty development awards within the undergraduate program that would be competitively awarded, similar to those created three years ago in the MENG Program. One award could be exclusively for contract faculty to develop a new course; one could be for tenure-track faculty to develop a new course, and the third could be a research award.

--See response to this topic also under “Section II. Concerns that the Department may be able to address with the help of the Dean’s Office.”

“5. Consider the job security of instructors, hopefully with a move to longer term contracts.”

--In 2015-16 as Chair I met with contract faculty (instructors) for feedback. A main concern was that year-to-year contracts provide very little job security. PPM permits for longer-term contracts. I took the concern to A&H Chairs; it moved on to Dean’s Council. No response has been forthcoming, but the university will need to render a decision (if even authorizing Colleges to address the issue within PPM guidelines) about the way forward on this topic for changes to be made.

-- See also response to this topic under “II. Concerns that the Department may be able to address with the help of the Dean’s Office.”



Page 5, Standard F, Program Support

“Staff has asked for development opportunities external to those provided by the university.”

--As Chair, I will encourage our staff to attend one relevant professional development conference each year.

Page 6, Standard H, Program Summary

Concerns: There has been a dramatic decline in enrollments, particularly within some programs, over the past several years.”

--Working with department faculty and staff, I have, as incoming chair, made recruitment and retention our number one priority for 2015-16. I expect that to continue in 2016-17.

Recommendations:

“8. We strongly recommend the adoption of a set of departmental bylaws. This will remove considerable pressure from the department chair and aid in the efforts at transparency. The process of writing and adopting bylaws or policies should be a departmental-wide effort.”

--As Chair, I have been working extensively on policy during 2015-16, and have completed policy documents pertaining to scheduling, course cancellation, travel, job descriptions, process for electing faculty for leadership positions within the department, and more. I will have a complete set of policy documents and bylaws completed by August 2016 to take to the department for review.

“9. Gather the CVs of all department faculty (not just MENG faculty). Make these available in future outside reviews of the department. It would be a good idea to put highlights of all CVs on the department website as well, so that prospective or current students (and others) can see faculty members’ interests and accomplishments.”

--The Office of the Chair will work in concert with the Department’s marketing liaison and the College Marketing Director, Christie Dennison to accomplish this.

**II. Concerns that the Department may be able to address with the help of the Dean’s Office;**

Page 3, Standard C—Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

“Concerns: There is currently no uniformity in administering Student Course Evaluations. Some discussions have begun at the college level—we hope these will continue.”

--I am not sure if this is in fact the case. The Department follows the guidelines found in the PPM. If by uniformity what is meant is that given that Student Course Evaluations are now all online, we have lower participation rates, that would be true. However, Gail Niklason in OIE has indicated that the Ns for most classes are still statistically valid.

Page 3, Standard D, Academic Advising

“Recommendation 3: The next step for the program is to connect with career advising at the college level. Frequently, English majors do not realize their own significance in the job market and they need assistance in order to promote themselves and realize their opportunities.”

--The Office of the Dean, in consultation with Department Chairs, has had several discussions on this topic. Work is ongoing. See response to this topic also under “Section I. Concerns that the Department can address on its own.”



Page 5, Standard E, Faculty

“Recommendations 4: The 4/4 teaching load needs to be reduced if research is to be valued and if the department is to develop. A goal of a 3/3 for the department (and the College of Arts and Humanities) would be appropriate. This may involve a “teaching track” of 4/4 or 4/3 for faculty who prefer not to do more than minimal scholarly work and who do not wish to work with the MA program. In the meantime, policies should be created to award release time for research and not just administration.”

--See response found on page 2 of this report, under Standard E, Faculty.

“5. Consider the job security of instructors, hopefully with a move to longer term contracts.”

--See response found on page 2 of this report, under Standard E, Faculty.

**III. Concerns that would require being addressed at the Office of the Provost level and above.**

Page 5, Standard E, Faculty

“Recommendations: 4. The 4/4 teaching load needs to be reduced if research is to be valued and if the department is to develop. A goal of a 3/3 for the department (and the College of Arts and Humanities) would be appropriate. This may involve a "teaching track" of 4/4 or 4/3 for faculty who prefer not to do more than minimal scholarly work and who do not wish to work with the MA program. In the meantime, policies should be created to award release time for research and not just administration.”

--See response found on page 2 of this report, under Standard E, Faculty.

“5. Consider the job security of instructors, hopefully with a move to longer term contracts.”

--See response found on page 2 of this report, under Standard E, Faculty.

**Page 7, General Recommendations**

**IV. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

“College and University Recommendations: These recommendations are not numbered, since they do not purport to describe changes that the Department of English can accomplish on its own.”

There is need for a career services advisor at the college level to inform students of career opportunities and help them prepare for the job market or graduate school.

--The Office of the Dean, in consultation with Department Chairs, has had several discussions on this topic in 2015-16. Work is ongoing.

--See response found on page 2 of this report, under Standard E, Faculty.

Faculty in the MENG program and others who are required to engage in regular scholarship should be allowed a reduced teaching load. If contract faculty teach 4/4, the college should consider reducing assignments for tenure and tenure-track faculty.

--These teaching load guidelines come from the Board of Regents and currently are not subject to change.



Consider limiting the amount of service performed by contract faculty. Lacking tenure, contract instructors and adjuncts tend to be vulnerable to service requests and are easily exploited. Any service commitment from untenured faculty needs to be explicitly rewarded and appropriate to their non-tenured status, education and experience.

--Most contract faculty have expressed to the Chair great interest in performing service on behalf of the department, college, and university. These faculty appreciate the opportunities for professional development and enjoy helping improve the department. However, in conjunction with WSU OIE the department will be distributing a survey to all contract faculty asking questions about their service obligations/interest and the question of exploitation. Results will be shared with the department.

Provide a budget for the Composition Program that serves over 6000 students annually.

--I have requested funding from the Office of the Provost for a 3-year period but was told that "Ongoing support funds associated with coursework in individual departments need to come from the departments or the college."

--I will request funding from the College for 2016-17.

The frequency of faculty reviews (second year, third year, tenure, promotion, post tenure and/or PCP) seems duplicative. Since most of these are accompanied by peer reviews and formal feedback from the department chair, they likely constitute an inefficient use of faculty time and department resources.

--I would agree 100%. These reviews consume significant faculty time in a department as large as ours. But such changes would need to be initiated at the College or University level.

Given the number full time contract faculty who have stayed with the department for a number of years, consider staggering their personnel reviews or alternating between brief statement and/or form and a more thorough review.

--We do stagger the contract faculty reviews.

Review adjunct faculty on a more regular and consistent basis.

--Our adjunct Graduate Teaching Assistants are observed and evaluated twice each semester. Because so many of our adjunct faculty are former TAs, we have the most observed and evaluated group of adjunct faculty in the history of the department.

--We have a schedule for observing adjuncts, but the process is extremely time-consuming. Even with the reassigned time provided to the Composition Director and Assistant Director, it is difficult to observe a large number of adjuncts, in part because the Graduate TAs must be observed twice during their appointment.

This concludes the Department Response to the 2015-16 Board of Regents Evaluation Team Report.

Submitted April 30, 2016

Hal Crimmel

Chair, Department of English