

Dr. Madonne Miner
Dean, Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities
3950 West Campus Drive, Dept. 1904
Weber State University
Ogden, UT 84408

October 6, 2014

Dear Madonne:

The following document is the MENG Program's reply to the Board of Regents Evaluation Team Report from September 2014. The reply was written by me, approved by the seven faculty members on the 2014-15 MENG Steering Committee, and is based on feedback from all MENG faculty who chose to send via email suggestions about the content of the reply, and from Genevieve Bates, MENG Program Office Assistant.

The document consists of four sections; the first three respond to Concerns identified in the Team Report:

I. Concerns that the program can address on its own;

II. Concerns that the program may be able to address with the help of the Dean's Office;

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

IV. Addresses recommendations made, though not identified as a formal "Concern" as indicated by the letter "C" in the report.

Section I. Concerns that the program can address on its own.

Page 10, Standard B, section a., Curriculum: "...recommends MENG reinstate GRE requirement for admission. We believe lack of the GRE requirement creates image problems, as does near 100% acceptance rate."

--The Program Director feels the admission process has considerable checks and balances to ensure that students admitted are qualified to do M.A.-level work. These include a required minimum GPA of 3.0 (consistent with all M.A. Programs at WSU), an interview with the program director, a writing sample, three recommendations, a statement of purpose, and a CV. The GRE tells us little about our students' potential for success in the program. And consistent with our student population and university mission of "Access", we feel reinstating the GRE discourages students from applying.

Page 11, Standard B, section b., Curriculum & Mission Statement: 'Concern that the dual-designation courses did not match the rigor of the other graduate courses. Recommends reducing the number of

dual designation courses; if not possible MENG should ensure the dual designation classes offer the same rigor as the other graduate courses.”

--This concern began to be addressed in MENG Steering on September 29th. The Program Director will consult further with Steering and the Program Assistant about the pros and cons of reducing the number of classes receiving dual designation status. In any case, the Program Director will begin, in consultation with the Steering Committee, drafting guidelines for all dual designation classes in terms of expected workload, contact outside of class with students, and meeting MENG learning outcomes. These will be communicated to the faculty, and a review process for syllabi for all dual-designation classes will be introduced.

Page 11, Standard B, section b., Curriculum & Mission Statement: “Some faculty were also concerned that theory was not sufficiently covered in all courses.”

--Assessment done in spring 2014 showed a need for improvement in this area. At that time, members of MENG Steering serving to review the assessment artifacts suggested making all faculty teaching in the program aware of this need. Progress can be tracked through the assessment program already in place.

Page 12, Standard B, section c., Appropriate Allocation of Resources: “Faculty development probably is adequate but undoubtedly more travel money...would be well spent.”

--MENG could consider if we have funds available to support faculty travel. We would want to be sure there was a clear link between funds spent and benefit to the program. We would want to ask if these funds would better be spent on student travel.

Page 13 (1st), Standard C, section c., Learning Outcomes Linked to the Curriculum (Please note—there are two “page 13s” in this report): ‘Course syllabi should be linked to the curriculum grid to show the depth to which each class addresses the learning outcomes.’

--This would require substantially more work from faculty submitting syllabi and the Steering Committee that reviews them. Learning outcomes might also need to be revised to show different categories of the depth to which each outcome is addressed. The Program Director will seek guidance from the Steering Committee and Dean Miner on this concern.

Page 13 (1st), Standard C, section c., Learning Outcomes Linked to the Curriculum (Please note—there are two “page 13s” in this report): “We recommend the development of consistent criteria/requirements for the graduate level sections of these courses [5000-level] in order to achieve the graduate LOs...”

Section II. Concerns that the program may be able to address with the help of the Dean’s Office.

Page 12, Standard B, section c., Appropriate Allocation of Resources: “The teaching load is a concern.”

--The Program Director will discuss with Dean Miner options for alleviating this concern.

Page 12, Standard B, section c., Appropriate Allocation of Resources: "We recognize that TAs be paid more than adjuncts, perhaps through an additional stipend, to recognize their vital role."

--MENG Steering will discuss this option. The Program Director will also discuss this option with Dean Miner and with the Program Assistant. It may be necessary to benchmark other M.A. Program stipends to get a sense of whether the WSU program is below regional averages.

Page 14 (2nd), Standard D, section a., Advising (Please note—there are three "page 14s" in this report): "To maintain this quality the PRC recommends that the assistant be compensated commensurately to her performance."

--The Program Director has worked on this issue prior to the site visit by the team, and continues to work on it.

Page 15 (2nd), Standard E, section f., Workload (Please note—there are two "page 15s" in this report): "The 4-4 load is substantial, especially considering that one of the courses is at the graduate level. To this point, MENG has conducted an excellent program but we do fear they are at the tipping point for 'burn out.'"

--The Program Director will discuss with Dean Miner options, if any, for alleviating this concern.

Page 16 (2nd), Standard F, section a., Support Staff; "We recommend that this position [Program Assistant] be upgraded so that the salary is commensurate with the work being done. [...] MENG may also want to consider hiring a Research Assistant to help with the administration."

--The Program Director has worked on this issue prior to the site visit by the team, and continues to work on it. The Research Assistant idea will be discussed by the Program Director with the Program Assistant. There may be privacy concerns associated with having a graduate student have access to information about other graduate students.

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

Page 12, Standard B, section c., Appropriate Allocation of Resources: "The university needs to have greater resources in the library to match the needs of graduate programs. The current collection is too small for a master's level university."

--We understand the concern but have no control over how the university allocates funds to the library. Having said that, some faculty members in English order hundreds of books for the collection. Others feel that the future of libraries is going to be digital, for those libraries that do not already have significant collections.

Section IV. Addresses recommendations made, though not identified as a formal “Concern” as indicated by the letter “C” in the report.

Page 9, standard A, section d., Mission Statement: ‘Reverse first and second paragraphs of mission statement.’

--MENG Steering will review these and consider the suggestion.

Page 14 (2nd), Standard D, section b, Academic Advising: (Please note—there are three “page 14s” in this report). “Our concern is for the sustainability of this laudable procedure [personal admissions interviews with the Program Director] another faculty member may be needed if the enrollments increase in order to sustain the program’s graduation success.”

--The Program Director feels this task is not terribly time consuming except for a few weeks around the admissions cycles. Interviews are a good way to judge interest and aptitude of potential students, and also to learn about the students’ life beyond their academic aspirations. Such knowledge is helpful in many ways. But if the enrollments increase it may be helpful to seek additional faculty assistance.

Sincerely,

Hal Crimmel, Ph.D.

Director, Master of Arts in English