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Dear Amanda,

The following is the Master of Arts in English faculty response to the Board of Regents Program Review Report from Sept. 2020. I distributed the Report to program faculty in late-Sept., and the faculty met via Zoom to discuss responses on Oct. 7. Faculty members who could not attend were encouraged to e-mail their suggestions. The MA Steering Committee then met on Oct. 12 to discuss and synthesize faculty responses. I compiled that synthesis, and it was approved by the MA Steering Committee.

A. Mission

Recommendation: Revise the mission statement to reflect...

1. "Best practices for intention and planned student engagement including orientation, advising, and professional socialization."
2. "The intention to recruit and train students from beyond the local community."
3. The concentrations of the program emphasizing "the distinctness of the training provided in the concentrations."

The faculty agree and adopt the following course of action:

1. The Steering Committee will spearhead the mission revision during Sp21 semester, with the goal of completing it for approval by the faculty prior to the conclusion of AY 20-21.
2. Implement already developed plans for an orientation session for new students, beginning in December 2020. Group orientations will be offered twice per year (immediately before each semester), with individual sessions for the small number of students who begin in Summer. Orientations will emphasize the development of professional and academic skills, address the heterogeneous interests and career goals that students bring to the program, provide students with the opportunity to socialize with each other and with faculty and staff, as well as introduce them to the university, department, and program culture.
3. In terms of professional socialization, the following practices will be implemented:
 - hosting receptions in conjunction with campus guest speakers/writers, beginning with a virtual social hour prior to Brandon Hobson's virtual reading on Oct. 14;
 - inviting all grad students to course readings, showcases, and/or symposia; several faculty members intend to do this with class showcases in Fall 2020;
 - continue to work with students to publish their work, and to better integrate students into faculty professional activities by co-publishing with them both creative and scholarly work.

B. Curriculum

Recommendations:

1. Revise the current tracks into concentrations/certificates.
2. Require MENG 6010: Introduction to Graduate Studies be taken first semester and that it better reflect the individual areas of study within the program.
3. Eliminate remaining 5000-level (dual-designation) courses.

The program faculty agree with all of these recommendations, excepting #3, and will pursue the following actions:

1. Convert the TESOL track into a Graduate Certificate, to be completed for the 21-22 Catalog Year.
2. Revise the Literature, Creative Writing, and Teaching (Secondary Licensure) tracks into

concentrations. Faculty in each area will be actively involved in revising curricula. This effort will take some time, but we will begin Spring 2021, with the hopes of having the proposals through the curriculum process early in AY 21-22, and the new concentrations in place for the following Catalog Year.

3. MENG 6010 already introduces students to the various subdisciplines in English, including readings, discussions, lectures, and presentations representing each area of study within the broader discipline. As faculty revise the curriculum the program will consider how to better serve each area in this course, perhaps through co-teaching or offering it as a 2-credit hour course for all students, in conjunction with a 1-credit hour intro in each concentration. These course revisions are still in the planning phases, and the program intends to research best practices prior to implementing any revisions.

4. MENG 6010 is now required in the first semester for students entering the program in Spring 2021 and beyond. Because of low enrollment, the course was only offered once per academic year for a time, creating an “accordion effect” of students who entered in Spring, but could not take the course until Fall, and therefore filled the class before new students could enroll. By offering 6010 twice per year, the program has cleared that backlog of students. This requirement will be enumerated in the graduate handbook, and in our communications with applicants when they are admitted to the program.

5. The program faculty understand the recommendation that we eliminate all 5000-level (dual-designation) courses. They continue to be offered for students who are granted conditional admission to the program for one reason or another (e.g. their undergrad degree is in a major other than English), who are required to take two 5000-level classes to ensure they have the requisite background and skills for the program. As such, the program has offered one 5000-level section of the undergraduate ENGL 3080: Literary Theory and Criticism course, and one or two 5000-level sections of undergraduate writing-intensive courses. Some conditionally admitted students go on to become highly successful students in the program, and we do not wish to create a barrier to the economic, academic, and personal advancement that a graduate degree provides these students. The program will continue to limit the number of 5000-level courses offered, to work with faculty teaching those courses through the syllabus review process so that they provide meaningful graduate-level experiences, and to explore options such as a required tutoring session, or 6000-level prerequisite course that could eliminate the need for 5000-level courses.

C. Student Learning Outcomes & Assessment

Recommendations:

1. Revise Learning Outcomes as part of the curriculum revision (section B) so each concentration and certificate has its own outcomes that better reflect the expectations of the area.
2. Assessment be integrated into each course, so that students are assessed and provided feedback in a more timely fashion, thus synthesizing the evaluation of students and the assessment of the program.
3. Tout students’ accomplishments as part of marketing efforts to build the program’s reputation.

The program faculty agree and will pursue the following course of action:

1. Devise measurable Learning Outcomes as part of the curriculum revision process detailed in section B (above) beginning Sp21.
2. Further explore best practices for assessment. Some faculty expressed concern that assessment of students and assessment of the program might become indistinguishable. The Steering Committee will research best practices, and craft an assessment process that will provide meaningful feedback to the program as we undergo the curriculum revision process (section B).
3. The program has a list of student accomplishments which we will use in our social media marketing, on our website, and in our communications with students, potential students, and alumni. Our first social media post highlighting student accomplishments is scheduled to appear later in 2020, and the program will continue to spotlight individual and collective successes as they happen.

D. Academic Advising

Recommendations:

1. The College consider hiring an academic advisor to focus on the graduate students.
2. The program provide further training for the administrative specialist in advising.
3. Clarifying the advising requirement for students.

Program faculty agree and will pursue the following course of action:

1. Support the College hiring an additional academic advisor who can specialize in graduate students, while recognizing that budgets may not allow this in the immediate future.
2. Provide opportunities for the administrative specialist to receive additional training.
3. When necessary due to high advising loads, the director will coordinate with the English Advisor to work with some of the graduate students. Members of the Steering Committee also agreed that each could assist in advising during periods of particularly high load.
4. The confusion that the Team noted on the part of students is likely due to the mix of students they spoke with, as the two-tier structure was only implemented at the beginning of AY19-20. The graduate handbook notes the two required advising sessions, our communications with new admits to the program note this, and we announce it to students at several strategic points during the year via our newsletter.

E. Faculty

Recommendations:

1. Pursue diverse hires.
2. Pursue donors to secure scholarships for graduate students.
3. Implement processes to ensure continuity when program leadership changes.

The program faculty agree with the recommendations, in part, and will pursue the following actions:

1. The program does not hire its own faculty, but relies on the faculty of the English Department, and occasionally other departments. Occasionally, the program has hired an adjunct, and the Review Team notes that more online classes might present opportunities to hire diverse adjuncts. The program faculty will support diverse hiring efforts at the departmental level. However, further contributing to the problem of adjunctification is not the route to achieve greater diversity and equality. As program director, I have a particular concern with the suggestion that we utilize adjunct hiring to diversify the faculty, as this could exacerbate preexisting racial, socioeconomic, and other disadvantages.
2. The Steering Committee presented a list of funding needs to Brent Parkin in the Development Office. Scholarships were #1 on that list. The program will continue to work with the Development Office to build our scholarship endowments.
3. The director and administrative specialist are keeping records of day-to-day and cyclical operations in a calendar-style handbook. This will be available as a manual/guide for future program leadership.

F. Program Support

Recommendations:

1. Revise the website by moving all internal materials off the public-facing area and into a Canvas course as well as removing the remnant of an older webpage.
2. Create a newsletter that would share information with students and could also be sent to alumni, which would help with student retention and encourage program alumni to feel connected with the program.

The program faculty agree with the recommendations and will pursue the following course of action:

1. Kate Johnson will create a Google Site for the program similar to the highly functional page for the College (which she helped create). We will migrate all internal information and documents to that page once it is complete, with a goal of January 2021.

2. The program already produces a monthly newsletter for students, which welcomes new students, provides information about job opportunities, classes, and special projects, and highlights student accomplishments. We will work to make this something that alumni would be interested in receiving and send it to those with whom we have contact.

G. Relationships with External Communities

Recommendations:

1. Develop “an external advisory board that can provide feedback to the faculty on the development of the concentration areas” as well as assist with recruitment, diversity, and enrollment. They also suggest the board could provide “continuity and stability during future transitions.”
2. Devise “a plan for better tracking of MEng alumni and career placement,” and invite alumni to remain engaged with the program.

The program faculty do not agree with the recommendation to form an external advisory board at this time, but agree with #2 and will pursue the following actions:

1. The program sent a letter and survey to all 200+ alumni in Sp20, immediately before COVID-19 hit. Approximately 35 responses were returned, giving useful data about alumni and career placement. This information will be combined with data gathered during exit to glean a stronger picture of our job placement rates for use in recruitment materials. The survey will be re-sent to alumni who did not respond. Program faculty members have kept in touch with alumni over the years, and the program is collecting information from them to augment what we learn elsewhere.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Hartwig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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