

## **Five-Year Review Report**

**Department of English, University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, March 25, 2019**

### **Method**

The information in this report is based on a study of the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga English Department Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Review (2013-2018), two previous five-year review reports (2007, 2013), an examination of the university's and department's websites, and the two-day site visit I conducted on February 26 and 27, 2019. During my visit, I participated in more than a dozen meetings in several different formats with a range of individuals, including Dr. Andrew McCarthy, Head of the Department of English, Dr. Matt Matthews, Interim Vice Provost, Dr. John Tucker, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Rebecca Jones, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Rik Hunter, Department of English Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Jenn Stuart, Director of Composition, Dr. Lauren Ingraham, Director of General Education, and numerous department faculty, lecturers, students, and alumni. The Department Graduate and Undergraduate Programs Review (2013-2018) provided comprehensive assessment of factors impacting the culture of the department and, from my perspective, laid the foundation for extremely productive interviews while on site. At the end of the second day I delivered a preliminary reflection with recommendations to Dr. McCarthy, Dr. Matthews, and Dr. Jones.

### **General Observations**

The Department of English at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga appears to be in very good shape overall. The department leadership team, in my view, is especially strong. Administrators, faculty, lecturers, and students praised Dr. McCarthy, in particular, throughout my visit for the ways in which he has improved department culture since his appointment as Head in July 2018. Numerous individuals I spoke with referred to Dr. McCarthy as a "breath of fresh air" and cited enhanced communication and transparency regarding all departmental concerns. My conversations with undergrad and graduate students enrolled as majors in the department revealed that they "love" their instructors and classes and appreciate the sense of community in the department. These sentiments are corroborated by the fact that students consistently rate their classroom experience in English highly in their evaluations. Faculty and lecturers across all three departmental programs possess vigorous scholarly and creative agendas, regularly receive recognition for

their teaching and publications, and are active members of regional, national, and international academic associations.

Although faculty and lecturers alike raised concerns about certain policies and practices that have the potential to create tension between tenure-track and non-tenure-track instructors, there appears to be considerable unity within the department across programs given recent reforms detailed in the 2013-2018 Program Review, namely the hiring of a new Department Head, reduction of tenure-track faculty teaching load from 4/4 to 3/3, the hiring of faculty in all three areas, and modest increases in compensation for non-tenure-track instructors.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. Tenure-Track Hiring: Rhetoric and Professional Writing**

Five of the seven tenure-track faculty in the Rhetoric and Professional Writing Program currently find themselves serving in administrative roles either in the department or the larger university that involve some reduction in teaching load. In order to properly service undergraduate and graduate programs in English, the department ought to assess the need for one or more hires in area of Rhetoric and Professional Writing. Of particular concern is the department's ability to staff ENGL 2050: Introduction to Rhetorical Analysis, which is required of all undergraduate English majors as part of the B.A. Core, as well as the 12 offerings that are part of the B.A. concentration in Rhetoric and Professional Writing.

#### **2. Tenure-Track Hiring: Department Writing Outreach Coordinator/Writing Across the Curriculum Specialist**

Several conversations during my site visit involved discussion of opportunities for the department to reach out across the university community through its writing program. Initiatives such as certificates in professional writing and coordinating campus writing (to name only two) point to the need for a position that could take shape as either a Department Writing Outreach Coordinator or a Writing Across the Curriculum Specialist. We have both at my home institution, Eastern Michigan University. The Outreach Coordinator seeks opportunities to develop course sequences and certificates for departments looking to incorporate professional writing into their programming. The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at Eastern Michigan University strives to develop a cohesive writing experience for students throughout their academic experience at the university. Our WAC director helps faculty in all disciplines use writing effectively in their classes and assists programs with integrating writing and taking a systematic approach to writing instruction throughout curricula. I believe that the hiring of an Outreach Coordinator and/or a WAC Specialist would be an invaluable resource for the department and university as the English Department seeks to boost enrollment and build relationships across campus by offering needed programming in professional writing.

### **3. Non-Tenure-Track Relations**

While there have been many improvements recently to department culture, the unit as a whole would benefit by addressing concerns associated with non-tenure-track personnel in the following areas:

#### **a. Annual Evaluations**

During my site visit, non-tenure-track instructors indicated that annual evaluations for lecturers are processed with the same paperwork used for tenure-track faculty. The problem, as non-tenure-track instructors see it, is that because their workload expectations are tied almost entirely to instruction, the tenure-track evaluation forms--which assess the areas of teaching, research, and service--do not properly evaluate non-tenure-track performance in relation to expectations. Therefore, I recommend that the department develop a separate evaluation form for non-tenure-track instructors that better reflects their responsibilities within the department.

#### **b. Faculty Handbook and Bylaws**

Several individuals indicated to me the need to continue working to clarify job descriptions, promotion criteria, and annual review processes for non-tenure-track instructors in the Faculty Handbook, College Bylaws, and Department Bylaws. The problem appears to be that there are discrepancies among those three documents regarding performance expectations, promotions, and annual reviews. I recommend that the department work with non-tenure-track instructors to improve and clarify the language in the Faculty Handbook, College Bylaws, and Faculty Bylaws concerning these matters.

#### **c. Contracts and Compensation**

The previous Five-Year Review Report (2013) recommended providing three-year contracts "to the best performers among full-time NTT faculty." Numerous individuals indicated that the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga Faculty Handbook allows multi-year contracts but that they have not been offered to department instructors. I recommend that as long as enrollments permit the department works to provide multi-year contracts to qualified non-tenure-track instructors.

#### **d. Department Input**

One of the most potentially divisive issues facing the department is non-tenure-track voting rights. Currently, non-tenure-track instructors possess the same voting privileges as tenure-track instructors. Non-tenure-track instructors are concerned that their voting rights are, as several put it, "under attack." I would urge the department to develop a plan to resolve this issue definitively before deeper rifts form. One solution might be to form a committee comprised of non-stakeholders from outside the department to study regional peer institutions' input

practices and charge the committee with making a binding recommendation.

e. **Office Space**

I concur with the 2013 Five-Year Review Report's assessment that "the department would benefit from an area adequate in size to accommodate the offices of all faculty (both TT and NTT) under the same roof." Since this last report, new space has been made available to the department. Unfortunately, however, that new space is still not large enough for all department instructors. As a result, tenure-track offices and non-tenure-track offices will remain in separate buildings. I strongly recommend that the department continue to seek a space solution that brings the entire department under the same roof.

4. **Undergraduate Program Learning Outcomes**

The Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Review (2013-2018) documents the process by which the department recognized and began to revise student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the three tracks in the undergraduate major. My conversations with faculty during my site visit suggest that the department and its programming would benefit greatly from continued reflection about and revisions to SLOs, especially with regard to courses in the B.A. core.

5. **Students: Scheduling and Communication**

Student satisfaction with the department, instructors, and classes is very high. Both undergraduates and graduates did point to areas, however, where they saw room for small improvements. Many felt that scheduling could be better coordinated with honors and other departments' offerings. Greater flexibility with course offerings, especially with core classes in the major, was also an issue for some. Commuters wondered if scheduling could take into account their unique circumstances (offering blocks of classes on certain days so that they did not have to be on campus four or five days a week, for example; blocks of classes in mornings, afternoons, and evenings, too). Generally, students seemed to be asking for just a little more attentiveness to the ebb and flow of their lives. Many were willing to provide input if asked, so perhaps the department has an opportunity to improve efficiencies in scheduling by working with students directly in some form or another. Last, a few students shared that they are not included in departmental email communication about programming. Perhaps the department could implement a system to update email lists occasionally outside university processes.

6. **Student Testing (ETS)**

Graduating seniors in English at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga are required by THEC to take the ETS Major Field Test one year out of every five-year cycle. The scores are part of the formula used to determine funding

from the state. In 2017-2018, UT-C students scored noticeably below the national average (148.40/153.10). Part of the reason for the disappointing results is the fact that only one of the three department tracks appears to prepare students for the literature-based exam. Because so much is at stake with the ETS Major Field Test, I strongly recommend the department and university investigate the possibility of replacing this exam with alternative examination methods that assesses the instruction actually taking place in the Department of English at UT-C or consider testing only students enrolled as majors in the B.A. English, Language and Literature concentration track.

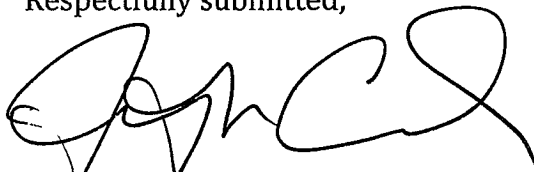
#### **7. Graduate Program**

According to the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Review Report (2013-2018), enrollments in the department's graduate program have fallen slightly since 2013. That said, overall numbers have remained relatively steady in recent years. I recommend that the university increase its support of department recruiting efforts at the graduate level in at least two ways. First, the university ought to promote graduate programming in the Department of English through local and regional advertising—print, public, and online. Second, the university ought to enhance its support of graduate students with more assistantship lines, increase funding per line, and offer funding for travel to conferences and research sites. Additionally, I recommend that department develop graduate-level certificates in Professional Writing to attract students whose careers might be advanced with this sort of writing credential but who may not be able to commit to a full M.A. degree program.

#### **8. Sabbaticals**

The previous reviewer noted the necessity of funding more sabbaticals for tenure-track faculty in the department. The Programs Review Report (2013-2018) indicates that efforts in this area are “on-going.” I, therefore, repeat the recommendation that the department seek support for at least two sabbaticals a year—one in the fall and one in the spring.

Respectfully submitted,



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Head

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