

TO: EPC  
FROM: Catherine Burroughs, Chair  
RE: ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
DATE: May 1, 2016

## 1. PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT:

The English Department plays a key role in any liberal arts education, as our courses develop the fundamental liberal arts skills: critical reading, critical thinking, and argumentation. The mission of Wells begins with a mandate “to educate students to think critically, reason wisely, and act humanely as they cultivate meaningful lives,” and the courses offered in the English department actively promote each of those goals.

Further, the empathy generated by a deep engagement with literature is invaluable in our efforts to encourage our students to “appreciate complexity and difference,” and our creative writing offerings cultivate the aesthetic awareness and dedication required to “be creative” in considered, ethical, interpersonally engaged ways.

Wells’ mission includes teaching students to “learn and practice the ideals of the liberal arts,” and what we do in the English department is fundamental to that goal.

## 2. PROGRAM GOALS:

Program Goals for 2016-2017:

Due to the work we just completed on our Prioritization Forms and Position Requests, we were able to isolate our immediate program goals and to determine how well these goals are being met. (**Please see Prioritization Document attached.**)

1. *Staffing Goal:* to hire a full-time or tenure-track professor of English specializing in American literature, post-colonial theory, and cultural studies. We also are supporting the unionization of adjuncts by avoiding hiring adjuncts to replace courses previously staffed by tenured faculty (unless they are paid properly and receive full benefits).

2. *Curriculum Goal:* To maintain a strong English major that serves the needs of our students by providing them with a sophisticated, well-rounded major. In response to staffing issues, we have adjusted our requirements for both the

Literature and Creative Writing concentrations: in fall 2017, students will be required to take one of three courses in Theory: ENGL 301 ("Translations"), ENGL 380 ("Critical Theory"), or FMS 241 ("Reading Popular Film"). In addition, we are requiring ENGL 225 ("Introduction to Shakespeare") for all majors.

3. *Data and Collection Goal:* We have created an "Exit Interview" sheet (see below) in order to keep track of graduating seniors and to have them provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of our department. This sheet will be issued to each graduating senior in May of each year. We have also made arrangements to fund an annual summer internship to assist us in the running and research of our department; duties will include: assisting the Visiting Writers Program; processing our Exit Interview; securing an alignment with the Book Arts Center and its curriculum in order to enhance our current offerings and the major/minor.

4. *Department Budget:* The Department has requested the same budget for over 15 years. To address this, we have requested that our budget be raised from \$2500.00 to \$3800.00 starting July 1, 2016. This increase will: help fund a symposium in October 2016 in conjunction with the Alumni Office to showcase our graduates pursuing careers and higher degrees in writing/edition/publishing/journalism/film, law, etc.; encourage our members to stay current with professional memberships; pay for internships that contribute to the running and research of our department (since no Faculty Secretary is available to meet these needs); fund the annual Department Party for graduating seniors at Professor Burroughs' home the evening before graduation; provide social events at which our current students can discuss career opportunities with professors and other students, etc.

Exit interview questions:

1. Please list your Concentration in English and any double majors or minors you will have upon graduation.
2. Do you feel equipped by your major for any jobs, professions, or graduate programs you plan to pursue? Please explain.
3. What have been your best courses/experiences in the major and why?
4. Which project/paper/course, etc. was most successful for you and why?
5. How could the Department have done a better job during your undergraduate years (2012-2016)? Please be specific.

6. Which particular skills in writing, reading, editing, and critical thinking were of most value to you while a student here, and how do you see these advancing your career path?

7. Please list your **exact plans** for after May 2016. What are your future plans over the next five (5) years?

8. Please add any commentary/feedback that you would like to give.

9. Please list your contact information for 2016-17 and beyond.

### **3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

What specific knowledge, skills, values, do we want students to have?

Over a four-year period, students should have:

- become excellent "close readers" of any text they encounter (including film, journalism, and television);
- absorbed the basic tenets (through texts and contexts) offered by our three Survey of Literature courses (ENGL 105; ENGL 215; and ENGL 250);
- become familiar with, and be able to employ, the basic tenets of theories written about writing and reading by taking one of three courses (ENGL 301, ENGL 380, or FMS 241);
- studied Shakespeare and familiarized themselves with literature written before 1800;
- studied the different genres taught in our department (poetry, drama, the essay, and the novel)
- learned to produce a 20-page project in either literature or creative writing that shows student competence in a particular genre or field, as well as honing their research skills;
- become equipped to score highly on the Graduate Entrance Exam (GRE) required for all MA, MFA, and PhD programs.

What do we want our students to look like when they graduate?

In addition to the skills and knowledge listed above, we expect each graduate in English to have developed into a highly "humane" individual, exuding the highest standards of moral and ethical behavior.

### **4. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

We plan to measure the quality of our students' learning in a variety of ways.

- --the quality of the graduate programs to which they are admitted;
- --the quality of the jobs for which they're hired;
- --the quality of their presentations at NCUR;
- --the quality of their writing for on campus and professional publications;
- --their Awards received (Phi Beta Kappa, etc.);
- --Tests, Quizzes, Papers that will be kept on file by the individuals who teach in the department and which can be shared when others who want to peruse them;
- --their exit interviews.

#### **5. MEANS OF ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES:**

We have created an "Exit Interview" sheet (see above) in order to keep track of graduating seniors and to have them provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of our department. This sheet will be issued to each graduating senior in May of each year, starting in May 2016.

#### **6. HOW ASSESSMENT DATA WILL BE UTILIZED: ACTION PLAN FOR COMING YEAR:**

Our assessment data (gleaned in our Exit Interviews) will be used to respond to requests for annual assessment reports.

#### **5. THE UPDATED ASSESSMENT PLAN:**

Since this is our first assessment plan, we will use it as the template for our subsequent updates in the Annual Report.