

Program Review Report Summary

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| 1. Reporting Institution | <u>Eastern Illinois University</u> |
| 2. Program Reviewed | <u>B.A. in English</u> |
| 3. Date | <u>9 June 2018</u> |
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5. Overview

The English Department of Eastern Illinois University offers an undergraduate program that ensures intellectual and academic excellence among English majors and minors. In promoting awareness of cultural diversity in the study of language and literature, encouraging creativity, fostering proficient student writing in an age of digital communication, and making appropriate contributions to general education and to other University programs, the Department serves a function central to the University's mission. The Department maintains a diverse, highly qualified faculty committed to excellence in teaching, research/creative activity, and service, attracting a diverse population of students of high quality who will graduate as independent, critical readers, thinkers, and writers. Department faculty are actively involved in planning, articulating, administering and assessing the aims of the Department, and in pursuing outreach programs and interactions among faculty, staff, students, and community.

The English major program was revised over the past five years, its initial offering in Fall 2015. Our aims were to increase the number of electives, to encourage intentional study and learning, and to incorporate "emphases" to provide flexibility as well as career preparation. In this we have succeeded. Instead of simply a major in English (BA) with related minors and a major in English Language Arts (teacher certification or BATC), the major program is now comprised of five emphases in which students can choose to complete one emphasis or choose (as many do) to complete a double-emphasis: English with an Emphasis in Literary and Cultural Studies; English with an Emphasis in English Language Arts (teacher certification); English with an Emphasis in Creative Writing; English with an Emphasis in Professional Writing; and English with an Emphasis in English Studies (a hybrid for more ambitious students). The program includes a "core curriculum" of sixteen semester hours required in all Emphases. Our minor programs in creative writing and professional writing remain largely the same, although they are now designed to attract primarily non-English majors. We also added a new minor in Literary and Cultural Studies and a revised minor in English Language Arts. In our contributions to General Education, we also revised our university-required, first-year composition program, at both regular and Honors levels (ENG 1001G/1091G & ENG 1002G/1092G), to ensure that students more effectively transfer habits of mind as well as reading and writing practices to diverse writing situations throughout the university and beyond.

Student learning objectives for the BA in English: English majors will: 1) think and read thoughtfully and carefully; 2) write clearly, analytically, and expressively; 3) interpret literary texts using appropriate critical theories and aesthetic vocabularies; 4) understand and be able to situate literary texts in diverse

literary, cultural, and historical contexts; and 5) become skilled in using appropriate technologies and research methods.

Student Learning Objectives for the BATC in English: Majors will: 1) demonstrate the ability to think and write critically about clinical experiences; 2) demonstrate the ability to use English language arts to help students become familiar with their own and others' cultures, thereby promoting global citizenship; 3) demonstrate knowledge of writing processes; 4) demonstrate knowledge of and skills in use of the English Language, including effective speaking skills; and 5) demonstrate knowledge of the range and influences of print and nonprint media and technology in contemporary cultures. All learning objectives for the BATC in English align with the NCTE and NCATE Standards, the new Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS), and the Common Core Standards.

6. Major Findings and Recommendations

6.a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program [e.g., (a) changes in the overall discipline of field; (b) student demand; (c) societal need; (d) institutional context for offering the degree; (e) other elements appropriate to the discipline in questions].

As is well known, enrollments at EIU have dropped over the past several years, and the English program has pretty closely followed the overall EIU enrollment numbers, in terms of percentages, in both the number of majors enrolled and the number of students taking General Education or service courses in English. Yet, there are favorable signs that the university may be at the start of an upswing, moving toward Fall 2018 and evidenced by a rising number of freshman applications, admits, and acceptances. The English Department has been at the forefront of recruitment and retention efforts which have benefitted not just the program but also EIU at large. In tandem with the past enrollment decline, English has lost a large number of faculty and staff through retirements and those moving on to other universities. One, perhaps bright, element of this situation has been a move toward an appropriate ratio of teachers and students; however, it is clear that the program has reached the point at which further loss of positions and faculty can no longer be sustained and still be able to offer what our majors and non-majors need to fulfill their college and career plans. English majors, as critical thinkers and problem-solvers, as perceptive writers, readers, and analysts, as editors and producers, and as teachers are still in high-demand across a broad variety of careers and vocations in an ever increasingly information- and communication-based economy and society.

According to prospects and projections for employment for English majors in such resources as the *National Association of College and Employers*, *Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook*, and *Employment Projections from Illinois Department of Employment Security*, the opportunities for employment with an English degree are limited only by one's imagination, from managerial to public relations positions, from editorial to business communications positions. In addition, the *BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook* projects that teaching opportunities will increase by 9% over the next four years, and the Illinois Department of Employment Security projects that secondary school teaching positions will increase 12.15% over the next five years.

In addition to alumni surveys, the English Department has researched the career placement of our alumni by identifying them on social media and employers' web sites. Beginning with alumni from the English BA programs, one to five years out, our findings are that:

- 20% of recent EIU English alumni put their reading, writing and critical thinking skills to use in the business world in banking, finance, insurance, or management, and another 6% run their own small businesses.
- 20% are pursuing graduate or professional degrees in fields including English, library science, African-American studies, media studies, and law.
- 20% work in writing, editing, marketing, or social media, or related fields.
- 15% are employed as instructors or professional staff in higher education or as librarians.
- 10% are pursuing professional paths as diverse as law, lighting design, and corporate recruiting.
- 10%-15% are teaching in middle and/or secondary schools.
- Recent graduates of the ELA teacher certification program have found jobs across the state of Illinois (over 60 schools), across the country (e.g., Arizona, Washington, D.C.), and around the world (e.g., teaching English as a Second Language abroad).

6.b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement.

There have been significant changes to the English Department curriculum as we have approved and implemented a new curriculum that now includes four emphases in addition to the BA with certification. Because many of the courses we once used for assessment no longer exist or exist in a modified form, our assessment practices have evolved to allow us to better assess students completing this new curriculum (for Learning Outcomes, see “5. Overview,” above). We have recognized that our assessment practices must evolve to fit the contours of our new curriculum, and we are in the process of transitioning to new modes of assessment. We draw our assessment portfolios from student essays submitted in ENG 2205 and ENG 3300, two courses in the English core curriculum required in all Emphases, allowing us to assess all English majors. These two courses provide us with a baseline and a sample of upper-division coursework.

We have introduced a new one-credit introductory course (ENG 1105) for incoming English majors. That course has been a great success, as it better prepares our students to progress through the major making informed choices about their course of study, student activities related to English (both academic and social), and about potential career options. Based on the strong results we have seen from ENG 1105, we will also revise and require our senior-level one-credit course ENG 4060, English Studies Career Development, to address all career paths and to provide our students with support at the end of their major. These two one-credit courses bookend our major.

The English Language Arts program (BATC) is also part of an assessment and accreditation process that includes all of EIU’s programs in teaching. We are proud that our English Language Arts program received “National Recognition” for our last successful report (2009) by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Administrative evaluations, based on standards described by North Central Association, of our assessment activities have been exceptionally positive throughout the review period.

6.c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.

As detailed above in “5. Overview,” the revised English major program was initiated in Fall 2015, our aim to increase the number of electives to encourage intentional study and learning and to incorporate “emphases” to provide flexibility as well as career preparation. Our BA and BATC curricula had not changed in well over forty years, and our revision was a substantial one. Revisions followed several semesters of study, review of assessment and course data, comparison with peer institutions, and input from student and faculty focus groups. Student response to the relatively new BA English program with Emphases has been overwhelmingly positive and our assessments, even over such a short period of time since the change, have noted engaged student learning. The next four years, as enrollments in EIU and the program increase, will be a critical time for further assessment (as described in 6.b.) to determine needed adjustments. The BA with the Creative Emphasis continues to be a growth program, despite our loss of several key faculty to other universities, and the individual courses draw students from all majors. The BA with the Professional Writing Emphasis is also growing in popularity, many majors choosing to double-emphasize Professional Writing with another English Emphasis. With this in mind, we have made a majority of courses in the Professional Writing Emphasis available online, which provides more flexibility for such students. And as an added result, the Professional Writing minor program, designed primarily for a non-major wishing to gain career writing experience, is completely available online. The English Language Arts (teacher certification) Emphasis continues to be strong, as our national recognition in accreditation shows. The Literary and Cultural Studies Emphasis has been weathering under-enrollment as a result of overall enrollment problems at the university and the loss of staffing resources in key literary areas, but it remains steady and resilient, actually on an upswing because of departmental recruitment efforts. The Emphasis has attracted mainly our most ambitious students who want to carve out an agenda of study that draws upon courses across the other Emphases.

We have revised several prerequisites in lower-division courses so that majors and students who are interested in pursuing an English BA can begin the English program earlier in their college careers. We continue to be a campus leader in integrative learning, adjusting as we have to the changing demographics, schedules, and needs of our university students (see Section 7 below). Our annual English Studies Student Conference, as a result of the revisions to our program, has broadened its horizons to provide an encompassing venue and numerous opportunities for all of our students to present their work in pedagogy studies, literary studies, creative writing, and professional writing. We have increased our encouragement of students to pursue independent research and creative projects, and faculty mentors work with students to help them prepare to present their research or read their creative work in public. Such instructional practices help students prepare for professional settings, including work or graduate school, and help students build a track record of accomplishment before graduation.

6.d. Descriptions of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.

As noted in 6.b. (above), based on the strong results we have seen from ENG 1105, we plan to require the senior-level one-credit course ENG 4060, “English Studies Career Development” to address all career paths and to provide our students with support at the end of their major. Currently, the course is only strongly encouraged for the majority of our majors, but we plan to make this course required for all majors, particularly with the upcoming implementation of our English Major Portfolio requirement next year (see below).

We have also added a sixth Learning Objective that will address speaking and listening in future assessments. The learning goal states that “English majors will be able to speak clearly, analytically, and

expressively, and will use active and critical listening skills to understand and evaluate ideas.” We have piloted a variety of different ways to measure this learning goal, including assessments of core courses such as ENG 3300 that have a required speaking component and randomized assessment of student presenters at the English Studies Student Conference, which has become an increasingly useful place for us to undertake assessment. Currently underway, we are considering a reduction of hours required in our program, primarily for Emphases in Literary and Cultural Studies, Creative Writing, Professional Writing, and English Studies, including the program core curriculum common for all majors. Deliberation is underway based on issues of staffing, student recruitment and preparation, enrollments, and comparisons with peer departments. While there is little to no evidence available proving that fewer hours translates into more majors (in fact, there is much evidence against drawing such a conclusion), the department feels the need to at least explore the possibilities, benefits and hazards. The English Language Arts Emphasis will not require any reduction of hours.

Recently, the Department passed a plan for the English Major Portfolio (EMP), which will be added in 2018 as a graduation requirement. Each English major will be required to submit a portfolio online (via the university’s Learning Management System [LMS]) that includes a major narrative explaining the academic choices they have made and their intended goals, a resume, and a sample of their best work in an English course during their time at EIU. The EMP will work in tandem with courses in our core curriculum, as they will be introduced to this requirement in ENG 1105, while the other required courses are ideal places where faculty can guide students as they work on various elements of the portfolio. We believe that this portfolio will not only be an invaluable professionalization exercise for the students as they make their way through the major and towards a career, but also a useful assessment tool for our department. We believe that this assessment data will be a particularly accurate measure of the program.

We have also implemented a mentorship program that pairs faculty with new students taking ENG 1105 (both first-year students and sophomore/junior transfers). We continue to look for ways to welcome our majors into the department and to help them make strong connections with faculty and other students as soon as possible. Our Registered Student Organizations (English Club and Sigma Tau Delta) continue to be both socially and academically active, largely due to the commitment of dedicated faculty advisors. We continue to see these organizations as a way to encourage a sense of community in our department and to prepare students to attend conferences and other events that will support their academic development and professionalization.

7. Responses to Institution-Assigned Issues

- **What strategies has the department implemented that will support the Integrative Learning Experience at EIU?**

English has long been in the forefront of integrative learning at EIU. Faculty in writing, literature, and pedagogy courses require students to undertake metacognitive activities, inviting them to reflect on their own learning and the relationships among course materials, civic life, personal life, and future careers. Integrative experiences beyond the individual English classroom include:

Team-teaching. For over twenty years, English joined with the Philosophy Department to team-teach Cultural Foundations I and II, a two-semester sequence, part of the General Education curriculum. English joins with the Art Department to team-teach “Women, Language, and Literature” and “Women in Art” for the Women’s Studies Minor program. English joins with Communication Studies to team-

teach “Communication in Science and Technical Organizations” for an advanced degree in Renewable Energy. English also team-teaches EIU Senior Seminars for the EIU Center for the Humanities’ 4114G, “Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies in Matters of Culture,” in areas combined with History, Philosophy, and Biology.

Integrative curricula. Both English and English Language Arts curricula require students to combine the study of three areas within English studies—literature, writing, and language study. Capstone courses provide an additional integrative element by requiring students to combine and synthesize material learned in earlier courses within new and advanced frameworks.

Internship. English 4275, “Internship in Professional Writing,” allows students to gain practical work experience while integrating these experiences closely with academic work in professional writing classes. Interns write reflectively on their work experiences and meet regularly with the internship coordinator to discuss progress.

Student teaching. Naturally, for students in the English Language Arts program, student teaching is a crucial opportunity to integrate practice and theory.

Study Abroad. The Department’s close relationship with Harlaxton College, England, and our leadership in developing short- and long-term programs, have resulted in a high proportion of our students experiencing study abroad.

The Close Reading Cooperative. Within the last eight years, a group of English faculty produced a podcast offering brief (six to ten minute) lessons in reading techniques that can be applied across the literary curriculum. These podcasts are not tied to a specific course; rather, they serve as a refresher or review available to students whenever and wherever they wish to consult them. And the videos gained an audience nationally and internationally.

English 2205 team-teaching initiative. When we are able to offer multiple sections of ENG 2205, “Introduction to Literary Studies,” instructors integrate their lesson plans and, on several occasions throughout the semester, bring their students together in plenary sessions, in an effort to enhance transfer of material from this important foundational course and to develop a shared culture in the Department’s learning community.

English Studies Student Conference. As mentioned above in 6.c., the Department hosts an annual undergraduate student conference. Students present their own research, professional and creative writing and gain experience as both presenters and audience members in a professional, presentation setting.

Additional Integrative Learning and Professional events. We also offer numerous events, throughout the school year, designed to provide students with a variety of opportunities to integrate academic and professional experiences, for example, Handshaking Night (in which students meet with an array of professionals in business, education, publishing, NGOs, and so forth), integrative learning activities resulting from Redden Grants, and opportunities for staffing such events as our annual Lions in Winter Literary Festival and English Summer Camp for High School Students.

- **What one unique, noteworthy activity is the department involved in that will enable the IBHE to distinguish its program from other similar programs in the state?**

The five emphasis model developed by the English Department faculty at EIU offers its students one of the most comprehensive English degrees in the state. Each emphasis offers its own unique opportunities for students to achieve excellence within their area of interest: every Professional Writing course (online and face-to-face) requires students to complete an applied learning project; Creative Writing students may specialize in one or more of four different genres of creative writing rather than just two or three; and students in the Literary and Cultural Studies emphasis may choose courses within a variety of interdisciplinary topical streams (for example, Law and Social Justice; Science & the Environment; Media, Technology, and Popular Culture) developed by the faculty. Our rigorous ELA program continues to be recognized as the gold standard in the state, with a 100% placement rate for our graduates. In addition, students of every discipline are exposed to ways to write within online and multimodal platforms. All of these opportunities are intended to develop a student-scholar who will excel in the 21st century—and none of this would be possible without the commitment of faculty who actively mentor students at all levels, both formally and informally. To make these changes in the program during this time of budgetary impasse, almost all faculty have been involved in actively retraining, updating, and expanding their skill sets in order to improve the undergraduate experience at EIU.

Moreover, while working hard to give English students at EIU an undergraduate experience of the highest caliber, faculty have also been actively involved in using their expertise to serve the undergraduates of the future. English faculty have been at the forefront of the University's recruitment efforts by developing, marketing, and teaching the English Studies Camp and, even more recently, the Dual Credit programs, which now make EIU's undergraduate English courses available to students throughout the state.

8. Decision:

Program in Good Standing

Program flagged for Priority Review

Program Enrollment Suspended

Explanation

Upon review of the report, I am confident that the program, its faculty, and graduates meets and exceeds expectations for quality and productivity at EIU and pursuant to IBHE expectations/guidelines based on enrollment and graduation metrics. Additionally, the program are to be commended by their outreach and community programming. Finally, I note the program has implemented an internship program which demonstrates EIU's commitment to experiential or integrative learning.

Jay D. Gatrell, Ph.D.

Provost & VPAA

2/7/18