**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2016-17**

**Department:** English (ENG)

**Date of Review:** April 13, 2017

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Lori Zakel, Associate Provost

Emmanuel Banda, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Jenna Beck, Chair/Associate Professor, Paralegal, Law, Real Estate

Wendy Cheng, Assistant Professor, Mathematics

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Jeanne Estridge, Data QVC Systems Analyst, Research, Analytics & Reporting

Vivian Jackson, Associate Professor, Nursing

Heidi McGrew, Division Assessment Coordinator, Liberal Arts, Communication & Social

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Annette Ross-Gray, Professor, Criminal Justice Sciences

Rena Shuchat, Dean, Health Sciences

Janet Schmitt, Director, Strategic Enrollment Management

Melissa Tolle, Director, School and Community Partnerships

Mary Wells, Associate Professor, Psychology and ENG Advisory Committee Member

**Department Members Present:**

Shari Rethman, Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication & Social Sciences

Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Chair/Associate Professor, English

Faculty and Staff:

Dair Arnold

Jenna Bryant

Susan Callender

Adrienne Cassel

Lisa Cook

Jamey Dunham

Chuck Freeland

Kate Geiselman

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Sarah Kiewitz

Dean Leonard

Rebecca Morean

Aaron Moyer

Caroline Reynolds

Penny Sobocinski

Lisa Tyler

Tim Waggoner

**COMMENDATIONS**

* The self-study that was submitted for this Program Review was outstanding, as was the meeting with the Review Team. The English Department is involved in so many exciting activities and initiatives, and the members of the Review Team were deeply impressed. Faculty in this department are so engaged with their students, with the campus, and with the community, and appear to be a high functioning unit: not that there is necessarily always consensus, but the department comes together when needed to produce some extraordinary initiatives and activities. Without some degree of teamwork, the department would not be able to do all that it does. It is the impression of the Review Team that the number of activities the department engages in with both internal and external communities has increased over the last several years, which is indicative of increasing engagement outside of the department.
* The Review Team would like to specifically mention two factors that contribute to the high functioning of the department: first is the strong leadership of the department chairperson, and the second is the commitment and dedication of the faculty in the department. The chairperson not only leads the department in its high level of engagement, but she also appears to have a talent for giving faculty in the department the opportunity to take on responsibilities that allow them to shine individually. Key faculty in the department are well-deployed in spearheading initiatives. While the department chairperson herself goes above and beyond, she has been wise in delegating responsibilities for different initiatives to faculty in ways that take advantage of their strengths, talents, and expertise.
* The English department benefits immeasurably from the expertise of its award-winning faculty. Not only are they experienced and knowledgeable, they have a remarkable willingness to share that experience and knowledge with their students.
* Of the many impressive initiatives that the department has undertaken in the past several years, one that has had perhaps the most tremendous positive impact on students is the pioneering work developing Open Educational Resources (OERs) to replace textbooks in ENG 1101 and ENG 1201. With a savings of over $300,000 thus far to students, this has made a major difference in terms of saving students money. The Review Team really can’t say enough about how impressive this is, and what a benefit it has been to students. This was a heavy lift for the department, but without question it has been worth it in terms of reducing costs for our students. It is indicative of this department’s commitment to their students, and to the College as a whole, that faculty willingly sacrificed the time and effort required to replace the textbooks in two of the highest enrollment courses that Sinclair offers. The department has earned high praise for this effort and has set an example that other departments at the College should follow.
* The department’s assessment work is stunning. Spearheaded by one of the faculty, the department has collected, distributed, and analyzed a great deal of data regarding course outcomes. Their work in determining whether their students are getting what they need out of their classes is truly commendable, and the department should be strongly encouraged to continue their efforts in this direction.
* The assessment work involving the General Education Written Communication outcome deserves special mention. When the Assessment Committee came to the department and asked them to pilot a rubric assessing achievement of the Written Communication outcome at the end of ENG 1101, the department stepped up and provided Sinclair its first direct assessment data ever for this outcome. This involved extra time and work on the part of faculty, which they willingly contributed, and the institution owes a debt of gratitude for their work which enabled a giant leap forward in terms of General Education assessment. The Assessment Committee greatly values and appreciates the department’s work in this regard, and recognizes that they should have asked for the department’s input in the initial development of the rubric that was developed for this new approach, and are now collaborating with the department on its revision.
* The Review Team was also deeply impressed by the Teaching Discussion meetings that are held monthly before each department meeting. What an exciting idea! Every department at Sinclair should adopt this sharing of best practices among faculty. It is a truly innovative and remarkable approach, and the rest of campus should know about it so that they can have the opportunity to implement something similar.
* The department’s outreach to its majors is admirable. The time and work that the department invested in dividing up its majors and assigning faculty to contact them via phone or email demonstrates the care and concern the department has for its program students. The same is true of the survey of program majors conducted in 2014 and the postcard soliciting suggestions from majors. This last effort was also noteworthy because the department is using the feedback they received to develop new experiences for students, including a book club, a writing group, and recruitment of volunteers for the Writer’s Workshop and Writer’s Festival.
* Members of the Review Team were largely unaware of the number of activities the department offers its students and the community. It was a little overwhelming just reading about them, let alone thinking about actually implementing them. The Annual Writing Contest, the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Poetry contest, the Spectrum Awards, the publication of the *Flights* Literary Journal: it is probably fair to say that most of the campus community isn’t aware of the number and extent of these literary activities that the department is engaged in, but without question they provide crucial learning experiences for students and valuable connections to the community.
* The department appears to have prioritized the goals and recommendations from the last Program Review and provided evidence of steady progress over the past several years. Of particular note is the establishment of the Advisory Committee to address the recommendation to get more feedback from stakeholders: it is not common for non-career programs to have Advisory Committees, and the department has used theirs effectively.
* The department’s outreach to adjunct faculty is fantastic: the orientation, mentorship, and particularly the teaching portfolios are superb practices and should be shared with the rest of campus.
* The increase in College Credit Plus sections has fallen heavily on this department, and their support is greatly appreciated by the College Credit Plus Office and the College as a whole. English courses are inevitably in high demand by area high schools, and the department has risen to the challenge. It was also inevitable that there would be challenges as this new program was implemented statewide in a limited amount of time, and the department has worked to help resolve some of these issues. The chairperson has been proactive and highly engaged in CCP efforts and, given the percentage of CCP offerings that are provided by the department, her involvement has been invaluable.
* The participation of some department faculty in RESPECT is highly commendable. Increasing success for minority students is a priority at Sinclair, and RESPECT represents one of the most promising approaches for making that a reality.
* The department deserves praise for their work managing section enrollment. The consistently high average class size is testament to the attention that the department pays to monitoring and managing enrollment in courses, and in the present fiscal situation this is more important than ever.
* The department chairperson has invested time in reviewing success rates with individual faculty members, and has incentivized and supported improvement where appropriate. While it is true that course success has become part of the state funding formula, funding considerations are less important than the overriding goal that Sinclair provide students with the best possible opportunity for course success. Discussions about improving course success are most effective and efficacious when conducted at the individual faculty level because it allows for specific, customized, targeted strategies for improving course success. The chairperson’s willingness to have difficult conversations with individual faculty regarding course success data is an indicator of her strong leadership, and ought to be emulated by other chairpersons across the College. It should be noted, however, that the expectation is always that increases in course success will not come at the expense of rigor or quality, and there should be no misunderstandings among faculty in this regard.
* The Review Team also admired the department’s role in helping set the Writeplacer cutoff score and the valuable data analysis that informed that decision.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

* First and foremost, there are some best practices that the department has developed that need to be shared with other departments across campus. Wider adoption of these practices could have a real impact on student learning at Sinclair. The work with the OER, assessment, various poetry and writing activities, and the Teaching Discussion meetings may be the most obvious of these best practices, but the department should identify which best practices they feel have had the greatest impact, and then develop relevant workshop offerings to be shared at Fall Faculty Professional Development Day, through the CTL, and through other venues. Other chairs should be made aware of the work with individual faculty members to improve course success rates where needed. The department is strongly encouraged to find ways to share some of the most impactful practices it has developed over the past few years.
* During the meeting with the Review Team, the English department noted that moving LIT 2201 (British Literature I) online resulted in a tremendous increase in enrollment. The department expressed frustration that it has had difficulty moving other literature courses into the online format, which could result in similar enrollment increases. The Review Team encourages the department to work with their dean to help get these courses prioritized for conversion to the online format by Sinclair’s eLearn department.
* Concern was expressed that the Writing Center no longer involves the department to the extent that it used to, and that there aren’t as many available tutors that have the qualifications they once had. The department is encouraged to explore approaches to increasing tutoring opportunities to students via department support. One suggestion was utilizing faculty office hours to provide drop-in tutoring support for students. The Business Information Systems (BIS) program has developed a highly successful approach that could potentially serve as a model that the English department could emulate. The department is encouraged to reach out to the BIS department to learn of their approach and explore the feasibility of offering their students something similar. In making this recommendation, the Review Team recognizes the tremendous amount of work faculty in the department are already doing outside of class, and would caution that whatever approach is selected should not be too burdensome for faculty.
* Some faculty in the department have done commendable work incorporating Service Learning into their sections. The Review Team strongly recommends that the department not only continue this practice, but expand it to additional faculty and course sections.
* During the meeting with the Review Team, some faculty expressed concern that many of the exceptional activities that they have developed are not adequately funded, or in some cases are not funded at all. The *Flights* literary journal was mentioned in particular, but the same may also be true of some of the writing and poetry awards, contests, and activities. The department is strongly encouraged to develop a specific list of activities that require additional funding, along with estimates of the funding required, and work with the dean to develop reasonable amounts that can be budgeted specifically for these activities. Administrators in Instruction wish to express their support for these activities and the value they see in them, and their willingness to help find funding for these activities where possible.
* Similarly, concerns were expressed over the loss of the TURNITIN service for identification of plagiarism. There is currently a pilot underway to address the inability to incorporate TURNITIN in eLearn course shells, and it is hoped that will lead to a resolution of the technical barriers. Either way, the department is strongly encouraged to find a way to again use TURNITIN, with or without being embedded in course shells, and to work with the dean on funding for this service. This is an issue that impacts many departments other than English.
* The development of the Professional Writing short-term certificate is without question laudable, but there is a concern that a technical issue may prevent this certificate from being awarded. Registration only runs degree audits for a student’s declared program of study: if students in another program of study pursue and complete the certificate, it might not be awarded unless Registration is aware of it. The Review Team recommends that the department contact Registration and work with them to ensure that this certificate is awarded to students when they earn it regardless of their declared program of study.
* The Review Team noted that it appears that many students transfer prior to completing the English or Creative Writing degree programs. The department is encouraged to research which courses appear to be associated with this loss of students prior to graduation, and to identify any factors that might be changed to encourage more students to complete the degree prior to graduation.
* The department is encouraged to continue their groundbreaking assessment work. Some of the same excellent approaches that have been applied to course outcomes should also be used for program outcomes.
* Finally, the department’s excellent engagement with and support of CCP is highly praiseworthy, and should be maintained. The department may also want to carefully observe how offering English college courses at the high school level might impact enrollment in sections offered at Sinclair in the future, and closely monitor any trends that emerge in that regard.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT’S PROGRESS AND GOALS**

The Program Review self-study and subsequent discussion with the Review Team were very impressive. There are so many praiseworthy activities this department is engaged in, and the Review Team came away with a strong appreciation for the dedication, commitment, and willingness to go the extra mile that is demonstrated by faculty in the department. Many of these activities have been implemented in just the last few years, which speaks to the culture of continuous improvement that exists in the department. Strong leadership by the chairperson, and an approach that utilizes the extensive expertise of faculty in the department, has helped nurture strong leadership among faculty members, and the number of faculty who are leading and participating in the various efforts and initiatives in the department is admirable. This is a department of faculty who are passionate about what they do, and willing to do whatever they need to do to for their students’ success.

A review of the number of activities and initiatives implemented within the past few years reveals a department that has managed change well, which will be essential in the upcoming merger with the Developmental Language Arts department. Given the high functioning nature of the English department and their ability to adapt to change, the Review Team has no concerns about this transition.

With all the department is doing, it is hoped that faculty do not feel overwhelmed or stretched too thin, and the Review Team hopes its recommendations do not lead to this result. Rather, the Review Team hopes that it has adequately communicated its sincere admiration and appreciation for this department and all that it does, particularly in light of the high number of Sinclair students this department serves, and serves so very well.

**INSTITUTIONAL OR RESOURCE BARRIERS TO THE DEPARTMENT’S ABILITY TO ACCOMPLOISH ITS GOALS, IF ANY:**

* In discussions with the Review Team, several faculty noted the challenges associated with teaching English courses to international students who lack the appropriate English language skills to succeed. There was some question as to whether additional support for these students may be required at Sinclair.
* The loss of TURNITIN is not just an issue for the English department: the service was utilized by other departments across campus. Hopefully the English department will be enabled to resolve this issue in a way that also benefits these other departments.
* Several faculty noted the problems associated with students who are enrolled in a prerequisite course during a term, are enrolled for the subsequent course in the next term, end up failing the prerequisite but remain in the subsequent course anyway. Previous discussions at Sinclair have determined that the technical barriers are too extensive to address this, but it may be time to initiate a wide-ranging re-examination of the feasibility of removing students from a class they are registered for when they have failed a prerequisite. However, this is a complex issue, one that would require input from many different departments across the campus to develop a workable solution, assuming one could be found. Sinclair may want to consider initiating this wide-ranging discussion.
* The department has done exemplary work in developing its OERs. However, these efforts require ongoing resources for maintenance and support of the OERs and for their continuous revision to remain current. What does the College need to do to adequately support both the OERs that have been developed and the ones that will be in the future?