

Undergraduate Committee report for AY 2010-2011
Prepared and submitted by Glynis Ridley
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Committee Members: Karen Chandler, Glynis Ridley (Chair), Jeff Skinner, Hristomir Stanev, Tamara Yohannes.

State of the Major

In 2010-2011 there were 350 active English majors (and 20 English minors). This compares with 291 declared English majors in 2009-2010 and 284 in 2008-2009. In 2010-2011, the department graduated 109 majors (compared to 101 last year). Department advisors (Ridley and Yohannes) are confident that the growth in the major (and increasing interest in the English Minor and the Creative Writing Minor) is chiefly due to two things. Firstly, we know from anecdotal evidence that all English students – both majors and minors – are appreciative of the weekly use of dedicated listservs to remind them of important dates in the registration calendar and to point them to e-links for a host of forms and procedures. Many are willing to recommend the English major to undecided friends on the basis of this alone, since they appreciate help in navigating a wide range of regulations and websites. Secondly, A&S advisors have been willing to send undeclared majors who have expressed an interest in English across to the department to discuss their options. Such students typically report a positive experience and many do decide to become English majors.

Funds disbursed

Undergraduate Committee is responsible for reviewing applications for department scholarships and allocating all monies. Committee members noted that the number of applicants (14) had doubled since the previous year. One applicant was ruled ineligible on account of his imminent graduation, leaving 13 applicants for 4 scholarships. At a meeting on 4/8/11, UGC members voted unanimously to award the following:

The Thomas scholarship was awarded to Esther McIntyre;

The Smith scholarship was awarded to Michael “Syd” Bishop.

The Committee then considered the Riedley scholarships. The department offers two: one providing a year’s worth of tuition, room, and board; the second providing half a year’s worth of tuition, room, and board. The Committee was unanimous in agreeing to split the one year Riedley into two: thereby creating three half year Riedley scholarships, to be awarded to: Kayla Forrester, Grace Howard, Joseph Manning.

The annual Mary Burton award (\$100.00) for the highest GPA went to Scott Lasley.

Assessment of the program

UGC typically assesses the state of the program through the Student Opinion Survey (previously the DEYTA survey) and the annual reading of student papers by committee members.

The Student Opinion Survey for English for 2010 includes 3 pages of student comments. Many praise individual instructors and express satisfaction with particular classes.

Dissatisfaction is easier to sum up in a sentence, since it is expressed exclusively in relation to the availability, or rather the perceived non-availability of particular courses. This is typified by comments such as “the English classes are too few and far in between”. Whatever the misconceptions about the number and range of English classes offered at any one time, the message is nevertheless a heartening one: students’ dissatisfaction with the Major – when it occurs - relates to disappointment that there are not more course offerings and more classes available. Students overwhelmingly enjoy the classes they take and they rate English professors among some of the best they encounter in the College.

Re. the annual Fall reading of student papers: on 5/3/11, Ridley requested a meeting with Associate University Provost Robert Goldstein to discuss this exercise, having learned that Provost Goldstein was interested in revising the exercise, through a reconsideration of the metrics used. At the meeting, the English department was represented by Karen Kopelson, Glynis Ridley, and Tamara Yohannes. The Provost’s office was represented by Bob Goldstein, Cheryl Gilchrist, and Connie Shumake. The Provost’s office representatives reported that English was the first department to take the initiative in contacting them about the exercise, to which they hope to make significant revisions. The last assessment based on the Undergraduate Committee’s reading of student papers generated the following scores:

SLO#1 3.4

SLO#2 2.9

SLO#3 3.3

SLO#4 3.2

SLO#5 3.4

These show only slight variation from the previous year’s data. At the meeting, English department representatives expressed concern that a host of variables (including the size of sample of written work and changing composition of the reading committee from year to year) generates a data set to no purpose. Provost Goldstein agreed that the exercise requires significant revision if it is to provide useful data and he expressed his willingness to attend a meeting of Undergraduate Committee this Fall - in advance of the reading of papers – to discuss some initial changes. In summary, the meeting proved extremely useful in establishing common cause between the Provost’s office and the English department in working towards implementation of a much improved annual exercise.

Committee Actions

Committee members engaged in the following:

- representation of the Department at various recruiting events. These included REACH events at the JCTC campus downtown; a study abroad fair on the Belknap campus; and an Honors open day on the Belknap campus;
- classroom visits to ENGL102 classes to advertise the English major and to promote the new English minor and Creative Writing minor;
- catalog management;
- crafting of a syllabus template available for faculty to download in advance of start of the new semester;

- production of the undergraduate newsletter;
- management of scholarship competitions;
- hosting of annual year-end party.

Projects for 2011-2012

SACS re-accreditation will require Undergraduate Committee to devote time to consideration of SLOs and the contents of syllabi. This will occupy UGC for much of the Fall. In Spring 2012, UGC members will engage in a recruitment drive, visiting as many 102 classes as are willing to host a 10 minute presentation on the English major.