

English Studies Department Program Review
Fitchburg State University
External Reviewer's Report

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I. Overview

The Fitchburg State University English Studies Department is a vibrant, academically engaging and pedagogically effective program. The department has many strengths. Among them:

- healthy intra-department culture
- thoughtful concentrations within the major that meet a variety of student demands
- rich and varied course offerings
- student-centered teaching culture
- vibrant faculty with active and varied scholarly agendas
- pleasant physical space with room for informal gathering and conversation
- significant leadership presence on campus

While it is difficult in a one-day visit to get an entirely accurate picture, all evidence suggests the department has a collegial culture supportive of innovation and diversity. Colleagues appear respectful of one another's work, universally committed to student success, and united in their desire to provide a rich, varied, and challenging program of studies to FSU majors and non-majors alike. Notable in their absence are the kinds of petty disputes that can undermine the effectiveness of any academic department, and while English Studies faculty undoubtedly

disagree among themselves on a host of issues, they do so in a way that enables engagement and positive change and avoids acrimony and inertia. This kind of healthy culture does not happen by accident; it comes about through a commitment to transparency, fair process, and shared values and goals. The department is to be commended for achieving this degree of smooth operation and harmony.

The department has successfully implemented three concentrations (literature, professional writing, and secondary education) within the English Studies program. To have incorporated professional writing and literature as fully-fledged concentrations within the same department, and to have done so without drama is – to put it mildly – no mean feat given historic tensions in the discipline between the study of literature and of writing. My conversation with students revealed no divisions among students in the different concentrations and no ill-will among the faculty; on the contrary, all were positive about the concentrations and satisfied with the academic quality, course diversity, and focus of the concentrations.

Part of this successful transition may be attributable to the 21-credit core shared across all three concentrations, including the introductory “Approaches to English Studies” course and the “English Studies Capstone.” This shared core likely contributes to a sense of community; nurtures connections both within and outside of the concentrations; and develops a common set of knowledge and skill across all concentrations. Especially significant is the requirement that literature and writing concentration students complete courses outside of their concentration. While professional writing students wind up taking more literature courses than literature students do writing, some balance is achieved through this distribution.

The department certainly has challenges. Foremost amongst these are calls from some quarters of the university to shift Writing II out of English; a need for increased staffing to address both departmental and institutional writing instruction and curriculum issues; stagnant enrollments in all programs; multiple challenges to the graduate program. But the core and foundation of the department – its faculty, curriculum, culture, energy, and outlook – are robust. With flexible and imaginative leadership and support from administration and from within its own ranks, I have every confidence that the department can respond positively to each of these challenges.

II. Observations / Areas of Interest and Concern

a. Curriculum

There is no single best English Studies curriculum. Departments work well when faculty have the freedom to teach in areas they are most passionate about; when student interests and scheduling needs are satisfied; when internally agreed-upon learning outcomes are understood and meaningful attempts are made to meet them; and when there is a balance between tradition and innovation. Fitchburg’s English Studies program curricula address and mostly satisfy these criteria.

In her 2012 external evaluation of the English Studies Program, evaluator Cheryl Nixon recommended that the department continue its curricular innovation and improvement. The

department appears to have taken up this recommendation with gusto, and the curriculum reflects a commitment to both traditional fields and more innovative areas, with diverse offerings in cinema, writing, and cultural studies. The department offers a rich and varied curriculum in each concentration, and the size (42 credits) and construction of the major allows students plenty of flexibility to pursue areas of personal intellectual interest. The twenty-one credit core, including introductory, intermediate, and capstone courses, guarantees a satisfactory common experience and identity for all English Studies students.

42
credits
/
21 cr core

In my meeting with students currently enrolled in the Capstone course, some expressed dissatisfaction with the number of Professional Writing courses offered. While this was a small pool of students and their statements may not reflect more widespread concern, I do caution the department not to overextend itself by developing too many new courses and supporting too many inter-departmental minors and concentrations at the expense of its core mission. In addition to the three major concentrations and courses in the core curriculum, the department provides significant support for three minors: in African American Studies, American Studies, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. This is a significant burden, and while English Studies appears able at present to offer its courses in adequate rotation, danger may lie in continued expansion.

Recommendations

Capstone: While the students I met with expressed (universally) great enjoyment of their Capstone experience, they made several incisive observations regarding the course and its role in the English Studies curricula. Their comments strongly suggest that it is time for the department to review the Capstone to increase its effectiveness. Specifically, students expressed the following concerns:

- A failure to introduce the portfolio component early in, and throughout, the major. One student clearly articulated the issue: “Capstone is a class we have to take and come to find out it’s supposed to be an accumulation of our four years here and I didn’t know I was supposed to be holding onto everything from my four years – I hadn’t saved anything from my last four years. If they’d told me I needed it and I didn’t have it that would be on me, but I needed something on the advising sheet – ‘hey don’t forget hold onto your stuff, here’s what capstone is’ a lot of us would be better prepared. . . . It definitely should have been told to us as soon as we entered the major.” All the students with whom I spoke echoed this concern. This might (at minimum) be addressed with some kind of statement in print and on-line advising materials regarding the importance of saving one’s work, but a more effective approach would be inclusion of key information regarding the portfolio in every syllabus in every course in the program, with special attention paid to the portfolio in the introductory “Approaches to English Studies” course.
- In a related concern, students expressed a strong desire that some elements of the Capstone course – such as external speakers discussing careers for English majors, resume writing and building, etc. – be introduced earlier in the major, even in the core curriculum. As one student said, “I didn’t do resume building until recently. . . . [this]

should have been addressed a long time ago. Start resume in Writing I and all students then would work on the resume, improving and adding to it each year.”

- Students expressed a lack of clear understanding regarding the goals of the portfolio process. As one student put it, “My portfolio didn’t have an end-goal . . . it seemed just an accumulation without a purpose, and not a creation of anything new – only did a new thing because one of the students suggested it.” While other students in the group did believe the portfolio exercise gave them “some perspective” on growth, most wanted a more robust reflective component than what is currently included.

Internships: The students with whom I spoke were frustrated with the lack of internship opportunities. Though the Program Review document notes that “an increasing number of our professional writing majors choose to do an internship,” students appear hungry for a more structured, intentional internship experience, as well as more opportunities to earn college credit for internships. I encourage the department to consider creating a required or optional internship experience, particularly for those in the professional writing concentration. The department cannot do this alone; it will certainly require more robust institutional support. FSU’s institutional structures (or those I was able to locate on the FSU website) for securing internships appear rather anemic, but it is a crucial area of growth, particularly for Humanities students. I urge the department to lobby the university to develop stronger institutional structures in internships.

b. Assessment

The English Studies department has in place a thoughtful, ongoing process of assessment, detailed in the Program Review document. The department actively collects and analyzes data, and has done so for several years. Those conducting assessment consistently find the same areas of weakness among students’ learning outcomes (all detailed in the Program Review). However, the Program Review is rather more vague about the crucial process of “closing the loop” in assessment: returning to the curricula and teaching practices that can be modified, enhanced, and otherwise developed to address these areas of weakness.

Recommendations

While the department has a very healthy process of assessment data collection and analysis, I recommend equal attention be paid to returning to curricula and teaching practices in order to improve learning outcomes. How are/are department faculty engaging in the kinds of high impact practices advocated by AAC&U (<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>) shown by research to improve learning outcomes? What kinds of institutional resources are needed to develop faculty and modify curriculum to achieve better outcomes? I found little evidence of departmental or institutional structures – as opposed to informal discussion and individual exploration, of which there are plenty – to help the department implement ideas that will lead to better learning outcomes.

In a related matter, while the department’s Program Review document contains a thoughtful, detailed discussion of the department’s goals and learning outcomes, I ~~was~~ could not find these goals on the department website (which is otherwise excellent – user friendly, informative, and

clearly organized). The one statement of learning outcomes I was able to find on the FSU website is a brief, not-very-helpful list on the Office of Assessment page (<http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices-services-directory/institutional-research-and-planning/office-of-assessment/documents/>). Much is to be gained by publicizing learning outcomes with students and with external constituencies (such as parents, alumni, and potential employers). I encourage the department to develop an outward-facing set of learning outcomes and/or goals, and to urge incorporation of program learning outcomes in individual course syllabi.

c. Graduate

Despite strong internal support for and pride in the department's graduate program, it appears to be struggling to grow and even maintain current enrollments. All the MSCA campuses are seeing a drop in graduate enrolments; Fitchburg's English program is not alone in this regard.

The core structure and curriculum of both the MA and MAT programs are sound: curricula are varied and reflect the changing nature of the discipline, and the program (wisely) offers both a thesis and non-thesis option for MA students. But it is undeniable that the MA and MAT have very low enrollments; the department needs to be innovative and bold to reverse those trends.

Recommendations:

Undergraduate Curriculum: As I discuss below, English Studies at FSU loses potential students as a consequence of its undergraduate Education curriculum. The likely and obvious pool of students for FSU's English graduate program is its former undergraduates, many of whom remain in the region and work as teachers. Without an academic double-major, students must backtrack in a post-baccalaureate program in order to meet admissions requirements for the MA or MAT programs – a clear disincentive. Providing a clear path from the Bachelor of Science in Education through an MA or MAT (either of which satisfies state licensure requirements) in English would provide at least a modest increase in enrollments for the FSU English Graduate program. I strongly encourage the department to work with partners in the provost's office and Elementary Education department to explore changes to the undergraduate curriculum that will benefit students and the university.

Online education: Online and hybrid courses are not a panacea for all that ails the Humanities. At the same time, hybrid and online are an area of relatively untapped possibility in FSU's English Graduate program, and the department must lead the way in development of academically sound and challenging hybrid course offerings to supplement their current face-to-face instruction. Since administration professes such strong interest in development of online courses, particularly at the graduate level, it is incumbent on them to provide proper training for those faculty interested in online course development. Faculty need incentives and support to undertake construction of online courses, and the university must provide that incentive.

Professional Writing: Given the success of the department's undergraduate professional writing concentration and the depth of talent among the faculty, it is surprising that the

department has not pursued development of either a graduate Professional Writing degree, or a concentration within the literature degree in Professional Writing. I encourage the department to engage in discussion with the Professional Writing faculty, the graduate dean, the provost, the alumni office, and Institutional Research (to measure regional interest) to see if resources exist for development of graduate programs in Professional Writing.

d. Liberal Arts and Science (Core Curriculum) Writing Courses

Generally speaking, English faculty play a less meaningful role in campus-wide writing issues than is appropriate and best for the university. This is made evident in the lack of a relationship between anyone in English Studies with the Writing Center, and in the current campus discussions and proposals concerning Writing II.

A major concern of the English Studies faculty – and a tension between the department and administration – is the future of writing courses in the Liberal Arts & Sciences curriculum, particularly ENGL 1200 (Writing II). Proposals have been floated to remove Writing II from English and have it taught by faculty in other academic disciplines. The argument for shifting Writing II out of English is that students arrive in their majors without proficiency in discipline-specific writing practice. An introductory course with focus on disciplinary writing practice would, so the argument goes, lead to increased disciplinary writing proficiency. Objections have also been raised that two writing courses and a third course in the Arts cluster give English an outsize role in students' undergraduate LA & S (core curriculum) experience.

While all parties clearly want the same result – strengthening students' ability to communicate effectively in writing – English Studies faculty are united in their belief that a six-credit writing requirement in the core curriculum, taught by faculty with experience and expertise in writing pedagogy, is a crucial component in meeting that goal. Further, the argument that English has 9 credits in the LA & S curriculum is misleading; Writing I and II are not content courses, and they are not introductions to the discipline of English (or of Rhetoric and Composition). Writing I and II are skills courses.

While a focus on writing-in-the-disciplines in Writing II is a worthwhile goal, shifting that course out of English entirely creates more problems than it solves (if in fact it solves any). The administrators with whom I spoke seemed uncertain about (1) which faculty (outside of English Studies) would want to teach these courses; (2) how those faculty would develop competency in the teaching of writing; (3) how writing pedagogy effectiveness and success in achieving learning outcomes would be assessed (if indeed it is currently being assessed at all).

It is hardly unusual for faculty to feel frustrated with the quality of their students' writing skills and to blame poor or inadequate instruction in introductory writing courses for these perceived deficits. Faculty outside of English are often uninformed about the learning outcomes of introductory writing courses and/or know little about how students gain skill in written communication. At Fitchburg, this knowledge deficit is particularly acute since there is no one from English designated as the person who acts as a source of information for the campus on writing courses and writing pedagogy.

The English Studies Department's Program Review document contains a persuasive, thoughtful, informative discussion of the role of English Studies in First-Year Writing. That document in itself should convince FSU community members of the centrality of English Studies in the success of First-Year Writing. I wholeheartedly endorse the arguments made in that document, and encourage all FSU community members with an interest in First-Year Writing to read it.

Recommendations

Identify areas of weakness in writing-related learning outcomes across campus

It seems unlikely that removing Writing II from the English Studies department will have any impact on students' writing effectiveness. Instead, in addition to increasing attention to interdisciplinary writing in the curriculum in Writing II (which I strongly encourage), the university must focus on improving and increasing opportunities for meaningful writing instruction, learning, and practice in all university curricula. There is also a pressing need for better assessment data to learn where the university is failing to provide support for improvement of students' writing skills. As FSU's NEASC five-year report notes:

LA&S has required courses within majors to meet certain goals such as the advanced writing requirement, but, at present, there is no method of assessing them. . . It may be emphasized that several of the deficiencies demonstrated in the LA&S learning outcome data can be attributed to a focus on assessing students at a beginning or emerging level of mastery of learning, rather than a longitudinal model. . . each department uses a different methodology of assessment, [and] seniors typically self-report a higher capacity to integrate ideas or information from various sources, include diverse perspectives, analyze the basic elements of an idea, make judgments about information, arguments or methods, apply theories of concepts to a new situation, and to reflect and revise. These findings suggest the importance of assessing student work at both introductory levels in general education courses and upper levels in disciplinary coursework to get a complete picture of student learning. (41 - 42)

Before the university engages in the divisive and potentially counterproductive process of separating Writing II from the experienced writing faculty in English Studies, it should follow its own advice and collect and analyze better data on writing-related learning outcomes from all areas of the undergraduate curriculum. This assessment effort can be undertaken by existing campus groups (such as the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council, with assistance from Institutional Research).

e. Support English Studies' role in leading university-wide discussion and initiatives for improvement of writing effectiveness

In addition to getting a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of writing instruction across the university, the university and the department would surely benefit from a more proactive and better-resourced role for English Studies faculty in addressing campus-wide writing-related issues. I am not recommending hire of an individual to head a Writing Across the Curriculum

initiative. FSU has undertaken WAC efforts in the past, but in the absence of adequate resources and interest, those efforts were frustrating and unsuccessful. Even with proper support, WAC work is extremely challenging. Unless the university is ready to commit significant resources for WAC support, it makes more sense to apply resources more strategically through existing structures. These kinds of thoughtful and limited efforts can lead to significant change. For example, interested faculty in English Studies with expertise in writing pedagogy should be given course release time and/or additional compensation to work with appropriate university offices and resources (such as the Center for Teaching and Learning) to offer development opportunities for faculty in academic departments that are seeking to improve their students' writing effectiveness and developing writing-intensive major courses. A campus-wide committee or initiative, with a clear and limited charge to develop writing intensive courses and support faculty teaching those courses, could also spearhead this work.

At the same time, the English Studies Department needs better resources to improve and administer both Writing I and Writing II and to support writing instruction across campus. Toward that end, I strongly recommend that the department hire a Writing Program Administrator, a faculty member trained in Rhetoric and Composition who is given adequate release time to address the complex writing needs of the campus. The department's last external evaluator (in 2012) recommended that the department hire a "Writing Program Director," but the department has declined to pursue this option primarily out of fear of violating the Collective Bargaining Agreement by assigning responsibilities to a Director that the CBA assigns the department chair. However, the department could develop a Writing Program Administrator (WPA) position that does not violate the CBA; peer institutions (such as BSU) have a WPA with no contractual conflict.

I encourage the department to explore resources available on the Council of Writing Program Administrators website (<http://wpacouncil.org/>) and to consult with WPAs at peer institutions to develop a position that meets the needs of FSU, its students and faculty. The goals and responsibilities of a Fitchburg WPA could look something like this:

- Develop and administer faculty development opportunities aimed at full and part-time faculty teaching Writing I and II. Development opportunities could include (and are certainly not limited to) a one-day orientation and/or workshop opportunities scattered throughout the academic year. At an orientation, the WPA can share Writing I and II course learning outcomes, sample syllabi, teaching resources, etc.
- Provide advice and support to Writing I and II full and part-time faculty as they address issues in their own teaching and as they further develop as professionals in the field
- Participate in English Studies departmental decision-making regarding writing pedagogy and curricula
- Work with other offices and resources at the university, such as the Tutor Center, the First Year of College initiative, the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council, the Center for Teaching and Learning, etc. to familiarize these groups with the learning outcomes, curricula, and teaching practices common in Writing I and II
- Work with these same offices and resources to enhance writing instruction across the university through innovations in curriculum and instruction

- Work with Institutional Research and Planning to develop, implement, and analyze assessment data on Writing I and II
- Collaborate with the department's Secondary Education faculty in working with external partners in the region, such as K-12 teachers; faculty and administrators at regional community colleges; and faculty and administrators at other MSCA campuses to share resources, etc.

f. Role of the Department in University-Wide Supplemental Instruction (Tutoring), Writing Pedagogy, and Curriculum Development

A corollary concern for English Studies faculty is the absence of a connection between English Studies faculty and the Writing Skills Center (or Writing Center – I found both titles on the FSU website). For about the last decade, the Writing Skills Center has not been under the supervision of the English Studies department. Writing tutors receive no training or instruction from faculty with expertise in Rhetoric and Composition, and the English Studies department has no formal (or informal) relationship with the Writing Skills Center in administration, staffing, outreach, or assessment. At the very least, running a writing tutor program without input or guidance from faculty with training and expertise in Rhetoric and Composition is a squandering of resources. One wonders who trains those students, how their work is assessed, and what benefit (other than financial) peer tutors gain from working in the Center. In addition, this lack of involvement can be perceived as an institutional dismissal of the authority and knowledge of English Studies faculty on matters relating to writing pedagogy and student writing effectiveness.

To an outside observer, the absence of a clear guiding role for English Studies in administration of the Writing Skills Center is part of a larger issue, which is the absence of guidance from those with appropriate expertise in campus-wide discussions of writing pedagogy and writing-related curriculum. Without a role in administration of the Writing Skills Center, and without a dedicated Writing Program Administrator, English is hobbled in its ability to provide campus-wide leadership on writing-related pedagogy and curriculum.

Recommendations

Hire a Writing Center Director

Academic Writing Centers are usually led by an English department (or in this case, English Studies department) faculty member trained in Rhetoric and Composition with release time to administer all aspects of the Writing Center. The responsibilities of the Writing Center Director could include the following:

- Training undergraduate peer tutors. Peer tutors can be trained in a one-credit course (which can be taken more than once) – a good opportunity for students in the Professional Writing and Secondary Education concentrations.
- Working with a graduate or undergraduate assistant, assistants, or intern(s) to coordinate tutoring sessions and development opportunities for tutors
- Providing outreach and advertising to the campus regarding services available at the Writing Skills Center.

If FSU's English Studies department does not currently have a faculty member on staff with this interest and expertise, the department should consider requesting a faculty line for this purpose.

g. Enrollment

The department's Program Review document notes that the number of majors has remained stable "in recent years," and notes further that declining enrollments are due in part to the movement of the theater concentration to the Communications/Media Department. Whatever the causes, the major has seen a drop in majors from 203 in 2011 to 115 in 2015 (Institutional Factbook 2016). This decrease is consistent with sagging enrollments in the Humanities nationally, but enrollments in the English Studies Department at Fitchburg – indeed, in all Liberal Arts majors at the university – are also hurt by the university's curriculum for Early Childhood and Elementary Education majors. At all of Fitchburg's peer state universities, Elementary Education students double-major in a Liberal Arts subject, completing all the required courses in that subject. At FSU, however, students pursue an Interdisciplinary Studies major, with the option to concentrate either in two "fields" (which consists of a minor and 6 courses in one discipline) or three fields (a minor and two fields of four courses each).

To an outsider, Fitchburg State's Elementary Education curriculum and its Interdisciplinary Studies corollary are extremely complex, and appear to place students – and academic departments – at a significant disadvantage. First, should a student be unable to complete the MTEL exams required for licensure, or should a student decide that they do not wish to pursue a career in education, they are left with a watered down Interdisciplinary degree – difficult to explain and market to employers – and no substantive base of knowledge or skill in an area of study. Second, because these students take a smattering of courses in a number of different disciplines, they do not develop the kinds of intensive and lasting relationships with faculty that students experience in an academic major. Third, when these students pursue a graduate degree (as all Massachusetts educators must), it is unlikely they will choose an MA or MAT in English, since they lack the undergraduate major and preparation. (See "Graduate" discussion). This hurts graduate enrollments and limits students' options.

Recommendations

Work with appropriate university offices and departments to review the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Major requirements

The Elementary and Early Childhood Education major curricula are well beyond the scope of this external reviewer's charge, and those curricular decisions are of course best left in the hands of the professionals in that field. However, Fitchburg's program of study for Elementary-level educators is unlike any other among the MSCA campuses, and there are many valid arguments (beyond those I offer above) for a review of the current model and implementation of a double-major in an academic subject. I encourage FSU's English Studies faculty to initiate that conversation.

Develop an English major for elementary education students

If the Education faculty and administration are unwilling to consider revision of the Elementary Education major, the English Studies department might explore possibilities for creation of an

Elementary and Early Childhood Education Concentration in the major. The primary hurdle to a double major now is that the three existing concentrations are each 42 credits. It would be challenging for a student to complete a 42 credit major in addition to all the requirements for Elementary and Early Childhood in 4 years, and so English would need to consider a 36 credit concentration for those students. But the department currently offers several courses that should appeal to future K-6 educators (such as Children's Literature and Literature for Young Adults); it already has a successfully concentration in secondary education; and the benefits to students and faculty should provide incentive for this work.

Were FSU to adopt the model used at all its Commonwealth peer institutions, Liberal Arts departments – and especially English – could expect to see at least a modest increase in majors since many Elementary Education (and Early Childhood Education) majors double in English. By way of comparison, at Bridgewater State University, of roughly 600 English majors, about 180 are Elementary Education double majors – approximately 30%. (An additional 30 or so are Early Childhood Education double-majors.) This is an avenue worth exploring.

h. Research and Creative Activity Support

In my meeting with department faculty, concerns arose regarding the expectations of administration for faculty research. FSU is in the midst of significant executive-level staff turnover; this naturally causes a great deal of anxiety among the faculty as these administrators learn the campus culture. FSU English Studies faculty, as the Program Review document notes, take full advantage of all the financial support offered by Fitchburg State University for travel to local, national, and international conferences, conventions, association meetings, workshops, and other professional development. Faculty contributions to the development of the discipline “take various forms, including research publications (journal articles, published/unpublished manuscripts, and books), creative publications and/or performances, and professional writing submissions. In addition to submitting work for review and publication, faculty members also serve as editorial consultants and journal reviewers.” Department faculty spearhead major departmental, campus and regional initiatives; they lead key on-campus offices; and they hold leadership positions in local and regional professional associations.

By any objective standard the diversity, scholarly and creative productivity, teaching excellence, and service and leadership activity of the department's faculty are all deeply impressive. Evidence of the meaningful accomplishments of the faculty are detailed in the supporting documents accompanying the Program Review; they speak for themselves in both quality and quantity. While I have no specific, programmatic recommendations to address faculty concerns regarding adequate recognition for their professional output, MSCA and department leadership have an obligation to remind new and continuing administrators that the Collective Bargaining Agreement clearly states that in the process of evaluating faculty, “regard shall be had to the fact that the State Universities are primarily teaching institutions” (98). These rich and substantive professional contributions are all made while these faculty maintain an onerous 12 credit/semester teaching load. Ongoing material support for and recognition of these accomplishments are crucial for the success of FSU's students and faculty.

i. General Hiring Recommendations

My first recommendation is for a full-time faculty member with a specialization in Speech. The department is soon to lose through retirement a Speech instructor, which will leave only one full-time faculty member on staff to teach and develop courses in Speech. This is a requirement not only for department majors, but also for the whole institution, and there is no prospect on the horizon for dropping either the department or institutional requirements. A replacement hire in this area would allow the department to pursue growth in the area of Speech and Rhetoric as well as continue to develop and teach existing courses in Speech.

My second recommendation is for one new line, and possibly two lines, in Rhetoric and Composition. The department and the university are in serious need of an experienced and skilled Writing Program Administrator, but there is equal need for a faculty member with experience and interest in Writing Center administration. Please see my discussion above on both these areas of need. If FSU is serious about supporting its students' growth and success in written communication, it must support adequate staffing through faculty hires.

III. Conclusion

As my predecessor found in 2012, the FSU English Studies department is strong, innovative, and high-functioning. The faculty are united on what matters most: student learning and student success. In my conversation with students, I was most impressed by their certainty that their faculty not only cared about the quality and impact of their education, but cared about and knew them as individuals. From the department's administrative assistant to its chair, each person I met in English Studies at FSU was committed to a rich and meaningful educational and personal experience for its students. While the department faces many of the challenges that we are all facing in the Humanities nationally, none of these are insurmountable problems. Crucial to the continuing success of English Studies is meaningful and effective partnership with and support from administrative leadership so that the department can continue to grow internally and serve the university and its students most effectively.