

AY20 Expedited Program Review: English BA

Submission date: 10 February 2020

Program/s in this review: English BA

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): _____

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

- David Bowie, Professor and Chair, Anchorage
- Jackie Cason, Professor, Anchorage
- Jared Griffin, Associate Professor, Kodiak
- Trish Jenkins, Associate Professor, Anchorage
- Emily Madsen, Assistant Professor, Anchorage

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Relevancy of the program: Our program offers students the opportunity to learn in ways that are useful beyond the classroom because 1) our innovative curriculum encourages lifelong learning, critical thinking, and effective writing; 2) we teach textual work as an engagement with history, convention, culture, and place so that students can adapt and contribute responsibly in a changing regional and challenging global environment; and 3) our students practice a full range of literacies – written, digital, and visual – so that they may become active and well-equipped citizens. Furthermore, the Department attends to Alaska’s diverse cultures, the North Pacific Rim environment, and networked technologies, all intersecting through forms of textuality.

Partnerships: Among other initiatives, the department co-sponsors the Democracy and Civic Action Week essay contest, and faculty are involved in the Alaska Center for the Book, the Books of the Year program, and (through the Center for Community Engagement and Learning) Welcoming Anchorage.

Workforce development and employment opportunities relevant to the program: Through our internship course, our program supports workforce development and provides the potential for employment opportunities relevant to our program. The internship course places students at local businesses, non-profits, and on the UAA campus where they acquire experience in a professional setting. The student intern meets one of two types of expectations: They can be contracted to work 1) in a professional setting not necessarily related to their respective area of study but that needs a writing expert who composes with precision and clarity as they produce documents in response to a variety of situations; or 2) in a professional setting that is related to their respective area of study and needs a writing expert who can also apply disciplinary skills and knowledge. The internship experience typically requires students to draw upon skills that writing courses develop such as writing, editing, design, document production, document analysis, and research knowledge. Sometimes interns also use the disciplinary knowledge of their major and/or minor.

According to the key findings of the AAC&U’s 2018 Employer Research report, employers value applied knowledge in real-world settings. Several of our upper-division writing courses provide opportunities for students to meet this outcome—most notably ENGL A311 (Writing and Rhetoric in Public Life), ENGL A312 (Advanced Technical Writing), ENGL A313 (Professional Writing), ENGL A478 (Public Science Writing), and ENGL A495 (Internship in Professional Writing). In these courses, students complete projects that require them to solve real-world design problems, develop strategies for applying their knowledge and skills in real-world settings, and apply writing expertise and disciplinary knowledge in real-world settings.

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Role program plays in supporting other academic programs: A significant number of non-majors enroll in our classes. According to the student credit hour data, we serve a significant number of other majors. Specifically, the following programs require students to complete an English course for degree completion:

- BS in Aviation Technology, Aeronautical Studies Emphasis requires ENGL A312
- BA in Computer Science requires ENGL A313 and ENGL A414 or ENGL A478
- BS in Computer Science requires ENGL A313 and ENGL A414 or ENGL A478
- BS in Environment and Society requires ENGL A478
- BA in International Studies requires a “mastery course” and ENGL A440 is one of the four courses to choose from
- BA in Legal Studies requires ENGL A311, ENGL A312, ENGL A313, or ENGL A414

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

Summary: The Department of English offers one undergraduate major (English), and naturally enough a sizable amount of teaching in the department is focused on supporting that major. However, a large amount of departmental teaching also serves to support needs across UAA, ranging from general education to requirements in other departments’ degree programs. Students taking English and linguistics courses, whether for their major or not, gain cognitive insights and practical application of skills that are relevant to all areas of study that involve competence in language.

The department’s faculty approach English Studies as a dynamic, evolving collection of subfields that, when taken together, provide a better understanding of the world’s most widely spoken language in all of its forms and uses. Although the department has experienced headwinds during the review period, ranging from lower demand for English degrees nationally to the move of Tier I writing courses out of the department, the department is taking steps to deal with those issues, and retains a solid foundation on which to build.

Productivity and internal demand trends: Degrees awarded and number of majors: From 2013 to 2019, as shown in 2020 program review data, the Department of English experienced a 4.0% drop per year in the number of degrees awarded (annual changes are calculated from a best-fit linear trendline; the trend in number of majors is essentially the same as degree awards). This roughly parallels the trend in degrees awarded across CAS and UAA (annual drops of 2.3% and 1.4%, respectively).

Within the discipline of English, the UAA Department of English’s trend in degree awards can also be fruitfully compared to English degrees awarded across the University of Alaska System and nationally. For comparison, the UAA English annual drop of 4.0% occurred while UAS’s English program experienced an annual drop of 3.1% (though the very small Ns may make this calculation unreliable), UAF’s English program had an annual 7.1% reduction, and nationally there were 4.8% fewer English degrees awarded per year.

So it is clear that the English program faces challenges, reflected particularly in departmental declines at UAA nearly matching the decline in English programs nationally. In recognition of this, the Department of English has taken steps to counteract such issues. In particular, the faculty have done the following:

- Last year, the department significantly reworked the English major curriculum to provide students both more flexibility and a more efficient path through the major. Students previously had to choose from three options through the major, which locked them into very specific curricular choices and created bottlenecks. Those options were eliminated to allow students more curricular freedom, both eliminating bottlenecks and giving students the ability to tailor a path to their degree that more closely aligns to their interests.
- Also last year, the department merged a number of different courses in ways that will allow the department to more quickly and flexibly offer courses tailored to student interests and demand.

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- Over the past three years, the faculty have increased outreach and visibility efforts at UAA and in the community. This includes, of course, simply making sure that students know what the English major has to offer by making sure the department has representation at events such as UAA's Preview Days, but also through co-sponsorship of the Democracy and Civic Action Week essay contest, and faculty involvement in the Alaska Center for the Book and the Books of the Year program. It also includes longer-term efforts that we expect will bear fruit, such as recent work to leverage the department's internship program to increase community awareness of the value of an English degree.
- To tie into the UAA 2020 value of celebrating student success, in 2017 the department reconfigured our annual departmental publication *Understory* from a creative writing-only collection into a selective collection highlighting student success across all of the subfields of English Studies represented in the department (literary studies, rhetoric, composition, creative writing, and linguistics).

Productivity and efficiency: Cost and revenue measures: It is difficult to analyze cost and revenue data for the department because there has been a significant change affecting credit hour production measures: Two years ago, the Tier I writing courses were moved from the Department of English. As a result of the high demand for those courses, the Department brought in a very large amount of tuition revenue before the courses were removed compared to more recent years. However, the Department's SCH production in 2018 included a relatively small proportion of Tier I GERs, and there was none in 2019, so those years' data (especially the latter) reflect the current situation.

The committee reviewed tuition revenue for ENGL and LING courses in 2018 and 2019 (these are calendar years, so 2019 is partial data, since fall semester information was not yet available on the "Leadership" section of Institutional Research site, from which this data comes) against total unrestricted instructor pay for those courses, and the net difference. In 2018, the department brought in \$1,143,856 in tuition revenue against \$766,604 in unrestricted instructor pay (for a positive net return to the university of \$377,252, or 49.2%), and for the art of 2019 for which figures were available the department brought in \$547,047 in tuition while costing \$385,612 in unrestricted instructor pay (for a positive net return of \$161,435, or 41.9%).

This compares favorably with both UAF's and UAS's ENGL and LING courses: UAF brought in net revenue of \$35,826 in 2018 (a 3.7% profit, based on \$1,015,425 in tuition against \$979,599 in unrestricted pay) and \$48,106 in 2019 (a 10.7% profit, based on \$497,273 in tuition against \$449,257 in unrestricted pay), while UAS experienced net losses of \$36,516 in 2018 (a 20.3% loss, based on \$143,854 in tuition against \$180,370 in unrestricted pay) and \$4,391 in 2019 (a 4.0% loss, based on \$104,824 in tuition against \$109,215 in unrestricted pay).

Clearly, the UAA Department of English is efficient in budgetary terms. This is particularly noteworthy given the need for smaller class sizes in many of the Department's classes, due to the centrality of writing in the discipline.

Demand from other departments: For the first several years of the review period (2013–2017 and part of 2018), the first-year composition (i.e., GER Tier I writing) courses were located in the department. Since those courses, by their nature, serve students across the University regardless of major, it follows that the proportion of teaching directed outside of the major was high in those years—from 2013 to 2017 the proportion of the department's teaching that served those outside of the major hovered around 80%. In 2018 the Tier I GERs were located in the department for only part of the year, and so the proportion of out-of-major teaching dropped to 55.9%.

However, even with the removal of the Tier I GER courses from the department for the entirety of AY 2019, 38.2%—more than a third—of all Department teaching served students outside of the English major, reflecting a continued meaningful amount of service to the University as a whole. Our classes are interwoven with other majors and programs, including International Studies, Environment and Society, Legal Studies, Aviation Technology, and Computer Science. One reason for this is that the Department of English functions in the university as a de facto Writing Across the Curriculum service. We also provide students with opportunities to take upper division electives to fulfill their credit requirements for graduation, and several ENGL and LING courses are

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offered online each term, and these courses are frequently taken not just by UAA students, but also by UAS and UAF students.

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

Summary: The Department of English offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in its mission to educate students to become active and literate citizens. The courses offered by the Department of English provide an opportunity for a truly liberal education, one that encourages both self-discovery and an exploration of enduring ideas. As a program that focuses on the field of English Studies in an integrated model, the curriculum includes courses in writing, rhetoric, literature, literacies, and linguistics.

The Department of English is very much a part of the dynamic world of higher education and has taken important steps to adapt to the changing landscape of English Studies. UAA's Department of English has developed, and continues to develop, curriculum in accordance with its own mission and expectations for student success, its disciplinary expectations, and UAA's values and expectations for academic programs.

Curriculum and program design: We have developed, implemented, and revised our curriculum to reflect student learning and diversity that is consistent with our mission and UAA's values.

Courses

- We have revised our foundational courses to include a broader array of classes on world literature and culture, Alaska Native literature, Critical Thinking, Creative Writing, Linguistics/How English Works. In fact, we have designated ENGL A245 (Alaska Native Literature) a foundational course.
- We have developed ENGL A200 (Global Literature and Culture) and other course offerings to emphasize comparative literature studies that more closely respond to our diverse student body and local communities.
- We continue to work on curricular changes that underscore these initiatives to keep our curriculum current and relevant.

Program Major

- We initiated a significant redesign of our major under an interdisciplinary English Studies model. This redesign features a restructuring of our program's curriculum through innovative program design to continue to meet our discipline's and UAA's expectations and values. The integrated model of the English program provides students a cohort experience while affording students significant freedom to select courses that support their goals. We have shifted from a set of core courses, most at the 400-level, to a design that encourages an iterative building of knowledge and skill as students progress from lower division to upper division courses.
- We have reorganized away from narrow tracks (in literature, rhetoric, or education) so that students can choose a focus/concentration that fits their interests and goals and move through the program more efficiently.
- We have streamlined our students' path toward degree attainment and increased our graduation efficiency measures.
 - Between 2013 and 2017, the average time it took our graduates to attain a degree was 5.34 years.
 - For 2018 and 2019, students' years per degree decreased to 5.2 and 4.7 respectively.
 - Our department's strides in graduation efficiency may be compared to other UAA baccalaureate programs. For instance, UAA's overall 2013–2019 graduation efficiency rate (years per degree) is 6.2 years. While UAA has also made strides in decreasing students' years per degree over the past two years, averaging 5.5 years, the English department remains generally more efficient in graduating our majors.

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Distance offerings: We are capitalizing on faculty expertise to support learning and meet student demand with current technological resources.

- We have increased our online offerings so that more students can complete their larger portions of their degrees via eLearning.
- We have started to use Zoom videoconferencing to provide a way for students in remote areas to participate in classes synchronously.
- Our goal is to structure our program offerings, especially upper-division courses, in a way that students in rural or remote Alaska communities can complete our program. By increasing the level of choice, we are designing a program that will be more adaptable to student needs and more readily available to the community campuses where students may want to declare and complete the major without moving or commuting to Anchorage.
- This development is also in response to English program demand in rural and remote service areas. Since 2013, a quarter of all departmental courses have been delivered at community campuses, indicating such a demand for our program offerings. (This dropped somewhat with the move of the Tier I Writing courses from the department, but even with that shift roughly a fifth of all English courses are delivered at community campuses.)

Program Student Learning Outcomes assessment: The English Department prides itself on being a supporter of UAA's mission and is intentional in our service to that mission. For instance, we have taken deliberate action to closely align our Program Student Learning Outcomes with UAA's General Education Requirement Learning Outcomes.

English Program SLO 1: Interpret texts in context with reasoned evidence drawn from English Studies' research methods

- GER SLO #3 – Relate knowledge to historical context
- GER SLO #4 – Interpret different systems of aesthetic representation and understand their historical and cultural context
- GER SLO #7 – Locate and use relevant information
- GER SLO #8 – Adopt critical perspectives on globalization and diversity

English Program SLO 2: Construct texts that are responsive to audience, purpose, genre, and voice

- GER SLO #1 – Communicate effectively
- GER SLO #7 – Locate and use relevant information
- GER SLO #9 – Integrate knowledge and employ skills gained to synthesize creative thinking, critical judgment and personal experience in a meaningful and coherent manner

English Program SLO 3: Engage scholarly, professional, and public discourse in diverse communities

- GER SLO #5 – Investigate the complexity of human institutions and behavior
- GER SLO #6 – Identify ways science informs understanding of natural processes
- GER SLO #7 – Locate and use relevant information
- GER SLO #9 – Integrate knowledge and employ skills gained to synthesize creative thinking, critical judgment and personal experience in a meaningful and coherent manner

Out of the nine GER SLOs, the English department has aligned its program to support eight (with SLO #2 "Reason mathematically and analyze quantitative and qualitative data competently to reach sound conclusions" the only exception). Few UAA programs can make such a claim to support UAA's GERs so broadly and intentionally.

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Student success: In addition to supporting GERs, the English Department has taken several measures to facilitate and implement Student Success initiatives, a UAA core focus, including High Impact Practices and targeted advising.

- Student engagement in High Impact Practices is a notable feature of our program, including:
 - Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC). Most of our courses are writing intensive.
 - Scholarly collaboration with faculty members and internships. Our internship program (ENGL A495 Internship in Professional Writing) pairs students with projects both inside and outside the university. Students have collaborated with faculty on research projects, and one of our students helped write a \$100,000 grant for Anchorage Parks Foundation in her internship.
 - Study abroad. Faculty are currently exploring these opportunities, with a pilot scheduled for 2020.
 - Capstone experiences. Our capstone courses (ENGL A476 History of English Language, ENGL A478 Public Science Writing, and ENGL A479 Advanced Studies in Literature) require students to integrate what they've learned throughout the program.
 - Portfolios. E-portfolios are frequently used in English program courses.
- Our dedicated advising strategies support students as they progress through the degree, as evidenced by our efficient time-to-degree data (see above). Department advisers are noted for their accessibility to students and have revised department handouts to help students navigate the program.

Student accomplishments: These characteristics of our programs, from curriculum revision to student success, have resulted in noteworthy student accomplishments:

- Many of our recent graduates have continued on to graduate programs, for example: PhD in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy at Ohio State; PhD in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at North Carolina State; PhD in Linguistics at the University of Victoria; MPhil in Political Theory at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar; MA at Medill Journalism School at Northwestern, MA in Speech Language Pathology at Ohio State; MFA at UAA.
- Recent graduates have moved on to degree-related careers, for example: Alumni Outreach Specialist at UAA, teacher at Cook Inlet Head Start, freelance Technical Writer, Marketing Coordinator at DOWL Engineering, Speech Pathologist with ASD.
- Since 2013, nearly 140 English program graduates have enrolled in a second degree program in Alaska, and 134 of those graduates have persisted for another award at UAA.
- Nearly 1 in 4 English program graduates have earned an additional post-graduate award.
- Multiple English program graduates have served as commencement student speakers.

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

UAA's integrated English Studies program is distinct from UAF and UAS, whose programs center on the study of literature. We have designed a curriculum that fosters students' capacities to interpret texts, create meaning, and engage diverse communities. Course offerings represent linguistics, rhetoric, literacies, literature, and creative writing in equitable measure, and community campus faculty play an integral role in curriculum development and delivery. Students practice multiple methods of inquiry and compose in multiple professional genres, fostering consilience. Our program aligns with UAA's general education learning outcomes, guiding learners to "integrate knowledge and employ skills to synthesize creative thinking, critical judgment, and personal experience" and to "adopt critical perspectives for understanding the forces of globalization and diversity." While our program curriculum provides common foundational and integrative courses, it provides many elective choices, making it accessible and flexible in serving students' diverse goals, in and outside of Anchorage.

We are distinct with a writing intensive curriculum and five upper-division writing courses that develop writers across the curriculum and help them integrate general education skills into disciplinary subject courses. Disciplinary knowledge is

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always discursive, and for that reason the high impact practice of writing intensive courses equips students to succeed across the curriculum and in post-graduation careers.

Beyond the major, our program is distinct in offering minors in English (with emphases in Linguistics, Literature, and Professional Writing) and Creative Writing. A Linguistics emphasis pairs particularly well with Anthropology and Languages. A Literature emphasis on critical textual and cultural analysis complements History and the social sciences. Professional Writing, with its emphasis on composing complex information in a readable form for various audiences using a variety of media, serves students in multiple STEM and humanities fields. The Creative Writing minor provides workshop-based instruction in the crafts of fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry and dramatic writing.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

This review shows us to be a busy, efficient department that has managed to do more with less, despite faculty attrition, a hiring freeze, and the move of Tier I GER writing courses to another college. We serve a large number of English majors as well as a significant population of students from other majors who come to us for courses in global language and literature; sociolinguistics; technical, professional, and scientific writing; and upper-division major requirements, among other courses. Our recent curriculum revisions reflect our efforts to reduce barriers to completion of the English major and to provide multiple instructional pathways for students, allowing them increased flexibility in making their way through major requirements and electives. Thanks to these changes, faculty have been freed to innovate, crafting courses around topics that our students find valuable and engaging, such as Shakespeare and Pop Culture, and Neuroscience Narratives. We are now able to respond quickly to student needs with our course offerings, and we have seen online enrollment from students at UAF and UAS. As students begin to declare under the new major, we anticipate improving course enrollment numbers.

We envision continuing to use our curriculum to meet the goals of our department mission as well as the university's goals for 2020, in particular the streamlined path through our major making English a practical and affordable major, and one that does not place artificial barriers in students' way and allows for efficient completion of degrees. We plan to continue to highlight our Department's students and their achievements through our undergraduate publication, *Understory*, which publishes creative and scholarly student work. We also anticipate promoting student success by encouraging our students to seek both internal and external internships. Promoting external-facing internships will encourage our students to build relationships with community partners and organizations, laying the groundwork for them to transition into the Alaskan workforce and meet Alaska's workforce needs. Our students have already had great success working with non-profits, crafting communications materials, improving handbooks, and writing grants. We aim to see even more of them in public-facing roles through our internship program in the coming years.

In addition, in the near future and beyond, Alaska will need to be able to better articulate its own story. Stories are powerful, and stories unite each part of the English major as a whole. This past summer showed the power of individual citizens showing up, emailing, writing to legislators and news outlets, and telling their own narratives about their lives and the future they envision for this state. Our students, who are uniquely prepared for this kind of work, have much to contribute. The emphasis on narrative and the creative act of putting information and ideas into the context of lived experience is a core strength of English studies. As our campus and state continue to address fiscal, social, and health challenges, the stories we tell and the stories our students are uniquely positioned to tell will be more important than ever.