

**EXPEDITED
BACHELOR OF ART IN ENGLISH
PROGRAM REVIEW**

Fall 2019

Committee:

Emily Wall, Professor of English, English BA Program Coordinator
Kevin Maier, Associate Professor of English
Andrea Dewees, Associate Professor of Spanish, Humanities Department Chair

Introduction to this Document

We are offering this expedited review in response to Provost Karen Carey's request. Given the short timeline and need for immediate information, we've given you a brief overview and focused on answering the questions specifically asked by the provost. However, we also note that these questions mischaracterized the current status of our program, due to inaccurate numbers regarding student:faculty ratios and other issues. We address these inaccuracies in our answers below.

The English B.A. program is up for a full review in AY 2020-21. We urge anyone making decisions about English to also review the AY 2015 full Program Review.

English Program Review Overview

It should be noted that the English program has two main teaching obligations:

1. **Service-related courses:** which include 100-200 level general education requirement (GER) courses, primarily in composition, and 200-400 level courses required by various degree programs at UAS.

Note: The regents asked all the MAUs to align lower-division courses so in the past few years we worked with UAF and UAA faculty to do so. As a result of this alignment process, half the courses we teach have a WRTG designator instead of an ENGL designator. Those are still technically English courses, taught by English faculty, and an integral part of the English curriculum.

2. **Program courses:** which include 200-400 level English courses required (and/or approved as electives) for the following degrees:
 - English BA
 - Geography BA
 - Outdoor Studies Certificate
 - English Literature and Creative Writing minors
 - BLA degrees (including an English emphasis area)
 - We also have courses in the new IBA degree as well as a designed Creative Arts stream which is roughly 50% English courses

Degrees

The English program offers a BA degree in English and minors in Creative Writing and English Literature.

BA Degree: The BA in English provides a broad foundation in the liberal arts as well as specialized training in language and literature. The program is designed to provide students with: (1) knowledge of English and American literature and culture in their multicultural contexts, and (2) advanced skills in critical reading, research, writing, speaking, and problem solving. The BA includes three areas of emphasis: Literature, Literature and the Environment, and Creative Writing. After taking a shared core curriculum, students choose one of these emphasis areas, completing relevant upper division requirements that develop expertise in a more focused area.

Creative Writing and English Literature Minors: Both minors offer students the opportunity to advance their writing and critical analysis skills to support their primary course of study. The Creative Writing minor is designed to provide students with the skills necessary to write poetry, fiction, and/or creative non-fiction. Students also analyze contemporary literature for technique and form. This minor helps students develop their innovative thinking and their communication skills, and it also helps provide them with a route to publication or prepare students for entrance into an M.F.A. program. The English Literature minor is designed to provide students with a broad overview of English and American literature as well as to enhance their reading, speaking, research, writing and critical thinking skills.

Responses to Provost Karen Carey's Questions in her Request for this Expedited Review

On Oct. 10, 2019 Provost Karen Carey asked for an expedited review of the English B.A. program and posed four questions.

1. Currently there are seven faculty in the English program and 23 majors. In addition over the past five years on average seven students graduate each year. Is this sustainable over time?

The English program is responsible for serving the university with several crucial fundamental GER courses, including WRTG courses. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of some of our faculty appointments and recent retirements (as we explain below) there are 5 FT English faculty on the Juneau campus.

English and Writing Courses

We would like to note that a large percentage of the workload for faculty in the English program is actually devoted to teaching WRTG GERs. For example, this fall semester, of the department's **28 courses offered, 21 are WRTG courses**, not including thesis projects or internships.

The English faculty are responsible for teaching all of the Writing GERs at UAS. Writing GERs comprise 17% of the total GERs required. If students elect English courses for their Humanities and additional Humanities/Social Science GER, it potentially brings the number of GER courses up to 34% of a student's GER credits.

A large percentage of the students at UAS move through our courses, and the English faculty and our courses "serve" other disciplines. Many of the courses in Social Science, Humanities, and Education, Business, and Natural Sciences require writing, and those faculty depend on our department and program classes to teach their students. In short, English faculty spend a lot of their instructional time and workload on these GERs, which benefit degree programs beyond the English BA.

Faculty Workloads & Recent Losses

In the years since our last program review, we have had 5 full time tenure track English faculty on the Juneau campus: Dr. Kevin Maier, Dr. Simpson, Dr. Sol Neely, Professor Emily Wall, Professor Ernestine Hayes, and Dr. Nina Chordas. Dr. Simpson and Dr. Neely together comprise 1 full time faculty teaching English courses (i.e. each teach about half of their workload in English).

One of UAS' strengths is interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship and this is reflected in our faculty teaching loads. Drs. Simpson, Neely, Maier, and Elliott, and Professors Landis, Whalen and Florian, teach courses with HUM, GEOG, COMM, PHIL and ODS designators and thereby contribute to GERs, as well as the Geography, BLA and other degrees.

We would like to bring attention to the fact that English has sustained significant faculty loss in the last two years. At the time of our last program review, we had five full-time tenure-track English faculty members on the Juneau campus; we currently have only three. After having lost both Ernestine Hayes and Nina Chordas, our campus has only Dr. Kevin Maier, Professor Emily Wall, and both Dr. Simpson and Dr. Neely (who together comprise one full-time faculty position in the English department).

This loss represents a 60% of the tenure track faculty on the Juneau campus in the past few years.

On our Ketchikan and Sitka campuses, we have an additional three full-time tenure track faculty: Professor Rod Landis, Dr. Math Trafton, and Professor Teague Whalen. Two of those faculty teach courses online that our degree students take. These faculty members also teach the bulk of the online composition courses at UAS.

As is evident in the two term faculty positions we've needed for the past several years (Dr. Will Elliott, Professor and Professor Stephen Florian), we do not have enough tenure-track faculty to cover all the courses offered. Dr. Elliott was hired in the spring of 2015 as a term and Professor Florian in the fall of 2018. Both were meant as "emergency" hires and we've kept them on because we simply cannot cover all the needed English courses without them.

On the Juneau campus we also regularly employ 2-3 adjuncts to teach both GERs and upper division courses. For example, Geoff Kirsch now regularly teaches ENGL 461: Advanced Creative Writing. Neither we nor the NWCCU We believe it is ideal for an adjunct to be teaching long-term, or teaching to be teaching courses for our majors in their senior year (where internships and thesis projects happen, letters of recommendation are written, etc.). The Sitka campus relies on adjuncts but Ketchikan campus has moved away from hiring any adjuncts to teach their courses.

English Majors & Course Enrollments

Like all faculty at UAS, we wish for higher enrollment in our courses and for a larger number of majors. We agree that this is not an ideal situation. As we are all aware, enrollment across UAS has been declining for the past few years and the current budget situation is not helping attract new students. The English faculty is deeply concerned about enrollment and the recruiting problems we are experiencing, and how this is being addressed by the administration.

We note that enrollment management has become a significant part of the English Coordinator's tasks in the past three years. PCOs has become a complex process as we balance the 6-year sequence, the number of majors we have, current enrollment trends, and faculty losses. We are proud of the fact that very few English courses have been cancelled in the past five years. We strive to provide as robust and stable a program as possible, given our budgetary and enrollment constraints.

In addition, nearly every faculty member in English has spent significant time in recruitment, which is not a traditional part of a faculty workload. For example, in an effort to recruit, Dr. Maier made multiple visits to Anchorage area high schools, as well as regular visits to Juneau area high schools. Dr. Simpson is currently working on a partnership with SERRC. Professor Wall is faculty at the regional creative writing conference in Skagway every other May and she uses her panels and talks to recruit students into our writing courses.

We also pay close attention to retention rates in courses. We believe it's our concern if students are leaving courses or not signing up for them. Keeping students in our courses is a faculty concern and one we continue to address with mentoring of junior faculty members. We also note that the turnover in administration of the dean, directors, and provost has harmed our efforts in this area.

We would also like to highlight the general make-up of an English course. A number of students in our English courses are not English majors. This has traditionally been the case at UAS, in keeping with our mission as a community-focused and open-enrollment institution.

On a related note, we would like to draw attention to the WRTG 090 and WRTG 110 courses. These courses have lower caps and lower enrollments, but these courses serve an important function within the university and wider communities. For more vulnerable populations, these are the entrance courses. There are students who come to UAS and who are not eligible to take *any* courses but these (and one art course) because they do not test into, or have the prerequisites for, any other course at UAS.

In a wider scope, even though there are fewer majors in our courses, our course enrollments continue to be sustainable. On the Juneau campus it has been extremely rare for us to let a course run with than 10 students in it.

Over the past year the English faculty have also updated the degree to reflect more current trends in the field. We've removed some of the more colonial and outdated courses, and we have in turn added or revised a number of other courses to reflect a more postcolonial curriculum and a selection of courses that will appeal to our current student body. We will continue to do this work, and look for ways to make our program more attractive to incoming and transfer students.

2. Student:faculty ratios in the English program are 8.7 to 1. If Writing classes are included the Student:Faculty ratio increases to 11.1; however, the Writing classes are all at the lower division level. Is this sustainable over time?

The student-faculty ratio is one factor, among many, that we can look at when we assess our programs. There are several issues with using this ratio, most of which are outlined on the IE page and summarized with this statement:

"These difficulties make it essentially impossible to come up with a reliable student faculty ratio." https://anc.powerbireporting.uaa.alaska.edu/reports/powerbi/UAS/IE_Reports/Students/Course/Student_Faculty_Ratio_UAS?rs:Embed=true

This ratio is best understood as a student-*teaching* ratio and is extremely limited as a measure of program sustainability or faculty output. Thus, this ratio should not be the centerpiece of any program review, and must be contextualized within overall institutional conversations about expenditures and budgets (including financial analysis of administrative expenditures).

That said, we will attempt such a contextualization here.

- All WRTG courses are planned for and taught by English faculty, and fully integrated into the English curriculum, so these courses should be included in the student-faculty ratio.
- The 8.7/1 ratio in English includes internships and directed studies—classes that are necessarily 1 faculty to 1 student. As these courses with low enrollment are not compensated at 1 to 1 in our workloads, we would encourage calculating this ratio without these courses included.
- Furthermore, it also appears that this level of analysis does not combine classes that have stacked local and distance sections, like our ENGL 370 course, which is delivered in a synchronous face-to-face and distance sections that are treated on the workload as single classes.
- Courses with very small enrollment caps, mostly developmental in nature and whose credits are not counted as part of the BA English, should be excluded because including them artificially decreases the student-faculty ratio for the program. It is understood that these courses meet the needs of our general UAS student population and, when successful, enable students to complete a degree. But they do require more faculty time and expertise than other courses. This may not be sustainable going forward. For example, the accelerated course model piloted by Professor Ernestine Hayes has a high “cost” with two faculty members teaching a relatively small number of students. We have suspended this program in light of current faculty losses and enrollment trends.
- Finally, because the Juneau program coordinator has no role in faculty workloads for Ketchikan or Sitka, nor any role in any grant-funded courses on those campuses, and no role in determining any enrollment-related course cancellations, the student-faculty ratio should be calculated by campus.

For the Juneau campus, the most salient limitations of this metric are:

- Our interdisciplinarity (ENGL courses count towards multiple degrees, faculty co-teach)
- Our internship, thesis, directed study, and independent study courses
- Any courses that are stacked or any hybrid classes taught with both a distance and a local section
- Any cross-listed courses
- B.A. English faculty provide instruction to meet core GER requirements for all degree programs

Humanities Chair Andrea Dewees has recalculated the student-faculty ratio for 2017, 2018, 2019 to account for the last 3 items. There are no mechanisms that she is aware of that will help us account for our interdisciplinarity. This is a significant limitation with existing measures.

This data set has the following characteristics:

- It excludes any courses taught in Ketchikan or Sitka
- It excludes any internship (491), practicum (494), thesis (499), directed study and independent study courses
- It excludes WRTG 104, 092 and 110
- The following additional courses were removed from 2017: S193 Composition Studio
- The following additional courses were removed from 2018: WRTG 090 Writing and Reading Strategies and ENGL 418 (this is because a course was cancelled late by the Dean, and after UNAC action, reinstated after the term had started. It's arguable that this Dean-level enrollment mismanagement negatively impacted student enrollment in the course)
- The following additional courses were removed from 2019: ENGL S370 (because it was a hybrid course: local and distance sections)
- It includes ENGL and WRTG courses

2017 Student-Faculty Ratio: 10.7

2018 Student-Faculty Ratio: 11.5

2019 Student-Faculty Ratio: 13.2

This data shows that BA English program faculty are adapting to the enrollment challenges faced by UAS. (We note that the downturn in BA English enrollment is in line with overall decreasing enrollments). The increase in Student-Faculty ratio over this time period of decreasing enrollments reflects effective enrollment management adjustments at the program level. Going forward we should explore options for cross-listing and stacking (with the caveat that these efficiencies will not be reflected in the student-faculty ratio).

3. Could enrollments be strengthened if upper division courses were taught in a hybrid model (e.g., face-to-face and online)?

Teaching Online & History of Campus Collaboration

We are finding more and more interest from students in online (especially asynchronous) courses and have increasingly moved our courses in that direction. Nearly every faculty member in English now teaches part of his/her workload online, and we have seen consistently strong enrollment in these online courses.

We teach a significant number of online courses each year. Of the total ENGL and WRTG courses offered this fall, 42% are offered online.

- **ENGL:** 7 courses, 3 online (30% online)
- **WRTG:** 21 courses, 7 online, 2 hybrid (on campus 2 days a week + asynchronous online work) (42% at least partially online)

A quick search of the 6-year sequence for ENGL and WRTG courses provides a snapshot of how much of our degree is actually delivered online.

We have a decade-old agreement between the three campuses about regional rotation of distance courses. Prior to that time, courses were regularly cancelled because multiple campuses were offering similar online courses at the same time. Because online courses draw from all communities, an agreement was needed. All three campuses agreed to teach some courses online. Ketchikan and Sitka were given *all* the lower-level GER courses, and Juneau was given the most upper division courses, with Ketchikan and Sitka teaching a few each semester. (See the 6-year sequence for a detailed list of which campus teaches which online course.)

New Models & Experimentation

English faculty on all three campuses have been teaching synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, and integrated courses for a number of years. Part of our department assessment work for the past several years has been to analyze various methods of delivery and how those methods impact the learning outcomes in each course. As faculty we are responsible for the integrity of our courses, and since these are skills-based courses, we are accountable for the skill-level of our students at the end of each class.

We've piloted various models and have been experimenting to see which courses attract the most students, and how various models impact retention and skill-level. Over the past few years we've had multiple department discussions comparing notes on which models work best for which courses. Unlike Social Science or Natural Science courses, where faculty are primarily lecturing (and therefore Zoom or other video methods might serve them), English courses use a variety of methods to teach including: small group discussion, the workshop model, a reverse lecture-lab model, and others. Each faculty member in our department is passionate about his he/she uses various technologies and combinations of online or local classes to best deliver his or her course. We consider method of delivery to be an important part of our pedagogy decisions.

A few examples of the delivery methods we are working with:

- Professor Will Elliott is currently experimenting with a hybrid WRTG course now in which students attend classes on campus 2 days a week, and spend the rest of their hours in an asynchronous online format. (Because there is on-campus required attendance it doesn't violate the 3-campus agreement.) We are eager to see if the retention and enrollment rates improve with this model.
- In addition, in an effort to draw in a wider range of students, both Professors Kevin Maier and Sol Neely have experimented with a hybrid model of on-campus students and distance students who attend synchronously via video and audio conference.
- Professor Emily Wall teaches about 60% of her workload online and has found the asynchronous model best for her workshops and composition courses. In particular she notes the high pass-rate for her online 110 course, as well the high retention rate of her summer, asynchronous courses. In the workshop, she has found that 100% participation happens in discussion, whereas in on-campus classes, at best there is about 85% class participation.

Ten years ago almost nobody on the Juneau campus was teaching any kind of distance courses. Now every faculty member in the English department is. Not only are we reaching more students, with more diverse perspectives in the classroom, we are also able to further enrich the student experience.

For the moment, most of our distance courses are taught as online asynchronous courses. Faculty on all three campuses who regularly teach distance agree that the majority of online students *want* asynchronous courses, largely because of scheduling needs. In the past we have had difficulty enrolling other types of online courses. Denise Carl, the A&S advisor, says "students hands-down always chose the asynchronous option." Kate Govars, the Ketchikan advisor working primarily with distance students, agrees. In a quick review of the fall schedule and enrollments across all A&S courses, it's clear students prefer asynchronous courses (for example, in BIO 111, 35 students chose asynchronous, 6 synchronous). Although data is hard to find on this point, as the system doesn't distinguish methods of delivery, multiple faculty have agreed that in their experience the best way to draw students is through asynchronous teaching.

Moving Forward

The English faculty continue to have pedagogy and enrollment management discussions on the topic of distance teaching. We are currently focusing on two primary areas of discussion:

- We are currently planning to deliver additional courses online, both synchronously and in various hybrid models, which would enable us to offer the B.A. in English entirely online.
- As we continue to extend our outreach efforts, one of our goals as a department is to seek out more education and mentoring in online teaching. Many of us came to online mid-career and are finding the pedagogy of teaching to be complex and challenging. We appreciate the CELT center and its panels and discussions of online teaching.

We recommend that UAS as a whole examine which model(s) are best for our purposes, keeping in mind our goals of quality teaching, and student achievement in addition to recruitment and retention.

4. Is it possible for the English program with the three emphases to become a concentration in the BLA or IBA?

The BLA & English

The BLA already has primary and secondary emphases in English and Creative Writing (when students take the interdisciplinary degree). The English emphasis has been a part of the program since the inception of the BLA program. Peter Sommers notes that English was always a significant part of the B.L.A. and part of its original concept. In 2009 when the program was revised, the formal emphasis area in English was created.

The BLA is a good choice for students outside of Juneau who wish to study English. It's also an attractive option for transfer students, although credit-wise it's actually faster for students to graduate with the BA in English. When we redesigned the B.A. English program in 2006 we ensured students could finish the degree program in any two calendar years. However, the core of the BA Degree includes at least 12 lower division courses, and since transfer students typically need mostly upper division credits, the BLA is often a more expeditious option. We see students choose both options and we are happy we can provide multiple degree streams, depending on student needs, to help attract and retain students at UAS.

The Proposed IBA

The proposed IBA has a Creative Arts stream which has a large English component. Professor Wall is the lead designer on this stream. She, along with a small group of Art, English, and ODS faculty, designed this degree with a strong English component. We encourage anyone interested to review the degree program documents.

Why the B.A. in English?

Despite taking so many hits on faculty and resources, the English program at UAS has survived.

This program was created originally in response to students wanting a more "traditional" or "easily recognized" program. Nearly every college and university in the country has a program in English. Most small liberal arts colleges (which UAS has defined as our "niche" within the UA system) point to their English program as the foundation on which a liberal arts college is built. When we created the program, most of the students in the BLA immediately switched to the BA in English. Parents, employers, and graduate programs consistently recognize this degree and the kind of writing and analytical thinking it implies. Most of our students who go on to graduate school choose the BA in English. Being able to offer this degree gives students more options, while utilizing the same faculty resources we need for the BLA, the IBA, and our UAS GERs.

Cutting programs at UAS negatively impacts *all* programs at UAS. As we've seen over the past five years, losing programs like Engineering or the BA in Art negatively impacts enrollment in other programs. Fewer choices for students, means fewer students. UAS needs a strong core of English faculty to teach its GERs, and this program maximizes their time and abilities by offering not only "one more degree," but a degree that's standard to most universities.

Students come to our courses from across various degrees at UAS. We have students who are majoring in history, anthropology, biology, and education, among others. These students come to us to strengthen their writing, analytical, and literary skills. While many courses at UAS are content-based, English courses are heavily skills-based. As we've heard over and over from employers: they want students who can write and who have analytical skills. Every course we offer teaches students those skills. These are not skills picked up in a single semester; most students at UAS need multiple English courses to master these skills. We routinely have faculty in other departments direct their students into our courses to strengthen this skill-base.

And finally, the English B.A. program is the driving force behind *Tidal Echoes*, the regional literary and art journal UAS publishes. We are very proud of how this journal has become a flagship publication for the university. It is at the center of the literary culture of Southeast Alaska, and one of the key regional venues supporting indigenous writers and cultures in Southeast Alaska. It is strongly linked to the B.A. in English program. The publication was designed to give students real-world experience in the publishing industry. Students typically take several creative writing classes to learn the skills they need, and then apply for the internship in their 3rd year. It takes 3 students a year in internship positions to edit and publish the journal. English majors in the B.A. program must do a thesis or internship, and this provides direct incentive for students to want to work on *Tidal Echoes*.

Conclusion & Needs

Writing this expedited program review has initiated a number of conversations among English faculty across all three campuses. Certainly reviewing the numbers and discussing the current state of our degree and PCOs has clarified for us the work we're attempting to do, and how significant the loss of faculty has been to our programs.

We respectfully request that Dean Thomas and Provost Carey consider beginning the process of replacing Ernestine Hayes and Nina Chordas. Given the state of our current fiscal crisis, as a stop-gap measure we request 3-year term contracts for both Dr. Will Elliott and Professor Stephen Florian. We would have an extremely difficult time meeting the needs of the university without these two highly valued faculty members.

Given the increase in our synchronous and asynchronous teaching we also request the university consider methods of support for pedagogy instruction in these areas.