



Date: March 9, 2020

To: Cathy Sandeen, Chancellor

From: John Stalvey, Interim Provost *John RS Stalvey*

Cc: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
David Bowie, Professor; Chair, Department of English
Jackie Cason, Professor
Jared Griffin, Associate Professor
Trish Jenkins, Associate Professor
Emily Madsen, Assistant Professor
Susan Kalina, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Claudia Lampman, Vice Provost for Student Success

Re: **AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings – English MA**

I have reviewed the dean's findings, the program's response to the dean's findings, and the completed Expedited Program Review Template for the English MA.

Recommendations

My recommendation is to accept the decision and recommendations of the dean and request to delete the program after admissions have been suspended and the teach out has been completed. Demand for this program is low. Despite the program's high quality, the institution cannot sustain this program. Resources should be focused on sustaining the baccalaureate program. Students interested in the field will have access to an MA in English with a focus on literature at UAF.

Decision

Recommend Deletion

AY20 Expedited Program Review – Optional Program Response to the Dean’s Findings: English BA and MA

Date: 28 February 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: David Bowie, Professor and Chair of English, Anchorage Campus

Cc: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
English Program Review Committee Members:
Jackie Cason, Professor of English, Anchorage Campus
Jared Griffin, Associate Professor of English, Kodiak Campus
Trish Jenkins, Associate Professor of English, Anchorage Campus
Emily Madsen, Assistant Professor of English, Anchorage Campus

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review: Optional Program Response to Dean’s Recommendations

Program/s in this review: BA in English and MA English

Program response to dean’s findings:

1. SUMMARY

The Department of English has a record of being responsive, adaptive, and resilient in the face of instability and change. An adaptive disposition is intrinsic to the English Studies curriculum and is a quality we foster in students who will face a world in flux after graduation and who will emerge with a strong understanding of, appreciation for, and capacity to use the English language. The University of Alaska Anchorage’s Department of English has developed curriculum in accordance with its own that serves and amplifies UAA’s values and expectations for academic programs and its mission and vision of student success.

While cuts are absolutely necessary, they should be based on *transparent* financial evidence and a vision of the future; the Dean’s document suggests that the University’s vision is simply a drawdown of graduate degrees in the interest of resourcing undergraduate degrees. While this process of expedited program review examines one program at a time, a future of budget constraints calls upon us to think more broadly and to imagine programs that will attract students and invite them to attend our campus. Continual change without vision wastes resources and impedes efforts to fulfill program and University missions.

For these reasons, the Department is combining our response to the BA and MA program reviews, because any changes to the MA will directly impact our BA program.

Below, we lay out the context for our Department’s situation, our fiscal and logistical questions and concerns about the Dean’s recommendations, and our own set of recommendations in response to the Dean’s document.

2. CONTEXT FOR THE DISCUSSION

Any discussion of the future of the programs offered by the Department of English must acknowledge the changes that have occurred in the past several years, because the Department has

repeatedly found itself in the position of responding to mandates, and attempting to do so in proactive and purposeful ways that would support student learning and achieve fiscal efficiencies. However, efficiencies have not been fully realized, because following each revision to the curriculum, interim administrative leaders have shifted course in ways that have adversely affected the Department.

Before 2018, the Department of English offered a slate of courses similar to most English departments across the country, including the first-year composition general education courses and a number of more specific undergraduate and graduate courses. In 2014, the University of Alaska System administration cited course transfer issues as a barrier to student success, and mandated a review and alignment of all general education courses across the UA system. Internal research revealed that all courses were already transferring (except, of course, those with failing grades), but the Department seized the opportunity to address the transfer of learning challenge by building a coherent curriculum grounded in first-year composition courses that then reinforced core concepts in upper division courses. That programmatic revision—which included state-wide alignment, revisions to many of the courses our Department offers, building online master courses, and creating new training materials for graduate students, Middle College instructors, and part-time faculty—took three years and considerable work. However, shortly after the conclusion of all of these changes, in 2018 the first-year composition courses were removed from the Department without consultation and placed in a different college, despite the desire of the Department of English to retain them.

This administratively driven decision had a number of adverse effects. Most immediately, to mitigate damage to the MA program in English, changes to the design of that program were necessary. The first-year composition courses had, before their move, served a dual purpose: They had, of course, been used to educate beginning college students in the basics of writing, but they were also used to provide opportunities for high-achieving MA students to gain experience in the teaching and evaluation of writing by serving as teaching assistants in conjunction with coursework in the theory and practice of teaching. As teaching assistants, they provided a service to the University and, in return, were able to obtain an advanced degree at a lower cost. However, once the courses were moved, there was no longer an opportunity for MA students to obtain teaching assistantships or the experience that they gained in fulfilling them. Therefore, in 2018 we revamped the MA in English in a way that would allow students to gain a broad base of experiences in English Studies, and that would at the same time both reduce costs and leverage a stacked class model to incorporate the pedagogical and leadership experiences that those graduate students were now otherwise unable to receive.

Separately, we had realized that the curricular model for the BA in English, which followed a very traditional model for an English program, provided too many constraints for students and thus created bottlenecks that reduced students’ abilities to complete the program in a timely manner; in addition, it did not reliably expose students to the breadth of the field of English Studies represented in the Department (i.e., literature, linguistics, rhetoric, literacy, creative writing, and advanced writing). Therefore, in 2019 we restructured the program to make it easier for students to complete their degree. At a superficial level, the changes we made can look like a simplification of the program, but they actually provide a foundation that allows students a cross-cutting experience that challenges them to experience, interpret, and apply the English language across many forms and contexts. Further, by incorporating this breadth of design, we developed a program that is distinct from all other English programs in Alaska and most of them across the nation. In addition, this revision of the BA program was done with the previous revision of the MA program in mind, so

that undergraduate students would, through their classes, have the opportunity to develop mentor-mentee relationships with their more experienced and capable graduate-level peers.

The recommendations now to delete the graduate program, reduce faculty positions by three, and continue to review the undergraduate major will likely require yet another curriculum overhaul to adjust for the loss of expertise in key areas of an integrated English Studies program. This process of continual revision and rebranding is not only inefficient but harmful, resulting in, among other things, the loss of both undergraduate and graduate student opportunities, plus a diversion of faculty labor from teaching students to focus on yet another curricular revision.

3. INTEGRATED NATURE OF THE BA AND MA PROGRAMS

The interconnection between the BA and MA is acknowledged in the Dean’s recommendation for the MA program, which suggests that “[d]eleting the MA...will help with the long-term sustainability of BA program.” However, the Department does not agree with the recommendation that the Dean makes in the MA document: “With this deletion the number of full time faculty should eventually be reduced to by [sic] three positions.” Given the interconnectedness of the MA and the BA, a reduction in three faculty positions due to the MA deletion will unavoidably have an impact on the long-term sustainability of the BA program. A reduction in three faculty positions is a 30% reduction in Department faculty at the Anchorage campus. In our opinion, a reduction of 30% to our faculty positions will not in fact help with the sustainability of the BA program; rather, it has potential to do great harm to our English Studies model and the strength of the English program, which is one of the largest majors in the College of Arts and Sciences and an essential component of a humanities education.

4. SPECIFIC CONCERNS

4a. NEED FOR CLARITY IN FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

The Dean’s recommendations for the Department raise specific questions about the financial context for these decisions. First, we have unanswered questions about the following statement: “With fewer students in the [MA] program, the tuition they pay only covered 50% of the cost of teaching the courses in 2019.” Given our use of stacked courses, we are uncertain how this result was arrived at. This is particularly the case given that, if anything, graduate enrollments in stacked courses serve to boost total numbers and generate a higher rate of tuition dollars, since students pay graduate tuition for their seats in those courses. (We return to this issue in the next section.)

We also seek clarity about the benchmarks for improvement if we are to undergo continued review. If “[t]he English Department as a whole does not serve enough students to meet its costs”, what goals or benchmarks should the Department strive for to meet to improve this metric? Simply reducing faculty will not impact the number of students the Department serves; in fact, it may significantly compromise our capacity to recruit new students.

4b. CONCERNS ABOUT THE DEAN’S RECOMMENDATIONS

We have a number of concerns about the Dean’s recommendations for Continued Review of the BA in English and Deletion of the MA in English. To begin with the BA in English, we note that programs of a similar size with comparable FTE production were listed for Continuation, so we do not entirely understand the rationale for English’s Continued Review status. This is particularly the case since it is not clear from the Dean’s recommendation what specific issues need to be addressed

in the BA program. According to guidelines on the Expedited Program Review status page, Continued Review status means that the administration will “review the program again within 2 years after *specific issues identified* in the review are addressed” (italics added for emphasis). The Dean’s BA recommendation lists no specific issues for the Department to address, only indicating that “if the Board of Regents approves deletion of the English MA, then the long-term sustainability of the BA is likely improved. This should be monitored and addressed in a future program review.” What does “likely improved” sustainability look like? What guidelines should the Department use to measure this moving forward? It is unclear how this “likely” improvement is to be measured or addressed in future program reviews.

There are also no guidelines provided regarding what “eventually” reducing three faculty positions would look like. The Department has several questions about these reductions: Who is currently being counted, and in what role(s), to determine the numbers of the Department, and on which year(s) are the data based? Over the past seven years, three tenured Department members have worked full time in administrative roles and taught occasional courses for the Department. How are Department costs calculated for the salary and benefits of administrative personnel? For example, for people with partial appointments in English, are they each being considered as a full or as a partial position? Also, what is the accounting for people who regularly teach a course or two each year outside of the Department? Is there a distinction made between tripartite (e.g., 65% teaching/20% research/15% university service) and bipartite (e.g., 85% teaching/15% university service) faculty in this analysis? Do the financial calculations take into account the faculty losses that have recently occurred in the Department? How does the proposed deletion of the MFA factor into these numbers—do the reductions to English faculty include the faculty for the MFA or not? As can be seen, the lack of real transparency in the numbers feeding into the financial calculations lead to serious difficulties in understanding how the Department is to bring costs and revenue in line with each other.

We also have concerns about the rationale for recommending deletion of the MA in English. For example, the claim was made in the Dean’s review that last year tuition paid for only 50% of the cost of that program. However, we are uncertain how such a claim is possible, given that many of our graduate courses are stacked with undergraduate ones, meaning there is minimal extra cost for providing those courses. (If that statistic was based on, say, only standalone graduate courses then it would certainly make sense that that percentage is so low, but that would be a misleading result.) In addition, we are unclear whether this calculation includes sections of courses such as ENGL A698 and A699, for which faculty receive no workload compensation but students do pay tuition.

Finally, if student success actually is, as is widely alleged, the ultimate goal of the recommended changes, we wish to emphasize that we have purposefully and carefully built BA and MA programs that interweave in meaningful ways. The elimination of the MA program would damage this relationship, which currently benefits both undergraduate and graduate students.

4c. LIKELY EFFECTS OF THE DEAN’S RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE BA PROGRAM

Many of the CAS programs recommended for deletion are at the graduate level. The Dean’s recommendations thus seem to be organized around maintaining strong baccalaureate-level programs, and the Dean’s claim that the English MA deletion will improve the sustainability of the BA program would also suggest this goal. However, we object to the idea that the elimination of the MA program, combined with a reduction of 30% of our faculty (with the reduction, presumably, following the guidelines of the CBA) will help improve the sustainability of our BA degree.

Accepting these recommendations would have a negative impact on the BA program, on the ability of faculty to engage in high-impact practices, and on our capacity to participate meaningfully in research and service. Given that UAA’s mission includes a commitment to teaching, research, engagement, and creative expression as a means to discover and disseminate knowledge, tenure-track faculty workloads need to include research, and our ability to conduct high-level research is improved by the existence of the graduate program. Our faculty’s research should rather be fostered, because it benefits and enriches student experience. For example, faculty members design courses that engage with the research that they conduct in a place-based content, allowing students the opportunity to study linguistics, rhetoric, and literature grounded in Alaska-specific concerns.

Reduction of faculty and diminished strength of the English program would also negatively affect community campus English faculty and courses. While community campus English courses operate financially separately from CAS, the student experience and student success connection could be hindered or interrupted by implementing the Dean’s recommendations. It would indicate a step backward in encouraging collaboration between UAA campuses. That step backward would encumber the Department’s goal of increasing program accessibility to rural service areas. The proposed reductions would diminish the Department’s ability to serve those service areas, a cycle that would continually prevent the Department from achieving its academic and pedagogical mission.

One additional factor for community campus students is that they need to know that the UAA program is healthy if they are going to invest in moving to Anchorage to continue their education, whether they plan on pursuing a degree in English or another field. The community campuses feed many students into the Anchorage campus, and so we need to take into account the perceptions that are likely with program deletion. To begin with, many students have already seen complications with the education program, and they will be that much less interested in attending classes in Anchorage if programs that are seen as central to a university’s mission are not offered. In addition, given what we saw with the deletion of many of the School of Education’s programs, if students begin hearing that the MA in English has been deleted, they are likely to think that the BA will also be deleted. Instead of Anchorage being community campus students’ top choice to continue their degree, community campus faculty fear that that the Anchorage campus’s prestige will continue to drop with the weakening of its English program.

5. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

If UAA is committed to maintaining and supporting undergraduate baccalaureate degrees, a robust undergraduate English major is an essential part of any solid humanities program. Our position as the fourth-most popular major in CAS by number of declared majors indicates that students value what we offer and that we have built a strong reputation and appealing curriculum offerings. We urge the administration to reconsider the short-term reduction of three faculty positions, as it can be expected that changes at the graduate level, as well as the Department’s weight in senior faculty, will result in faculty losses by attrition in the short-term future in any event. Looking practically at our Department, we face up retirements in the next three to five years. If we also lose faculty to positions at other universities and have three lines eliminated, the BA will not be sustainable by any measure. In fact, these cuts could have the effect of shuttering the Department.

In order to sustain the undergraduate program, reductions in faculty lines, if they are to occur, should be gradual and responsive. Reductions in Department faculty could be brought about with dual appointments, buy-outs, or transfer of faculty to other departments. Reductions should consider community campus faculty and offerings as well as Anchorage faculty. An initiative to

administer English curriculum across sites and reduce duplication would be a genuine cost-cutting measure. But if the University cuts the early- and mid-career base of the Department, which would occur if the CBA is followed, it will be impossible to sustain a healthy undergraduate major. A reduction following CBA guidelines would mean the loss of two literature positions and our sole remaining linguistics position. This leaves a Department that functions on an English Studies model greatly depleted, and less able to provide a rich and integrative experience for our students. In short, eliminating three tenure-track positions would—contra the Dean’s claim that the goal is strengthening the BA in English—undermine our ability to sustain our integrated English Studies curriculum, because it would adversely affect the Department’s coverage across the distinct areas of English Studies (literature, linguistics, writing, and rhetoric).

In addition, we recommend that the MA program be suspended rather than deleted. We recommend this because we expect that there will come a time when the University is rebuilding, and it will be much more efficient to revive the MA program at the local level at that time rather than needing to develop a completely new MA program to be approved at higher levels.



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Cc: David Bowie, Professor; Chair, Department of English
Jackie Cason, Professor
Jared Griffin, Associate Professor
Trish Jenkins, Associate Professor
Emily Madsen, Assistant Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: English MA

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

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

Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role

UAA's mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. It is also committed to instruction at multiple academic levels, success of all students regardless of their higher education goals, and service to the diverse peoples and communities of the state. UAA's core themes are (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, (3) Student Success, (4) UAA Community, and (5) Public Square. UAA values international and intercultural education, diversity of experiences and perspectives, and the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska that comes from the Alaska Native peoples of this area.

The College of Arts and Sciences contributes to UAA's mission with a suite of programs that provide, among other things,

1. general education courses for undergraduates in CAS and other Colleges,
2. opportunities for undergraduates to pursue majors in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts, and
3. opportunities for faculty and students to pursue research and creative activities in CAS's academic disciplines,
4. graduate programs for advanced studies.

Given decreased enrollments across UAA and significant budget cuts to CAS, the challenge is to serve UAA's and CAS's missions with only 75% of the funds it had in 2018-2019. CAS's shrinking budget is especially challenging for programs that rely on state financial appropriations through CAS because the programs have a gap between (a) the total costs of everything the program does and needs, and (b) the tuition CAS receives to cover those costs. This describes most programs in CAS: most rely on state appropriates and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

The MA in English contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by providing students with graduate studies in English, and providing both students and faculty the opportunity to conduct research and creative activities in applying the English language in various domains.

Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity

In Fall of 2018, the delivery of all Tier I WRTG courses at UAA officially transferred from the English Department to the Department of Writing in UAA's Community and Technical College. Prior to this transfer, Tier I WRTG courses were taught by English MA students. After that transfer, the MA program in English suffered. Demand for the program decreased: in 2013 and 2014 the program had more than 20 students, but by 2018 and 2019 it fell to 13 or less, putting it near the bottom of CAS's 11 master's programs, and giving it only half the median number of students in CAS's graduate programs. Following the transfer, there have been steep declines in student credit hours, credits hour per faculty, and class sizes which averaged only 3.7 in 2019, and average of 4.7 awards per year is near the bottom of CAS's graduate programs. With fewer students in the program, the tuition they pay only covered 50% of the cost of teaching the courses in 2019.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

In recent years the program was revised to rely less on stand-alone graduate courses with fixed topics, to stacked courses with both advanced undergraduates and graduate students, and with more flexible topics that provide wider options for graduate students and fewer bottlenecks in the curriculum. Graduate students benefit from internships that connect their applied skills with local employers.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

UAF offers an MA in English with a focus on literature, while UAA's MA has a broader focus. Combined, the two MA programs in English produce about seven awards per year with five from UAA and two from UAF.

Commendations and Recommendations

The program is commended for efforts to adapt to the transfer of Tier I WRTG courses to CTC, a move that eliminated the opportunity for English MA students to be instructors of record. The faculty should also be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

Decision

Deletion. Historically, the English Department covered its costs with all the students it taught in its Tier 1 WRTG courses, BA courses and MA courses. This is no longer the case. When all costs for the English Department are considered now for everything the faculty do (namely, teaching, research, and service) the Department has a gap between the tuition students provide and the costs to run both the BA and MA

program. Deleting the MA program will affect relatively few students and will help with the long term sustainability of the BA program. With this deletion the number of full-time faculty should eventually be reduced to by three positions. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.

AY20 Expedited Program Review: English MA

Submission date: 10 February 2020

Program/s in this review: English MA

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 program: The MA in English provides students the opportunity to obtain a deep understanding of the use of the English language across several domains. 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: According to the key findings of the AAC&U’s 2018 Employer Research report, employers value applied knowledge in real-world settings, and they also find the ability to write an absolutely crucial skill. We have reworked our curricular offerings to allow more opportunities for application of knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom, and, as would be expected of graduate work in English, the program provides extensive instruction in writing across genres and for multiple audiences. Several of our students make use of our internship course, which combines both of these by having students apply their writing expertise and disciplinary knowledge in real-world settings.

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. In many cases, interns are also able to use their experience to then mentor other students.

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 graduate program (the MA in English). The department's faculty, and therefore the program, takes an English Studies approach, in which the field of English is made up of 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 MA in English has experienced significant changes during the review period, the department has taken steps to react to those changes, and has maintained the program's strengths while making it much more efficient.

Program productivity: The MA in English is a small but consistently productive program, producing at least four graduates per year during the review period. The program, when pursued full-time, is designed to take two years, but some of our students are part-time, and so they generally take three years. The faculty are careful to admit students who have the ability to be successful at completing the program, and this is reflected in low DFW rates.

Support to other programs: The MA in English underwent a major transition during the review period. During the first few years of the review period the program directly supported the Tier I writing general education courses, because the students in the program were trained to function as teaching assistants in those courses. With the move of those courses out of the Department of English, the English MA was no longer able to maintain that function, and since the program's curriculum was designed to support that role, that necessitated a curricular revision.

As part of the ensuing curricular revision, the program was revised so that it could directly support the BA in English, which had not previously been the case. This was primarily done through a move to stacked courses, with the student learning outcomes for the graduate courses explicitly designed to have the graduate students act as mentors to the undergraduates in the paired courses. The specifics of how this is done differs by course, but can take the form of graduate students developing expertise in a particular topic and helping undergraduate students develop skills in that area, or graduate students acting as team leaders for groups working on significant projects.

Efficiency: The English faculty recognized a few years ago that our approach to teaching the MA in English—basically, taking the traditional path of teaching several small courses for our graduate students—was inefficient, and particularly so in an era of declining budgets. Therefore, we shifted our curricular offerings to a model involving several stacked courses, so that faculty time could be allocated more effectively. This also allowed us to shift the focus of the MA in English in a way that it could directly support the BA in English (as discussed in the next section).

This approach has the dual advantages of enhancing the BA in English by allowing undergraduate students the opportunity to have contact with students who have more experience and knowledge (whereas there had previously been little such contact), and also by increasing the efficiency with which faculty resources are used. That is, given that the MA in English is a small program, class sizes are small; by shifting to a stacked-course model, that means that while the program involves small graduate sections and therefore appears to have a high cost per SCH, only a small proportion of faculty costs are actually involved in the delivery of those sections, since they are simultaneously teaching larger undergraduate sections.

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, and has taken important steps to adapt to the changing landscape of English Studies. The department 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. The MA in English provides an opportunity for students to gain a fuller understanding of English Studies as an integrated field of study encompassing the subfields of writing, rhetoric, literature, literacies, and linguistics, all while also developing skills in leading and mentoring undergraduate students.

Curriculum and program design: We have developed, revised, and implemented our graduate curriculum in concert with our revisions of our undergraduate program to reflect student learning and diversity that is consistent with our mission and UAA's values. A shift toward topics courses allows flexible offerings and course stacking. We can sustain the graduate program offerings with limited enrollments while providing leadership opportunities for graduate students and enriched experiences for undergraduates. Specifically:

Courses

- A shift toward topics courses allows flexible course offerings and means that the faculty can more easily adjust course offerings in response to student desires and needs.
- A shift to stacked courses has allowed us to increase faculty efficiency (as discussed in section 2), and has also allowed for the pedagogical advantage of allowing graduate students to become mentors to undergraduates as they (the graduate students) develop their subject-matter expertise further, providing an enriched experience for graduate and undergraduate students simultaneously.
- We continue to work on curricular changes that underscore these initiatives to keep our curriculum current and relevant.

Program Design

- We initiated a significant redesign of our program under a multidisciplinary 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 requires a small set of courses that underscore the breadth of English Studies, and then provides students freedom to (in consultation with their advisors) select courses that support their goals.
- Because our MA students follow diverse paths after graduation (e.g., pursuing further graduate education, working in industry, serving nonprofits, teaching), students may complete the program with either a thesis or a project, opening a range of opportunities for both theoretical and applied research.
- In our redesigned program students experience a range of disciplined inquiry methods, from literature to linguistics to rhetoric and writing studies.

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. To that end, we see UAA's General Education Requirements not just as a useful statement of the aims of an undergraduate education, but also as the foundation of higher education more generally, and therefore we have taken deliberate action to align our Program Student Learning Outcomes with UAA's General Education Requirement Learning Outcomes, albeit, of course, at a higher level of expected ability.

English Program SLO 1: Address precisely articulated critical questions

- 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 #8 – Adopt critical perspectives on globalization and diversity

English Program SLO 2: Demonstrate deep familiarity with print and electronic scholarship

- 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: Apply detailed evidence to support claims

- GER SLO #3 – Relate knowledge to historical context
- GER SLO #4 – Interpret different systems of aesthetic representation and understand their historical and cultural context

English Program SLO 4: Utilize field-appropriate theories and methodologies effectively

- GER SLO #3 – Relate knowledge to historical context
- GER SLO #5 – Investigate the complexity of human institutions and behavior
- GER SLO #6 – Identify ways science informs understanding of natural processes

English Program SLO 5: Write analytically according to disciplinary conventions

- 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 6: Document fully according to disciplinary stylesheets

- 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

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 obvious exception). Few UAA programs can make such a claim to support UAA’s GERs so broadly and intentionally.

Student success: While one would certainly expect graduate students to enter a program having already proven themselves successful as students, the English Department has taken several measures to facilitate and implement student success initiatives, a UAA core focus, at the graduate level to ensure student growth through the program. These initiatives include High Impact Practices and individual, targeted advising.

- Student engagement in High Impact Practices is a notable feature of our program
 - Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC). The program’s courses are all, by their nature, writing-intensive.
 - Scholarly collaboration with faculty members and internships. Our internship program (ENGL A695 Internship in English) pairs students with projects both inside and outside the university. In conjunction with these internships, students have collaborated with faculty on research projects, leading to co-presentation and -publications.
 - Portfolios. E-portfolios are commonly used for courses in the program.
- Students receive individualized advising from relatively early in their degree program. Our advising strategies support students as they progress through the program, as evidenced by our efficient time to degree (discussed in section 2), and we have implemented strategies to make sure that the advising relationships works ever more smoothly.

Student accomplishments: These characteristics of our programs, from curriculum revision to student success initiatives, have resulted in noteworthy student accomplishments. Many of our students have pursued their degrees as a way to advance further in their careers (e.g., ASD and MSBSD teachers, members of the military), and a number of our recent graduates have continued on to further graduate or professional degrees (e.g., PhD in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy at Ohio State; PhD in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at North Carolina State; MPhil in Political Theory at Oxford; MA in Speech Language Pathology at Ohio State).

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

UAA’s integrated English Studies program is distinct from the MA in English at UAF, which centers entirely on the study of literature. We have designed a curriculum that fosters students’ capacities to interpret texts, create meaning, and engage diverse communities across all of the various subfields of English Studies. All students in the program, before specializing in one of these subfields, receive an intensive background in the theories and methods of linguistics, rhetoric, literacies, literature, and writing. This means that students graduate from our program knowing how to practice multiple methods of inquiry and compose in multiple professional genres, fostering concision. Our program curriculum also provides many elective choices, making it accessible and flexible in serving students’ diverse goals.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

Our program stands alone as the only comprehensive English Studies program in the State of Alaska, and it provides a valuable service for Alaskans seeking to advance their careers and/or pursue further education in English Studies. Thanks to our decision to stack our graduate courses with corresponding undergraduate courses, our graduate program is efficient and cost effective. Faculty have used this stacking as a way to provide new experiences for our graduate students, including tasking them with leading small group sections of undergraduates, asking them to deliver lectures in areas of content they specialize in, and providing them additional opportunities to discuss theory connected to the content of the course. Both graduate students and undergraduates have commented on the liveliness of the stacked classroom, and the way it enriches both sides of the experience.

In the future, we would like to conduct more outreach, both internal and external, to boost our enrollment numbers for the graduate program. While it is cost-effective even with smaller numbers, larger cohorts result in a greater sense of collegiality and community in the program, and we want to continue offering that to our students. We will continue to support graduate students who want to go on to pursue higher degrees, and we plan to build on the success of the high numbers of students from our program who go on to terminal degrees and successful careers in technical writing and other fields to create a vibrant, supportive alumni network.