

## **Department of English One-Year follow-up report on the status of the initiatives outlined in the Developmental Plan and report on English minors**

As requested by Senate upon approval of the department of English's Periodic Program Review in January 2020, this one-year follow-up reports on the status of initiatives in our BA program and provides a report on students outside the program who sought minors in English along with minors pursued by English BA students. Data in tables 1 and 2 were provided by the UPO in June 2021 for the years 2015-2019.

### **Part 1. Status of the initiatives outlined in the Developmental Plan**

**Recommendation #1:** Provide innovative and academically challenging experiences for our students – develop Internship program (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions and Timeline:** The Curriculum Committee will begin investigations into the feasibility of an Internship Program in the 2018 – 2019 academic year. These investigations will take into consideration student preference for an internship model in which both students and the Department find Internship opportunities. The Curriculum Committee will bring a progress report, as well as plans for next steps, to the Year End Faculty Retreat at the end of term 2019. The Department aims to have an Internship program in place by the 2020-2021 academic year.

English is taking part in a pilot program in the Faculty of Arts with University Co-op. Planning began in 2019 when English, Sociology, History, and Politics and Governance were selected for the Arts pilot, with other Arts programs projected to join Co-op in 2022. Our students were invited to apply for Co-op in spring 2021 and the first cohort will begin the program in fall 2021. This spring, English had eight student applications, the second highest submission rate in the Faculty of Arts (there were 34 applications total from across all units). While these numbers are somewhat lower than Co-op expected, pandemic conditions probably dampened some enthusiasm among students. We anticipate higher uptake for Co-op as we return to campus and continue to support the experiential opportunities of our students. Prof. Irene Gammel has volunteered to act as the faculty Co-op coordinator and is involved directly with the Co-op office and with students who seek this opportunity.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide innovative and academically challenging experiences for our students - Better integrate career-ready skills across the curriculum (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions:** a.) Encourage instructors to include an assignment, such as a reflection piece, that encourages students to make connections between course material and career-ready skills; b.) Make better use of the services offered by the Career Centre to help train students in how to make these connections within our courses; and c.) Explore the possibility of introducing more explicit industry-related courses in the curriculum.

In addition to partnering with the Faculty of Arts Co-op, we have begun increasing awareness in our courses of career-ready skills by showing students how disciplinary knowledge in the classroom translates into career-ready competence in the workplace. One way of doing this has been to invite the Career Office to speak consistently in individual classes and by incorporating

career-based skill information directly into our course outlines. Nearly half of our faculty have regularly invited Nikki Waheed, previous Career Education Specialist in the Faculty of Arts, and current career advisor Laura MacKinnon, to speak to students in their courses about the ways skills in the discipline of English translate into myriad career opportunities. Such skills include those traditionally associated with English like communication, writing, and editing; other skills in project management and corporate branding and storytelling are highlighted for students in hour-long presentations from the career office. While not all faculty members make use of Arts career specialists, those who teach second-year and fourth-year required courses do incorporate career presentations into their syllabi, thus ensuring that students in our program are addressed by career specialists at some point in their program trajectory. The main course where students encounter career specialists is ENG 810, a required second-year offering in English research methodologies. Career Specialists are also regularly invited to speak to fourth-year students in another required course, ENG 910, where graduating students are able to reflect on what they've learned in our program and how it potentially prepares them for positions in a variety of fields. Waheed and MacKinnon tailor presentations to these students, introducing career advice in the second year and reinforcing that information in fourth-year contexts (some faculty in ENG 400, a required third-year course, also invite career specialists to speak with their students). We continually stress to students that unlike more specialized degrees, a BA in Arts is preparatory for a diverse range of career opportunities. Critical skills and creative ingenuity prepare our students to work flexibly and competitively in today's job markets.

Additionally, the department, with the English Course Union (ECU), planned a March 2020 careers event to draw awareness to the relationship of the academic program with larger job skills. We invited our Program Advisory Council (PAC) and alumni to join us, and we looked forward to showcasing student work at this luncheon. The closing of the university that month due to Covid-19, however, forced us to cancel the event. We will re-stage this opportunity when we're all back on campus. We did, however, support the ECU in a fall 2020 Zoom event that focused on career opportunities for students, though it was conceived by the ECU on a much smaller scale than the 2020 planned luncheon.

In anticipation of future career events, the department replaced our PAC with new members in winter 2021, including two alumni and others with diverse industry connections to the GTA and beyond. The department looks forward to working with the PAC, the ECU, and our students to expand conversations regarding university education and career readiness.

**Recommendation #3:** Provide innovative and academically challenging experiences for our students - Develop Concentrations (Priority – Medium) **Implementation Actions:** The Department (whenever possible, in conjunction with other faculties and programs across the University) will prioritize developing Concentrations in areas such as: Creative Writing and Publishing; Literature and Social Justice; Digital Humanities and New Media; and, Drama and Performance Studies.

Despite disruptions to curriculum development due to the ongoing pandemic crisis, we have begun discussing the feasibility of creating concentrations in the areas outlined above. At the moment, we do not have sufficient faculty to meet the demands of concentrations in most of the suggested areas. The department met with the Dean in April 2021 to discuss the implementation

of a concentration in Creative Writing, and we productively discussed strategies for shaping a creative writing curriculum with introductory, intermediate, and advanced courses. To this end, we have created one new introductory-level course, ENG 230: Creativity, Writing, and Everyday Life, that was first taught in fall 2020. New intermediate level creative writing courses were passed by Department Council in April 2021. The Dean is aware of the department's hiring needs in creative writing, and we have been thinking strategically about how to make use of existing faculty and contract instructors. Our first goal is to begin incorporating the intermediary courses into our curriculum to determine student uptake and faculty support. While we have a map for a concentration in creative writing, we will only officially submit it once some of these tactical difficulties are worked out. Similarly, our limited faculty in Digital Humanities prevents a robust development of a concentration in that area. We currently have no faculty who specialize in drama. Of note, however, is the development of an interdisciplinary minor in Black Studies that will be housed in English. It has been spearheaded by Melanie Knight and Anne-Marie Lee-Loy. Faculty will vote to approve the proposal in a special summer department council meeting.

**Recommendation #4:** Provide innovative and academically challenging experiences for our students - Expand creative writing offerings (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions:** The Department will create two Creative Writing Practicum courses, one for fiction and one for poetry. The Department will also explore the possibility of adding scriptwriting and playwriting to its course offerings.

In 2018, the department created two new courses, ENG 306: Poetry and ENG 307: Fiction, both creative writing practicum courses. Originally, ENG 306 was a creative writing practicum that introduced students to both fiction and poetry. By more explicitly determining the function of these courses, students receive greater specialization in creative writing studies. In winter 2021, faculty voted to approve four new creative writing courses, two of which are intermediary, ENG 406 (a course in poetry) and ENG 407 (fiction). Two other newly-approved courses give students industry-specific skills, including a course in publishing and another that focuses on editing.

**Recommendation #5:** Strengthen SRC excellence in the Department - Review Research Courses in Curriculum (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions:** This evaluation will consider whether ENG 810 should be returned to Year 3 of the Program and whether ENG 810 should be preceded by an Introductory Research Course. The Department will change the mode of delivery for ENG 810 from a “lecture” to a “lab” to better describe the work that is conducted in that course. As more than half the students found that they used the skills in SSH 301 “very little” or “not at all” during their time in the Program, and 25% of respondents who gave suggestions of a course that could be removed from the curriculum identified SSH 301 as such a course, the Department will support any efforts to make SSH 301 an elective course in the curriculum.

In 2019, the department voted to retain ENG 810's placement in the second year. This decision was based on meetings where faculty discussed the value and role of English research methods in our curriculum. It was determined that students benefit from the course earlier in their academic career since it provides specific skills needed to complete the degree successfully. In addition to ENG 810, a course in literary theory, ENG 400, provides challenges to students. The

overall consensus was that it's best to spread these courses out over second and third year rather than requiring them both in a single year. ENG 400 is more advanced and therefore makes most sense to maintain in the third year.

The department met with the Associate Dean and Chair of Sociology in January 2021 to discuss removing the SSH 301 requirement from our curriculum. Arts understands our position on this second-year course and its complex relation to our department insofar as it does not serve our students's needs, actively discouraging them. We would like to see it become an Open Elective for our students rather than a requirement in the second year, and we look forward to guidance on this issue from the Dean's office.

**Recommendation #6:** Strengthen SRC excellence in the Department – Request for hires (Priority – High) **Timeline:** The DHC will request three hires, one in Indigenous Literatures, one in Gender Studies, and the other in Victorian in the 2018 -2019 academic year with an aim to have at least one new faculty member in place for the 2019-2020 academic year. The DHC will continue to request hires in these areas each academic year until the positions are filled.

The department hired two Indigenous scholars who joined our faculty as acting assistant professors in fall 2020. A Black Studies scholar joins our department at the level of assistant professor in fall 2021. Assistant professors were hired in 2018-2019 in Gender Studies and Victorian literature. We have requested new hires in creative writing and digital humanities for 2021-2022.

**Recommendation #7:** Better prepare students for future graduate and career opportunities - Integrate the Program Advisory Council more Directly into Student Life and Learning (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions:** The Student Life Committee will identify appropriate alumni and invite them to become members of the PAC beginning in the summer of 2020 with an aim to have a new PAC on board by the 2020 – 2021 academic year. Student Life will host a “brainstorming” session in August or September 2018 with the PAC to determine the direction of the PAC for the year. The Student Life Committee will report on progress in this area at the 2019 Year End Faculty Retreat.

Action on this item has been slowed down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Student Life committee met in fall 2020 to discuss new members for the PAC and to develop new guidelines for their contributions to the department. The Dean's office issued invitations to the nominees in winter 2021 and five new members, including two alumni, will compose the PAC beginning fall 2021. We developed new guidelines for our PAC members, asking them to attend one student-focused event each year and to provide career guidance and advice on curriculum development through biannual meetings.

**Recommendation #8:** Better prepare students for future graduate and career opportunities - Integrate Career Consultant Services into Coursework (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions:** The Department will invite Nikki Waheed, Career Consultant to a Department Meeting to describe the services that she provides in Fall 2018. Individual instructors, along with the Student Life Committee and the Curriculum

Committee, will work with Nikki Waheed to develop and deliver appropriate training to students throughout the academic year. Instructors and the Student Life and Curriculum Committees will report on their progress in these areas and develop next steps at the End of Year Faculty retreat 2019.

Nikki Waheed spoke to our department in fall 2018, advising faculty on ways to incorporate Career Consultant Services into coursework. Nikki has addressed students at various events throughout the years since then, and she has helped develop a culture of awareness for career skills and opportunities among faculty and students. Currently, Laura MacKinnon works as our main contact in Career Consultant Services and has participated in the 2020 fall Orientation and other events. Please see the response to recommendation 2 above.

**Priority Recommendation #9:** Attract and retain high-quality students (national and international) - Work with Admissions and Recruitment to Develop High-Quality Marketing Materials and Events and Social Media Connections (Priority – Medium)

**Implementation Actions and Timeline:** The Department will hire a Social Media Coordinator to maintain and expand its social media outreach. The Social Media Coordinator will review the Department's social media use and make recommendations for improvement in the summer of 2019 to the Web Committee. The Student Life Committee will explore and work on opportunities for marketing with Admissions and Recruitment on an ongoing basis. The Student Life Committee will develop a new pamphlet for the Program to be available by for Winter 2019.

The department hired a Social Media Coordinator for each term since 2018. This role provides support and content for the department website and for its social media interactions. Additionally, a second media specialist was hired to develop Youtube content for the department beginning in spring 2021. A new creative writing brochure, printed in fall 2019, gives potential students a strong sense of the program's creative writing opportunities and its unique profile among other similar offerings at schools across the country.

**Priority Recommendation #10:** Attract and retain high-quality students (national and international) - Rebuild the Department Website (Priority – Medium) **Timeline:** The Website Committee will conduct a review of the website and identify areas of improvement during the summer 2018. The Department will submit required changes to the website builder or hire a new website creator in Fall 2019. A new Department website will be ready by winter 2020.

A new department website was implemented in fall 2020.

**Priority Recommendation #11:** Attract and retain high-quality students (national and international) - Create an English (or Humanities) Annual End-of-Year Student Showcase (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions and Timeline:** The Student Life Committee will work with the Career Centre and, if possible, other programs in the Arts, to deliver the first annual showcase in spring 2020. The annual showcase will be an ongoing event. Additionally, the department voted to establish a new Indigenous scholarship award as a way to attract high quality students.

A showcase event was planned for March 2020 that included students, the ECU, and our PAC. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to Covid-19. In winter 2021, Department Council voted to update our student awards structure, notably approving department funding of a scholarship for Indigenous student beginning in fall 2021.

**Priority Recommendation #12:** Contribute to Ryerson's priority of city-building and community contributor - Support the Development of an Alumni Association (Priority – High) **Implementation Actions and Timeline:** The Student Life Committee will identify and contact alumni who may be good leaders of an alumni association, gauge their interest in establishing an alumni association, and host their initial meeting (with representatives from University Advancement) in Summer/Fall 2019. The Student Life Committee will plan an alumni event for Homecoming weekend, October 2019. The Department will utilize new alumni pages on the revitalized website to promote events that will be of interest to the alumni and to foster an online alumni community. The Student Life Committee will support University Advancements efforts to encourage the creation of an Alumni Association on an ongoing basis.

An alumni association was created in 2019. We invited alumni to serve on our PAC and we are making efforts, slowed due to Covid-19, to work more closely with former students. Since 2021-2022 is the 10-year anniversary of the program, we have planned a number of events that are being fleshed out by the steering committee. These events will include functions with alumni. The 2019 event mentioned above was pushed back to March 2020 and then cancelled due to the pandemic. We are planning a live luncheon in winter 2022 that brings students, faculty, and alumni together.

## **Part 2. Report on number and programs of students completing English minors and number and program of minors completed by English majors:**

From 2015-2019, there were 724 students from six different faculties graduating with a minor in English (see UPO table below 1). The highest number of students with English minors came from the Faculty of Communication and from within the Faculty of Arts. Students in Media Studies made up the majority of those seeking a minor in our program. Not surprisingly, a robust number of students in Journalism also pursued a minor in English. Storytelling, communication, and critical analysis of cultural texts are elements shared by our program and Media Studies and Journalism. Development of a new minor in Storytelling could have widespread cross-disciplinary appeal to students. The data also suggests that the department should increase Liberal Studies offerings that meet the interests of students in other faculties.

In our own program and in BA double major programs with English and Philosophy and English and History, students completed 333 minors in 23 different Ryerson programs (see UPO table 2 below). Those programs with the largest uptake for our students are Sociology (35), History (28), Philosophy (18), Psychology (24), News Studies (13) and French (9). Six students obtained minors in Business Communications while others pursued Geography, Film, Law, and other fields. The data suggests that English should pursue a double major with Sociology to complement current joint majors with History and Philosophy. The data also indicates that our

students are less interested in courses outside the Faculty of Arts, and that we should consider new pathways and relationships of learning in connection to other Arts offerings.