

Almost Final Drafts of English Program Review and Resource Requests

1. Description of Program (200-400 words)

Consistent with the college mission, values, and solidarity statements, the English Department is committed to instruction in critical reading, writing, and thinking that will serve students in many contexts in college and beyond. Our students' ability to excel in a fast-evolving world comprised of myriad texts is essential for their individual success whatever their ambitions, for the health of our democracy, and for social and economic justice.

Courses

Regular course offerings include:

1. Transfer-level, Integrated reading/composition courses.
2. Literature courses, designed to meet the English major curricular requirements and IGETC requirements in the Arts and Humanities.
3. A 3-course sequence of creative writing courses, offered concurrently in each section.

Discipline Degrees:

English AA and AA-T (see Catalog description)

Role in General Education:

- Competency in reading and writing is of critical importance in nearly every course a student will take in college, and almost all students at CSM enroll in composition courses. English 100 or 105 is required for the AA and AA-T degrees, for many career-path programs, and for Area 1A of both the IGETC and CSU patterns.
- Literature courses can be applied to Area 3B of the IGETC and C2 of the CS GE pattern.
- Credit for Creative Writing courses fulfills Area E2b for the AA and Area C of the CS GE pattern; however, it is not applicable to IGETC.

Impacts on program

In the 2021 program review, we reflected on the “revolution” in changes resulting from both the COVID-19 pandemic and state-level mandates eliminating developmental course offerings, as well as the shift across campus towards more explicit efforts to create anti-racist course materials and to address opportunity gaps. Many of these challenges and opportunities remain in effect: students continue to enroll in online courses at higher levels than before the pandemic, though the enrollment in the current semester suggests that the majority prefer in-person classes to online or hybrid; faculty remain concerned about how the elimination of developmental courses is affecting our students.

The most significant new challenge is a result of technological disruption: Open AI's release of ChatGPT in November 30, 2022, followed by many similar or more advanced generative AI products, raises profound questions about how and what we teach. We remain committed to our goals even as we struggle to adapt to these changes.

Our commitment is demonstrated by the following:

1. Supporting our students' aspirations with excellent instruction / Connecting to Innovative Teaching and Learning: Along with staffing our Writing Center for one-on-one writing support,

faculty have participated in QOTL training, attended professional conferences and workshops (notably on AI), explored assessment practices, and participated in learning communities. Faculty have attended or presented at The Associated Writing Programs Conference, the Conference on College Communication and Composition (CCCC), and the Stanford Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence conference.

2. Creating equitable education opportunities for all our students: We have revised all of our course outlines in both composition and literature through an anti-racist lens; continue to participate in learning communities, many of which were developed and led by English faculty (e.g., Writing in the End Zone, Umoja, Project Change, Puente, Katipunan, IX in Action.); and continue to explore innovative and equitable grading practices.

3. Promoting a vibrant, safe, and welcoming campus community: We host special events and classroom visits from diverse and relevant guest speakers. We also work to promote and celebrate the student voice with the Writers' Ruckus, a bi-yearly reading event featuring student and faculty writers, and with our support for Labyrinth, CSM's award-winning student publication. More recently, we are working to create an English Major community through informal presentations showcasing literary study. English faculty have also continued to bring diverse speakers to campus: in 2021, Cristina Rivera Gaza; in 2022, Karen Tei Yashimata and Dr. Elenita Mendoza Strobel; in 2023, Matt Sedillo, Matthew Zapruder, Putsata Reang, and Tommy Orange.

4. Building a Culture of Participation and Communication: English faculty are heavily involved in work outside the classroom. Many full-time faculty have reassigned time for coordination of learning communities, honors, the Writing Center. We also participate in virtually all shared governance committees (Academic Senate, Curriculum Committee, Committee on Teaching and Learning, Educational Equity, Professional Development, Scholarship, AFT, and others).

5. Results of Previous Program Review (200-500 words)

This discussion includes our work on student learning outcomes and equity gaps, since most of our goals from 2021 focused on these areas.

GOALS 1, 2, 3 and 5: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment goals

NOTE: Measurement of student learning comes first and foremost from student success data (retention, grades, persistence), since English instructors award grades based on a demonstration of skills defined by the SLOs for each course. While not perfect, grades and retention reflect SLO achievement as accurately as any other measure. Therefore, much of our reflection on student learning can be found in the discussion of student success data of this review.

Learning outcomes assessment asks a simple question: Are students learning what we want them to learn? This, of course, breaks down into more specific questions about the curriculum, assessment methods, pedagogical strategies, equity gaps and so on.

Four of the six goals identified in our 2021 Program Review raised questions about areas of student learning we wanted to better understand or improve. While literature and creative writing courses are also important, with very limited time for this work, our priority must be to assess learning outcomes in the core composition sequence of ENGL 100, 105, 110 and 165.

- GOAL #1: Research learning outcomes for students in ENGL 105 compared to 100.
- GOAL #2: Analyze effective programs to identify proven ways to improve student success
- GOAL #5: Learn from our COVID experience about how to better serve students, which students are vulnerable, and how to build more flexibility into our course offerings.

The department has been grappling with significant external challenges for the last few years – not only Covid, but AB705 and its aftermath, as well as the ongoing challenge of equity gaps. These priorities are reflected in the above goals.

However, it quickly became clear that these enquiries far exceed the scope of anything we can do at the departmental level. We do have some data, but we would need more, as well as much more expertise in knowing how to frame the inquiry, to get anywhere. For instance, we can see from this year’s data that ENGL 100 has a higher overall success rate than ENGL 105, the course created to support students who might otherwise have placed into a developmental English course. But what do we make of this? It’s not clear that we should expect similar success rates in both courses, since first-time failure is built into the AB705 model. And even if we should, what exactly is causing this gap? The picture is complicated: our modalities have changed (hybrid and HyFlex along with more online sections), and our students—many of whom had disrupted high school educations thanks to Covid – may have changed. While we are still committed to assessing how well we are serving ENGL 105 students, this feels like it should be part of a college-wide research effort.

- *Action:* None.
- *Outcome:* A better understanding of how to frame a manageable question

Goal 3: Our other SLO-related goal – a review of assessment and grading strategies - was more actionable. A non-passing grade in ENGL 100 or 105 can significantly impede or derail a student’s progress. Are we grading equitably? As part of our work to support equity, tackle bias, and close learning gaps, we have prioritized exploring different grading strategies.

Our questions: How do our grading practices impact our students’ learning? What should we be grading students for? And can different grading and response strategies improve student learning and success?

A number of instructors have introduced various forms of contract grading in the last two years, and grading has been regularly discussed at Department meetings (10/20/2021, 2/15/2023, 3/15/2023).

- **Action:** English faculty joined faculty from other disciplines to present different approaches to grading, with a focus on equity and improving student learning (“Beyond Letters in the Gradebook,” Flex Day 1/13/2023).
- **Outcomes:** English has joined what is now an interdisciplinary focus on equitable grading strategies. Three English faculty participate in a monthly Equitable Grading Community of Practice, led the instructional design faculty; there are regular flex workshops focus on equitable assessments and grading strategies; and the English faculty continues to explore different versions of contract grading.

More work needs to be done in this area. We need to explore how contract grading, or other equitable grading strategies, impact our students going forward (likely an interdisciplinary enquiry). And we need to reflect on our goals as English teachers, something that we discussed in Fall

2021/Spring 2022 when we revised our course outlines, and that has been given extra relevance with the introduction of artificial intelligence services like ChatGPT.

GOAL #4: Revise literature curriculum as part of the College's work towards establishing an anti-racism campus

In Fall 2022 we revised fourteen Literature course outlines to make them deliberately anti-racist, more widely appealing, and more equitable. Rebuking the notion that teaching literature entails a lionization of canonical authors, we wanted to explicitly name the kinds of open, critical thinking that literary inquiry makes possible in our SLOs: "literary study encourages us to interrogate the world we live in and fosters awareness of diverse social, cultural, and historical perspectives, as well as varied individual experiences." At this time, we do not have enough data on the success of these new courses to assess whether these changes have been impactful.

Post-pandemic, we are also striving to offer *more* literature "elective" courses every semester so that we have counterpoints to the more canonical sequences of British and American Literature. The way to build the English major community is to invite more perspectives, and de-center the "canon" through different critical lenses.

- GOAL #6: Continue to develop support for the English program (notably the literature and creative writing courses).

Our faculty will continue to advocate for a lower-class minimum as district policy in part to allow innovative courses and communities to take root on campus and help our students plan to meet their pre-transfer requirements for the major, without running into cancellations. We also believe that class cutting, after students have not only shown interest in our courses but have enrolled ahead of schedule, leads to a death-spiral of program culture and trust. With a class minimum of 10, we were able to run The Short Poem in English in Spring 22; in Spring 2024 we are putting our full support behind offering LGBTQ+ Literature, which has been cancelled in the past due to "low" enrollment before the start of the semester. We are also working to support English majors on campus through informal workshops showcasing academic work and promoting literature. Sustaining such courses is vital to the college mission, as we know that literature is a powerful way to nurture communities that haven't traditionally been represented in our curriculum or on campus.

3. **Current Program Review (200-400 words)**

We will look separately at composition and literature/creative writing data.

ENGLISH COMPOSITION (100, 105, 110, 165)

In our 2021 program review, we noted that the success rates *seemed* to have improved for all students, but we also noted that this was "almost certainly an illusion created by the EW," the emergency policy passed during the pandemic which made retention appear nearly perfect.

Thus, although current data appear to show a decline in success rates, attention to rates of withdrawal suggest a slow return to normal: in the '20-21 period, retention rates are nearly 100% (94.7), while in the 2022-23 period, retention is down to 85%; withdrawal rates are higher across all groups for the

current period, with a few exceptions. Even those exceptions create more confusion than clarity. For example, success rates for African American students appear to hold steady across the period from '20-'21 (67.5%) to '22-'23 (65.5%), but student withdrawal rates have increased from 5% to 17.2% in the same period. For other groups, including Hispanic, Filipino, and Pacific Islander populations, success rates appear to have declined more significantly, but without knowing how these numbers may be affected by the many external factors noted above, we can do little more than speculate.

The distance education data are also somewhat difficult to trace over time given the shift to 100% distance education during the pandemic and the slow return of a majority of students to in-person instruction. Overall, the differences between in-person and online education do not appear to be statistically significant for any student population, with one exception: African American students appear to do better with in-person instruction, with a 79.3% success rate in-person, nearly 20% higher than overall. However, this may be due to the very high success rates of Black students enrolled in Writing in the End Zone, who make up a significant percentage the college's Black student population

Overall, we can't do much with our student success data. Analysis here calls for the sort of research that, as with other of our more ambitious learning outcomes assessment goals, exceeds our expertise and our scope.

However, English faculty remain committed to learning communities in part due to the success rates of students in WEZ. Research and advocacy by the leading professional organization for college English, CCCC, has increasingly focused on the social and emotional elements of learning, including data that suggest students improve when they are able to create connections with people who have similar lived experiences. As noted above, English faculty are participating in and leading several learning communities, and we hope to expand these programs in the coming years.

LITERATURE and CREATIVE WRITING

We have seen a slight dip in literature success rates from 20-21 to 22-23 (85%-92%-76%), mirroring a similar dip in success rates within our composition courses (78%-72%-66%). As noted above, it is difficult to do more than speculate about the possible causes of these changes, or to know how they are impacted by the EW policy and other changes since the pandemic, and these external factors are the most likely explanation, as success rates have returned to what they were before the pandemic. However, we remain concerned that our literature classes are less diverse than the college overall: for example, we had *zero* Black students enroll in Literature courses in 21-22 or 22-23. We need to improve outreach to students of color and to work with counseling to better promote our literature and creative writing courses to all students.

Our creative writing program continues to flourish. As in the literature program, faculty revised the three course outlines for the creative writing sequence, with an emphasis on a community of practice for students. We have been able to add extra sections of creative writing in Summer 2023 due to high demand. The bi-yearly Writers' Ruckus, a celebration of student and faculty writing, has successfully returned to campus. With steady, energizing faculty support, students have found community in the Creative Writing Club.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Opportunities for growth and shortage of faculty: The growth of enrollment at the college presents both challenges and opportunities. We hope to expand our learning community offerings, grow both our literature and creative writing programs, and collaborate more directly with other programs on campus to address these challenges.

As noted in the department's resource request, we will need to hire more faculty, particularly full-time faculty, to meet current student demand, let alone accomplish any of our goals. We have lost two faculty to retirement, while another has moved to a temporary position as the language arts division dean, and at least one more is projected to retire before the next program review / resource request. Lack of faculty creates barriers to completion for our students, particularly in the required composition sequence. Our division office has kept a record of students turned away from composition courses showing an average of 50 students turned away, with nearly 100 in fall 2023—and these numbers are likely far below the real total as reporting to the division office is voluntary.

We have also been unable to staff our writing center fully for the Fall 2023 semester, and one part-time faculty has been asked to take on a "temporary full-time" role.

For our learning community programs, it is particularly important that we hire new faculty, ideally from populations who share similar lived experiences and cultural values with our Writing in the End Zone, Puente, Umoja, and Katipunan communities—all currently led by English faculty. These communities are one of the most promising means for addressing ongoing opportunity gaps.

Artificial intelligence: As noted in the opening section, Open AI's release of ChatGPT in November 30, 2022, followed by many similar or more advanced generative AI products, raises profound questions about how and what we teach. AI programs *may* serve goals of educational equity and may offer increased learning opportunities for all students, but they can also play a destructive role: AI products can allow students to *seem* to have done coursework without having spent more than a moment typing prompts into Chat GPT or similar products, a problem that online faculty have particularly noted. They also present equity challenges in that wealthier students can buy the much more sophisticated versions of these programs, while minoritized student populations may be accused of "cheating" without clear evidence. This is particularly a concern for writing teachers as texts generated by AI programs are virtually undetectable at this time, despite misleading promises from Turnitin and other companies.

4. Planning

NOTE: Having laid out too many, and too ambitious goals, in 2021, we are mindful that these goals will not all get done in two years. We will need to prioritize and may have to change our priorities as the years unfold. However, as it's useful to keep a record of our overall concerns, we are listing all our goals.

Goal #1: Explore ways to improve outcomes for Pacific Islander students. - The persistent gap between learning outcomes for Pacific Islander students, especially women, and the overall student population, is clearly an equity issue. Faculty can discuss with MANA coordinators and others to find specific, actionable ways to improve student success.

- Timeline: Fall 2023 – Form a faculty committee to suggest a shortlist of strategies for better understanding learning outcomes for this student group; choose a strategy to implement in Spring 2024 and evaluate in Spring 2025 to report on in Program Review 2025.
- Resources: This will depend on what approaches we adopt, but may include surveys, specific data requests, or other support from PRIE.
- Responsible: English faculty, working with PRIE, also MANA/Katipunan counselors and others

Goal #2: Continue to work on equitable grading and assessment. Also an equity goal, faculty are continuing to consider ways to assess student writing that measure but also encourage their learning. Currently, at least eight full-time and two part-time faculty are experimenting with contract grading or other alternative assessment strategies, and two faculty participate in the Equitable Grading Community of Practice.

- Timeline: Fall 2023 – Continue to discuss contract grading / share experiences; Spring 2024 – create suggested guidelines for grading; Spring 2025 – evaluate success of strategies, to report in Program Review 2025.
- Resources: Faculty time (retreats, workshops)
- Responsible: English faculty, working with Equitable Grading Community of Practice

Goal #3: Understanding and planning for the impacts of AI

English faculty have created the college's first AI Workgroup, with four (three FT, one PT) participating in twice-monthly meetings. However, the group's focus is on broad issues of policy, so the English department will need to work together to come to an understanding of how AI is currently impacting students specifically in composition and other writing-intensive courses and how we may need to change our approach to teaching reading/writing/literature. For example, we may need to focus much more on teaching critical literacy around issues such as misinformation, misrepresentation, "deep fakes," and other issues raised by AI, in addition to adapting assignment strategies so that students are not merely producing the same kinds of writing that AI can now convincingly mimic.

We will work together to design assignments with AI in mind--assignments that discourage the use of chatbot prose but acknowledge that students are using it, or that allow students to use AI in a way that expands rather than reduces learning. We also want to create assignments that promote critical literacy specifically required to combat misinformation, already a serious problem likely to be made much worse as technology evolves.

- Timeline: flex day or class day retreats in the Spring '24 and Fall '24 semesters
- Resources needed: at least two full flex days or retreat time during a normal class day, with compensation for part-timers.
- Responsible: faculty: English faculty

Goal #4: Solidifying our mentoring program. Faculty informally mentor new hires, but it is a long-standing goal to make these arrangements official and clarify duties and responsibilities.

- Timeline: Spring 2024 – brainstorm mentoring duties with department; publish in advance of Fall 2024
- Resources: Faculty
- Responsible: English faculty

Goal #5: Building relationships and coordinating effectively with counseling. English and Counseling faculty need to develop strong mutual understanding and lines of communication.

- Timeline: Organize joint Counseling / English department meeting in Fall 2024.
- Resources: Faculty
- Responsible: Faculty

Goal #6: Explore viability of a single, four-unit course instead of ENGL 100/105.

As part of our ongoing response to AB705 and the loss of developmental courses, we need to consider how well our current ENGL 105/100 arrangement is working. This is a long-term project that will certainly exceed a year and likely two – both to assess the merit of ENGL 105 and to explore alternatives. For this year, our focus will be on researching the pros and cons of a single, four-unit English 100 to serve all students.

- Timeline: flex day or class day retreats in the Spring '24 and Fall '24 semesters
- Resources needed: at least two full flex days or retreat time during a normal class day-- with payment for part-timers
- Responsible: faculty: English faculty

Goal #7: Promote literature, creative writing, and the English major.

We have done considerable work to support our literature and creative writing programs, including activities outlined above (Writer's Ruckus, etc.) as well as establishing a Literature and Creative Writing Committee, building community, and creating the Creative Writing Certificate Program. These initiatives have enriched us, our students, and the campus community. We plan to build on them by formalizing the new Creative Writing Certificate Program; continuing to improve course offerings and pedagogy (curriculum update, attending conferences); exploring the feasibility of offering Creative and Literature courses at Coastside; exploring a comprehensive restructuring of our three-unit Creative Writing sequence; and writing a proposal for a Creative Writing Conference.

- Timeline: Various projects to begin in 2024
- Resources: Faculty
- Responsible: Faculty