VI. Conclusion – a one- to two-page summary of the observed deficiencies and needs identified by your program review. Highlight areas of greatest need and areas of significant contributions.

The program review demonstrates satisfactory support and resources for the four graduate programs. However, all four of these programs are growing at different rates and face differing stresses and needs.

The two technical communication degrees are experiencing steady growth, which is driven by specialization and distance education. Both the MATC and the PhD-TCR have specialized in studies of technology, science, and culture in relation to rhetoric and communication, and continue to draw a steadily growing stream of quality applicants each year. The two programs (the MATC in 1998 and the PhD-TCR in 2004) have also seen heavy growth by virtue of offering complete degrees via distance education. As a result, the number of students for each degree has doubled. This growth puts a good deal of pressure on the programs’ human resources, as the faculty has found itself teaching more courses (online and on-campus), reading more comprehensive portfolios, and sitting on more dissertation committees each semester. The programs need either to begin cutting back on growth in order to protect quality and professor availability or to seek additional faculty to facilitate continued growth.

As fully mature programs, the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in English have reached stable enrollment levels and now face the challenges of improving the quality of the programs while still finding opportunities to expand enrollments in innovative ways. Unlike TCR, English faces competition from more than 150 other Ph.D.-granting institutions. This is not the case for the Ph.D. specialization in Creative Writing, where applications have risen each of the last three years and the graduate program is enrolled to full capacity, especially considering the quantity of undergraduate teaching the creative writing faculty handles. With additional faculty, enrollment could increase. English has also started to see modest growth from its new M.A. concentration in Linguistics. The most traditional field—literature studies—must do two things if it is to compete effectively with so many other programs: (1) recruit more aggressively across Texas and in nearby states; and (2) cultivate particular areas of specialization within literature studies (something that many other programs have done for a decade or more), so that English at Texas Tech will have more than regional prominence in these areas. Part (1) can be accomplished immediately through the energetic and strategic use of existing resources; in fact, more aggressive recruitment efforts have already begun. Part (2) can be accomplished over a longer period by strategic hiring into vacated faculty lines and cultivating existing local and regional resources. Across all of its programs, English can also expand its enrollments by being innovative in the creation of graduate certificate programs (this has already happened in Linguistics) and exploring possibilities for online education.