VI. Conclusion

The faculty of the Department of English are dedicated and hard-working, but they are also at the limits of what can be accomplished while teaching a standard 3-3 load. Although securing funding is always a challenge, the department should attempt to increase the number of tenure-line faculty and reduce its teaching requirement to 2-2, which is a normal load at most national research universities. This would allow for increased research productivity and mentoring time for faculty working with graduate students.

Similarly, a reduction in the teaching requirements for graduate part-time instructors from a standard 2-2 to a 1-1 would allow us to compete more effectively for exceptionally qualified candidates, improve the performance of students in their courses, and speed completion of the degree, especially for PhD students at the exam and dissertation stages.

We should also increase teaching opportunities for our post-exam doctoral students. At this time, for example, doctoral students who have passed ENGL 5392 can teach at the 2000 level and post-exam students can teach at the 3000 level if there is a need, but with the changes to the examination system that now require the submission of a 3000-level syllabus, the pool of students who could potentially teach at the 3000 level will be getting bigger, meaning that students can both improve their CV’s for the job search and help provide classes for more undergraduate students as the faculty workload decreases.

We should also look at the possibility of large lecture classes with an increased workload credit for the faculty and reduced writing requirements for undergraduate non-majors who need to fill a core requirement; such classes could also employ graduate students as graders and discussion leaders in small sections.

Graduate Programs in Literature, Creative Writing, and Linguistics

While our graduate program has had a great success in attracting a talented, diverse, and highly motivated student body by offering a challenging, stimulating set of core classes and academic seminars, there are still several ways we could improve the program.

Our professional development program and our specialized professional development courses such as Research Methods, Critical Methods, and Writing for Publication have been a great success in preparing students for doctoral study and for the academic job hunt (we placed six doctoral students in full-time employment this past year); depending on the year, we have a very low attrition rate (usually only one or two students, about 3% or 4% per year), which suggests that the students have confidence in both their academic abilities and their chances of finding a suitable job after graduation. However, students who do not plan to enter a doctoral program do not necessarily need the research- or theory-heavy courses that prospective doctoral students do; also, much of the publication preparation in MFA programs differs from the writing practices taught in critical writing classes.

We should consider the possibility of creating a separate doctoral program in creative writing with a separate organizational structure and director, suitably funded by the university; as there are creative writers in other disciplines, an interdisciplinary element should probably be part of
this program. Should that be impractical, we should consider ways of making the MA program in creative writing more competitive in its funding and admissions process in order to attract the excellent MA students we currently lose to MFA programs, perhaps by tailoring some of our core courses to creative writers.

We should also consider establishing a MAT program (MA with a Teaching emphasis), certainly with online components if not completely online, for students who need additional certification for high school teaching positions. We already have a good deal of the technology in place with our online program in Technical Communication and Rhetoric; we need both time to adapt literature and linguistics courses to online delivery and funding to find ways to update our equipment, both for the faculty and for the department labs.

Our program has had a tendency to lose track of students after they graduate; we are often aware of a student’s initial appointment or acceptance to graduate school, but we often do not receive updates to their situations. We are currently establishing a student information database that will make it easier to track student awards, fellowships, and funding while they are here, and the records will be easily transferable to a post-graduation database. The post-graduation database will make it easier to track potential donors, advertise much more accurately our placement rates during recruiting season, and network with our graduates for potential assistance with admissions or job placement for our graduating MA and PhD students.

**Graduate Programs in Technical Communication and Rhetoric**

The technical communication and rhetoric graduate program comprises four distinct populations, and behaves almost like four different programs. For example, each group has grown at its own rate. Each group takes a different number of courses per semester, requiring separate and careful planning in course offerings across the two modalities (face to face and online) to ensure that each group may make steady progress towards the degree.

In addition to raw growth, the faculty has experienced the consequences of this growth in the form of more dissertation committees, more MATC comprehensive portfolios, more graduate classes, and more complex blends of students to teach and advise. This growth is realized not just in raw complexity, but also in the market response to our articulated specialty areas.

We believe that the rapid growth of our programs due to this specialization and the expansion into distance education has leveled off as we have begun to realize graduates from the online doctoral program, and we are projecting a more-or-less steady size of the programs for the next several years. But despite this welcome leveling, the faculty's time and energy is pulled in many complex directions that make it hard to balance their teaching, service, and research objectives. Add to this complexity the retirement of a key theorist and perennial dissertation workhorse -- replacing him this year is a priority, but even with a replacement, the faculty as a whole will be less effective than it currently is, while we wait for the new faculty member to learn the ropes and gain his/her footing.

Thus, the program's constant challenge is to protect creative research and scholarship efforts while still supporting our many graduate students and their myriad interests. We do not think we can grow any larger, having already doubled the size of the graduate program in the past 8
years, but we do believe that we can grow more innovative in our course, lab, internship, and scholarship practices, and thus increase the overall quality of the program and its graduates.

For example, we have brought outside speakers to campus every year to speak to the online doctoral students, and we believe that same conference atmosphere can be brought into the more conventional semesters with a bit of planning.

We have also experimented with cross-disciplinary and team teaching and research projects, and feel that there is a wealth of creativity that may be realized by continuing to grow these efforts. We have begun to draft plans to implement an exchange program with Southeast University, in Nanjing, China, which will bring faculty and students to Lubbock, send faculty and students to Nanjing, and create a more diverse online course climate. Developing this program will require investment in additional tenure-line faculty to teach and mentor additional Ph.D. students from China.

Goals

- Increase number of tenure-line faculty.
- Reduce standard teaching load for tenure-line faculty to 2-2.
- Reduce standard teaching load for graduate part-time instructors to 1-1.
- Expand opportunities for PhD students to teach 3000-level courses.
- Expand offerings of large lecture sections.
- Develop separate degrees in Creative Writing.
- Develop MA in English with Teaching emphasis.
- Develop online graduate courses in Literature and Linguistics.
- Develop a database of program graduates.
- Develop exchange program for TCR faculty and students with Southeast University of Nanjing, China.