

**University of New Mexico English Department Memo**

**To: Dean Peceny**  
**From: Gail Houston, Chair, English**  
**Date: 10/22/11**  
**Re: Long Version Action Plan in Response to APR Team Report**

Our department has already responded substantively to many recommendations made by the APR Outside Team who visited in spring 2010. Here is an overview of our actions and action plan covering the years spring 2009-fall 2011. The short version just covers actions taken since spring 2011.

**I. Replacement and Addition of Staff:**

We agree that we need more staff, and we were happy that we were given approval to add a Program Manager to our Core Writing Program.

**Actions taken:**

**\*In fall 2010, Dylan Gauntt became Program Manager, and he has done an excellent job of managing the substantive increase of freshman every year in the Core Writing sections.**

**\*Replacement of Barb Van Buskirk, who retired in November 2010. We replaced her with Eva Lipton in December 2010.**

**Actions requested:**

**\*Replacement of Dee Meier, Program Manager, who resigned as of May 17, 2010. We used 50% of her position to fund the Program Manager position (Dylan Gauntt) with the College providing the remaining funding (in support of our Core Writing Program). However, we were not permitted to utilize the remaining 50% of D. Meier's line to fund additional staffing in the department. See request use below.**

**\*In spring 2010, the Department committed to paying for 10 hours a week for the IT/web services of Sterling Coke because we were not given approval to hire him with part of Dee's line.**

**\*Action Requested: to use part of Dee's line to pay for raises for staff. Or request for .5 Media and technology resource to assist with videotaping, webcasting, audiovisual resources, etc.**

**\*Replacement of Tech person Robert Castillo, who resigned in May 2011. He was 50% in A&S and 50% in English and he had an office in English. A&S decided to take this position out of the Department and now this position serves the whole College. Walter, the new tech, is a wonderful tech and serves us as much as he can; but he does not have the time to serve all of our numerous needs in a department this large**

**when he is also charged with serving the whole college. Action Requested:** we as that we be given permission to use part of Castillo's line as a raise for staff and part of it for a .5 media/technology person.

## II. Core Writing Program

We agree with the team that, "there do not appear to be adequate financial resources to sustain high levels of quality in the program. . . . Core Writing have not received funding increases that parallel the growth of enrollment in their courses."

**Actions taken:** Houston has:

\*given Associate Chair for Core Writing the charge to reduce our use of PTIs

\*established a goal to lower caps on Core Writing courses so that our TAs can complete their degrees sooner and so we can provide quality writing instruction

\*asked RW to create viable alternatives to 102

\*support RW faculty help to establish a WAC presence at UNM (see attached preliminary response).

**Recent Action Taken:**

**\*in fall 2011, the new dean made a significant commitment to support Core Writing by establishing a Strategic Planning Committee to come up with a campus-wide solution. The dean also requested and received approval from the provost for funding 4 new tenure-line faculty for RW over the next 3 years to help replace the RW faculty we lost over the last two years: Scott Sanders, Wanda Martin, Lynn Beene, Susan Romano.**

## B. Morale

The team notes that lack of morale is a result of "Loss of faculty in key positions . . . . are occurring at the same time that student enrollment is increasing heightens the pressure on the department to fulfill its teaching mission. . . . Faculty sense that the campus" sees the department as a "service" unit rather than a viable academic program with strong research and teaching." The team also noted "traumatic incidents" in Creative Writing.

**Actions Taken:**

\*advocate for faculty lines (see hiring memos to dean in summer 2011): **The Provost approved funding for 4 RW hires requested by the Dean and approved the Dean's plan to hire 4.5 in ALS and BILS over the next 3 years for the department. This has**

**helped to raise morale.**

\*In regard to Creative Writing, since November 2009, before the APR visit, Houston helped guide them to decide on one initiative, in order to strengthen the program and help students complete their MFAs in a more timely manner, that is, to reduce the hours for an MFA from 54 to 45, 54 being an inordinate amount for an MFA. **This initiative is now in the queue to be approved by UNM committees and should be approved by spring 2012.**

\*asked the former dean to meet with CW. **The new dean has met with each individual CW faculty member during the fall of 2011.**

**Action Requested:**

**\*the English Department strongly supports the recuperation of the D. H. Lawrence Ranch, which would be a win-win for the University, the local and global community, and the department. This can only take place with the support of Scholes Hall, the regents and the legislature.**

**III. Positive Press**

Regarding lack of publicity about our department's initiatives, faculty, students, and outreach efforts:

**Action taken:** our department website features awards, activities and scholarship of our faculty and graduate students, and works with Carolyn Gonzales from the PR Department on publicizing faculty and student accomplishments.

**IV. Curriculum**

The team notes the need to reduce our concentrations for majors and to streamline our graduate program.

**Actions Taken:** Previous to the team's visit, Houston:

\*asked the Undergraduate Associate Chair to work on options for collapsing our concentrations

\*established an ad hoc Committee to examine proposed changes to the Core Curriculum, Undergraduate major offerings, Graduate curriculum, and Southwest Studies. This group met 4 times in spring 2010.

\*sought ways to reduce our reliance on PTIs

\*sought to lower the number of graduate courses we offer every semester.

\*sought to stop “trying to do too much” with “too few faculty.” The team notes that we cannot cover everything, but we hope to come to a consensus around providing quality coursework in traditional and new areas of study.

**Recent Action Taken:** The department ad hoc sub-committee on curriculum revision met regularly during the summer of 2011 in order to plan a retreat at which the department would work intensively on designing a new model for our undergraduate major. The retreat was held on 9/23/11 and resulted in a unanimous decision to move forward on revising the Utah model template. A new ad hoc curriculum committee has since then been established to revise the Utah model and bring suggestions to our department meeting on 11/17/11.

## **V. Southwest Studies**

The APR Team wrote: “Finally we strongly recommend that the department proceed to establish a Southwestern Studies emphasis, perhaps at the MA level.”

**Action Taken:** Houston asked Jesse Alemán to design a SWS Program, which he did, and which the curriculum committee will consider during our curricular revisions. Some in the department seem virulently dead set against such a proposal, which is difficult to understand. **The recent version of the revised curriculum includes a SW Program.**

## **VI. Student Questionnaires**

The team suggested “it would be useful to collect data on the quality of and student satisfaction with graduate courses and on the post-degree experience of graduate students who do not accept academic appointments in colleges and universities.”

**Action Plan:** Houston will take on this task when we complete our deliberations on the undergraduate major revision.

## **VII. Hiring**

The Team noted: “To help guide hiring decisions, the Department of English would benefit from surveying alumni, employers who hire alumni, and graduate programs that admit alumni to determine what skills and knowledge serve English students as they enter the job market or graduate school.”

**Action plan:** By spring of 2012 we hope to have our Undergraduate Associate Chair contact alumni and employers to get their input on what they are seeking in graduating UNM seniors.