

## Program Review 2008-2011

**Division:** Language Arts

**Department or Program:** English

**Name and Title of Preparer:** Tim Shively, English Dept. Chair

### I. Description and Mission of the Program

Which area(s) does this program considerably address (check all that apply):

☒\_X\_Basic Skills    ☒\_X\_Transfer    ☐\_\_\_Career/Technical    ☒\_X\_Cultural Enrichment

- A. Provide a brief description of the program including any services provided and the programs mission.

The English Department is composed of several distinct programs/pedagogical "areas": English Writing, English Literature, Creative Writing, Developmental Composition and Linguistics. Courses offered through the English Department are also cross-listed with other Divisions (such as ICS and Film/TV), and in connection with campus-wide programs such as Readiness, LINC, Puente, First Year Experience and Sankofa. This is in keeping with our Department mission to continually assess, improve and devise new strategies to assist *all* students, but particularly underrepresented and academically at risk groups, in developing the written communication and analytical skills needed to achieve their academic, professional and personal goals.

- B. Provide a summary of the program's main strengths.

The program continues to provide essential instruction in writing, textual studies and critical thinking skills to students of all academic disciplines across campus. Our diversity of classes and committed outreach, particularly to targeted populations of at-risk students, prepare them to be successful communicators in their other classes, further their educational goals and help them succeed in their professional lives. Our faculty are involved in all areas of instructional support and shared governance, and continue to demonstrate initiative and leadership in developing projects and task forces to address student retention and success issues

- C. Provide a summary of the program's main areas for improvement.

The Department has made some strides in improving enrollment and retention, but needs to continue work in these areas.

- D. What are your expected outcomes (such as learning outcomes, transfer, career goals, certificate and degrees) for students in your program?

We expect that our transfer rates will increase significantly over the next several years, particularly given the expected influx of Freshman UC/CSU students displaced from those systems due to admissions reductions. We have recently created an English Major, which should greatly improve student enrollment and retention in Literature classes in particular.

### II. Retention and Growth

- A. How has the program responded to the institutional goal of increased access, growth and retention?

While the number of students enrolled in the program has dipped slightly from last year (down from 13, 257 to 12, 846), we still enrolled significantly more than the 11, 755 students served in 2005-06 (a low point across campus). While not a steady increase, these last 2 years reflect the highest enrollment since at least 2000-01, suggesting that we have turned the corner on the enrollment decline of the past and will continue to grow,

provided we have sufficient resources (i.e. classroom space, hiring of fulltime faculty, release time for program infrastructure, etc.).

The real “recovery story” here, however, is our Literature program, which has shown a steady increase in enrollment, from a low of 976 in 2005-06 to 1080 in 07-08. And retention has likewise dramatically improved, from 83% in 2005 to 88% in 2007-08, compared to the more modest 2% gain in retention during the same period for composition classes (from 87% for 2005-07 to 89% in 2007-08). We attribute this to our Literature Committee’s efforts to manage course offerings more effectively and systematically increase marketing of these courses.

- B. How has the program responded to the institutional goal of increased access, growth and retention specifically for the identified targeted populations of African Ancestry, Latino/a, and Filipino/a students?

With specific attention to the targeted student populations, we are enrolling a higher number of these students overall than the last Program Review in 2004-05. English Writing classes saw an increase to 394 Black students last year compared to 381 in 2004-05, 1636 Hispanic students compared to 1464. Only Filipino students showed a decline during the same period: 762 compared to 852. As an aggregate, these student groups account for 23% of the total number of students enrolled in writing classes (3%, 14% and 6% respectively).

Literature classes saw even more dramatic enrollment gains for these groups, Filipino students *increasing* from 64 in 2004-5 to 91 in 2007-8 and Hispanic students from 113 to 132. Only Black students evidenced a decline, from 35 to 29. The percentage of these students among literature class enrollees is identical to the ratio for Composition classes: 23% (Blacks = 3%, Hispanics = 12% and Filipinos = 8%).

In addition to enrolling at higher numbers, these students have become more successful in our Literature classes. The interval between 2004-5 and 2007-08 shows a *dramatic* gain for Black students (from 74% to 79%) and Hispanic (from 67% to 73%) with a decline only among Filipino students (from 79% to 73%). As an aggregate, this accounted for 185 successful target population students in 2007 compared to 151 in 2004, a significant increase.

As a whole, target population students were not quite as successful in English Writing classes, the total number of successful students declining slightly from 2065 in 2004-05 to 2005 in 2007-08 (a 3% dip). However, Hispanic students did show a modest gain (from 1095 to 1178). While each individual population has its specific needs, clearly we are doing something right in our Literature classes which needs to be duplicated in our Composition classes.

- C. The Statewide Basic Skills Initiative defines “basic skills” as English, mathematics, reading, writing and ESL skills. In what ways does your program address the basic skills needs of students?

More than 85% of incoming De Anza students place into Developmental classes, which constitute a continually increasing number of the students which the English Department serves (from 2421 in 2005-06 to 2513 in 2006-07 to 2618 in 2007-08). Because of the small size required for these classes to be successful, (Developmental Writing classes have a seat count of 25 students) they have a lower productivity number (333.33) than do our other courses. However, these classes perform an essential function for the entire college community in providing students with the written communication skills they need to succeed in their other classes. In conjunction with appropriate placement on the English Placement Test, students initially placing into developmental writing tend to do better in Transfer Level writing classes than do students starting at the transfer level [**cite statistics –vs- 1A entry**], a benefit which translates into greater success for other academic programs which incorporate writing skills. And Target Population students account for

32% of all students enrolled in Developmental Writing classes, a significant factor to consider in regards to the college's goal of increasing the success of this population.

In conjunction with other Language Arts departments (Reading, ESL and Speech) as well as state, district and college programs targeting this population (e.g. Basic Skills Initiative, First Year Experience, Sankofa), the English Dept. continues to be singularly inventive and successful in meeting the needs of these students. In particular, our LART classes, which combine Reading and Writing curriculum into a team taught structure, have proven to be instrumental in helping students at the lowest developmental level. And the portfolio evaluation system which the English Department adopted several years ago for its EWRT 100 classes has provided our instructors with a clearer assessment tool to insure that students completing this course are indeed ready for transfer level writing courses (the number of successful students in EWRT 1A classes having climbed from 2987 in 2005-06 to 3110 in 2007-08).

### III. Student Equity

#### A. What progress or achievement has the program made towards decreasing the student equity gap?

In addition to its work with Developmental students, the English Department has also been a great innovator in addressing the student equity gap by implementing the college's student equity plan. Our instructors have not only pioneered some of the most important campus programs currently facilitating the needs of target population students (e.g. LINC, First Year Experience, ILEAD, Institute for Community and Civic Engagement), but our classes continue to host regional and statewide programs which assist the target populations (e.g. Puente, Sankofa, the Basic Skills Initiative). We have also developed innovative curriculum designed to facilitate these programs' success, such as class sections dedicated to community and civic engagement, Latina/o centered pedagogy (as in our Puente classes), and made efforts to strengthen our standards for students success through emphasizing appropriate placement based on the English Placement Test (particularly the essay portion) and portfolio evaluation of Developmental students.

The results are instructive relative to retention and success rates for non-target students. While overall enrollment in English Writing classes last year was at about the same point it was in 2004-05 (11,766 and 11,216, respectively), Targeted Populations have shown an overall increase comparing the same periods (2792 in 2007-08, up from 2697 in 2004-05). And, with this increase in enrollment, retention figures have remained fairly consistent for both target and non-target populations with an overall rise in the number of students retained, but roughly the same percentage of students being retained (approximately 85% of target students compared to a 1% rise from 88-89% for the student population as a whole). Literature classes showed a slightly different pattern, with a consistent retention rate of 88% in both 2004-05 and 2007-08 for the population as a whole during these 2 sample years but a 2% gain for target audiences, due largely to an incredible increase in the retention of black students (from 85% in 2004-05 to 93% in 2007-08. average rate of approximately 88%). While the fact that target population students are at least "holding the line" in Writing courses is encouraging in itself, but their progress in Literature classes is real cause for celebration.

Target students were also more *successful* in Literature classes than Writing classes when compared to the student population as a whole. While the total population of Literature students has maintained a 78% success rate across the last 3 years, down from a high of 80% in 2004-05, target population students have "closed the gap slightly, moving from a 73% success rate in 2004-05 to almost 75% in 2007-08. The lower rate for target student's success in EWRT classes (declining from approximately 76% in 2004-05 to 71% in 2007-08) is even more pronounced relative to much more moderate loss among the

general population (which moved from a high of 82% in 2004-05 to a low of 79% in 2007-08, with an average rate of 80% across all four years). The reasons for this are complex, and a “microanalysis of one “set” of classes within the EWRT data may prove insightful:

Distance learning courses have risen in aggregate enrollment (from 810 in 2005-06 to 1031 in 2007-08) and retention (from 70% in 05-06 to 78% in 07-08). Enrollment of target students, however, has remained constant while retention has increased significantly (from approximately 58% in 05-06 to nearly 70% in 07-08). This represents an even more dramatic improvement than the gain among the total population of students (an increase of 12% increased to 8%). However, the success rates consist of wild swings for both groups, the target student population increasing from 55% to 66% between 2005-06 and 2006-07 and then declining to 56% in 2007-08, the aggregate population showing a less dramatic but relatively similar pattern, moving from 66% to 72% to 67% at the same indices. So if we can infer anything about program data as a whole based on this sample, it's clear that there are certainly factors in addition to student equity effecting the success data, and it's also suggested that such variables may disproportionately impact the target population, which may skew a program's success data.

- B. In what ways will the program continue working toward achieving these goals?  
I think the distance learning example makes clear that in addition to campus wide initiatives, there needs to be more programmatic application of the college's strategies for increasing equity. By identifying the needs of students within specific programs, we can improve both the programs and the success rates in a mutually reinforcing way. Strategies for succeeding in Distance Learning classes, for example could be tailored to specific target populations in those classes. Given that black students showed the most extreme success “variations” among the target groups (from 17% to 31% to 25% over the 3 years of data) they could be grouped with students in other distance learning classes (much in the way the Linc program structures “cohorts” of students within a larger population), which would facilitate identification of their needs in that particular program and the design and implementation of strategies to address them.

The English Dept. will also build on its successes with the targeted groups in the Literature Program by attempting to integrate literary materials and pedagogy into our other programs. We have already laid the infrastructure for this by recently creating an English major, which should be mutually reinforcing for both the literature and composition programs. While the majority of our literature classes carry only an EWRT 1A advisory, students in these classes certainly need more than basic communication skills in order to analyze and write about complex literary texts. Similarly, student success in composition classes may be facilitated by greater inclusion of literary texts in the classroom, particularly those representing the cultures of the targeted student groups. We are currently planning a Department Retreat for Spring quarter in which we will strategize specific ways of implementing and accomplishing this synthesis of materials and pedagogies. This might include agreeing upon a common department text or assignment for a specific class, a strategy which would fit in very nicely with our existing portfolio process in EWRT 211, thereby facilitating the success of Developmental students as well.

- C. What challenges exist in the program in reaching such goals?  
Regarding data on the student population, we need to consider how demographics other than ethnicity might impact student equity. For example, one demographic pattern which seems to have been overlooked is that the distribution of age groups among all English Dept. enrollees has shifted towards the extremes of the span (the youngest and oldest students) while the “middle” age groups have begun to shrink. In the Literature program, for example, the “19 or less” age group consisted of 457 students in 2004-05 while in 2007-08 that number had increased to 495. There was a correlative increase in the

50+ group from 43-58. But the same intervals saw a reduction of the 20-24 group from 489-413 students and the 40-49 group from 31-14. The same growth pattern can be observed in the English Writing classes, with respect to the 19 or less group growing from 5227 to 5856 students. Though the 50+ group decreased from 78 to 67 students, a more pronounced drop is evident in the 20-24 group's increase from 4227 to 4141 students (the 40-49 group remained consistent at 217 students). It is not clear at this point how this shift might translate into programmatic implications, but the overall trend is definitely something we would like to monitor and hopefully triangulate with ethnicity and other key demographics, as it could have direct bearing on our efforts to achieve greater equity.

Another challenge we face is the attempt to identify ways of achieving equity in smaller programs, such as Creative Writing. With *Red Wheelbarrow*, which offers students the chance to not only publish their own work, but to work on a national literary publication, and its public reading and speaking activities which have featured a diversity of recognized literary figures such as Michael Harper, Regie Cabico and Adrienne Rich, as well as its sponsorship of diversity centered student activities such as the "Multicultural Literature Festival" and the recent "African-American Read-in" during African-American History Month, the program offers some unparalleled opportunities for underrepresented students to get involved in their college community, making De Anza unique among even community colleges with Creative Writing programs. But the Creative Writing Committee has struggled with enrollment over the past several years, even though it has attempted to identify ideal times at which to offer these classes, strategized the most effective means of outreach and marketing, and attempted to balance the contractual requirements of scheduling with the need to staff these classes with faculty who can not only draw the students to and keep them enrolled in the classes but insure that they succeed.

One of the primary challenges to these efforts is identifying significant trends in a program for which the data set is too small. For example, looking at target population students who have enrolled in these courses over the past several years, we see that the percentage they constitute of program enrollees as a whole dropped between 2005-06 (21%) and 2006-07 (18%), only to resuscitate dramatically in 2007-08 (25%). While on the face of it this seems wonderful evidence that the program has made significant gains in the areas of equity, parceling out the numbers shows that we are dealing with a very small population of students (42 at the *highest* enrollment year). And when we break this into specific demographic groups, the trend becomes even less meaningful. While Black and Filipino students, for example, have been restored to about the same level they were in 2005-06, they represent only 9 and 8 students respectively. So considering that general enrollment growth was lower in 2007-08 than 2005-06 (172 compared to 208), does this mean that we are succeeding at equity for these groups? Or, considering student success figures for the same periods, in which Black students saw an increase from 78% to 89% but Filipino students a decrease from 86% to 75%, does this mean that we are succeeding with Black but not Filipino students? The numbers are too small to draw any valid conclusions. We need to find better ways of correlating existing data, conduct more longitudinal research and incorporate qualitative means of measuring student success to better account for the trends within such programs.

#### **IV. Budget Limitations**

- A. Identify any limitations placed on the program based on limited funding. What increases in resources are critical to the program and what are the consequences of continued limited funding on the program.

Our primary difficulties in retaining and ensuring the success of at risk and underrepresented students are budgetary. The program faces serious infrastructural

threats should Reassigned Time be reduced any further. We have historically had 5 courses released for our dept. chairs, which has been reduced to 4 for this academic year due to elimination of B-Budget funds. This makes the already difficult task of managing the largest dept. on campus (currently 27 active, full-time faculty and more than double that number of part-time and reduced load faculty) virtually non-tenable. We cannot sustain adequate focus on hiring, mentoring and evaluation of faculty (currently we are barely keeping pace with the number of adjunct faculty on the verge of reemployment preference), facilitating the department's various committees and initiatives, enrollment management and countless other duties, which are in addition to the department chairs' teaching load, without adequate reassigned time. This extends to reduction or elimination of compensation for key "liaison" positions which serve primary functions in the success of the department, such as the English Readiness Coordinator's work in coordinating classes, overseeing the portfolio evaluation process and serving as an instructional resource for our Developmental classes, and the English Testing Coordinator's updating of testing prompts, training of readers and communication of important developments to the Department.

Our staff development opportunities have also been severely curtailed. Currently we are forced to plan our upcoming department retreat "al fresco," as our budget of \$1400 curtails us even from the rental of meeting space (and even that is in jeopardy). And without incentives for faculty involvement, we will see less participation in program initiatives such as First Year Experience and the Honors Program. This is particularly true for adjunct faculty, who are not obliged to participate in the district's extracurricular activities.

Finally, while we appreciate that the district as a whole has adhered to its Fulltime Faculty Obligation Number, the method by which fulltime positions are allocated to individual divisions and departments seems at odds with its stated equity goals. Like other departments in the Language Arts Division, English has historically been forced to rely on a disproportionate ratio of part to full time instructors (currently more than 2 to 1). By any yardstick of fairness, those programs which allocate a disproportionate share of their personnel and resources in advancing the district's strategic initiatives should be provided with the fulltime positions needed to help them achieve those goals.

- B. Describe the consequences to the college in general if the program were eliminated or significantly reduced.

The impact on the college's growth, retention and student equity, should the English Department's offerings be significantly reduced would be catastrophic. A glance at current (end of exam week) enrollment figures for Spring quarter shows that the department is significantly increasing the number of students enrolling, particularly in literature courses (currently 341 compared to 233 in Winter quarter, which will help recover much of the 1091 enrollment projection for the 2008-09 fiscal year and increase the department's productivity as a whole). In addition, the demand for GE elective courses will increase precipitously in 2009-10 as students are displaced from the CSU and UC systems. Without careful consideration, planning and allocation of Department resources (such as determining the appropriate program mix between Developmental and Transfer level classes), this shift in the population of incoming students could displace the very targeted populations the college has been striving to increase. Significant reductions in the department's offerings will also result in erosion of the department faculty morale, reducing participation in extracurricular activities, and deterioration of job performance with a concomitant undermining of student success.