

Departmental Summary

The Department of Writing and Library Science houses academic programs which appear to be in demand, and which were carefully planned. It also offers support to other programs on campus through library services, ESL, and writing, and supports multiple High Impact Practices. As noted below, the department should revisit reassignment time for advisement for academic instructional staff in consideration of the light advising load. Continued attention to streamlining curriculum and finalizing the assessment plan for the major (and following through with implementation) is recommended. (Note: because the academic component of the Library Science program has been eliminated, due to said budgetary constraints, this review will focus on summarizing key findings from the Academic Program Review process but will refrain from making recommendations for that particular program.)

Writing

The Writing program currently offers a major and a minor. Information on the Writing major was not available at the time of this self-study because the major was launched in Fall 2014. As a result, this review will primarily relate to the Writing minor.

Strengths

The Writing program is an essential component of the university's liberal arts curricular array. The minor is a value-added program to the university, as 80-85% of credit hours generated by the program in the last three years were devoted to supporting the General Education program (PPP, criterion 3, p. 4), the remainder were dedicated to the minor and service courses offered in support of other programs on campus (e.g., WRIT 209 is required of most students in the Department of Business and Economics and the Social Work program).

There is clearly a strong internal demand for the minor, as student enrollment in the program increased from one student in Fall 2008 to 44 students in Fall 2013 (WLS dataset 2013-14). This upward trend is not surprising given the external demand and importance that employers and society place on effective communication skills. Further, over the last 5 years, the program had an average of 5.8 graduates per year (WLS dataset 2013-14).

Most of the program instructional faculty and staff are relatively new to UWS. Their latest curricular revisions, evidence-driven decision-making, and plans for the future clearly exhibit a tremendous level of enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and energy dedicated to program improvement and development.

Naturally, the program serves as a key promoter and supporter of Writing Across the Curriculum, one of the university's High Impact Practices (HIPs). The program also plays an integral role in supporting other HIPs, as effective communication skills are essential for a meaningful engagement in Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity (URCSA), Academic Service-Learning (AS-L), First Year Seminar, Senior Year Experience, and Global Awareness. The program also actively engages in these related HIPs directly, by offering courses and providing human resources to advance these practices (e.g., the program incorporated AS-L in its courses, and program faculty lead the Global Awareness committee).

Recommendations

While we admire the program's enthusiasm for curriculum development and an evidence-driven decision to offer a Writing major, the number of courses in the writing minor and major listed under the categories of genres, writing and rhetoric, and electives ranges from 5 to 12. Given the university's financial constraints and a need to streamline the curriculum and avoid low-enrolling courses, we recommend that the program carefully plan its class schedules to ensure that these courses do not compete with each other in a given semester.

The program stated its interest in offering a Writing minor online but cited resource constraints and the DL overload pay policies as barriers to pursuing this option. Given the program-anticipated demand for such a minor, APRC recommends that the program explore the feasibility of this alternative program delivery, maybe similar to how the program approached the demand analysis for the Writing major, and then, if justified, propose an on-line minor (and any additional staff required) to the Administration.

The program reported that it developed student learning outcomes for the minor/major in 2012-2013 (APR, p. 8) and expected to conduct its first assessment in Spring 2014 (PPP, criterion 5, p. 8). Given the previous program status of a stand-alone minor, and now a major and a minor, APRC would like to urge the program not to delay the assessment of student learning outcomes in the future. Further, APRC recommends that the program communicate its student learning outcomes to students in course syllabi (as recommended by the Higher Learning Commission), not just the catalog, annual reports, and other venues listed in the self-study.

While the program seems to have a clear advising philosophy, the number of advisees in the program most recently ranged between 2-6 students per advisor (WLS dataset 2013-14, pp. 6-7). Given that the program has negotiated with Administration a reduced course load for instructional staff (from 15 to 12 credits per semester) to reassign 3 credits for advising duties, such a low advising load no longer seems to justify the staff reassignment. Therefore, it would be prudent of the program to re-visit this arrangement, especially since other programs on campus carry advising loads of 25-40 students per advisor.

Summary

The Writing program is a strong component of the university's liberal arts education. The minor's enrollment has substantially increased since 2008 and is expected to continue to increase thanks to recent active measures taken by the faculty and staff to improve the program. At the same time, given the recent launch of a Writing major, the program needs to be strategic with its resource allocations, as outlined in the APRC recommendations above.

English as a Second Language

The English as a Second Language program is situated in a unique position in that it serves academic needs on campus without having a major, minor, or stand-alone minor. Its funding sources and budget allocations are also distinct from other academic programs in that staff pay and benefits are directly

determined by ESL student tuition; a complicating factor is the idiosyncratic placement of the ESL program within the framework of the university. However, the program does serve important needs on campus for our International students and, as such, can benefit from regular self-assessment and review.

The program has established learning outcomes in four domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The outcomes are formed based on skills students will be able to demonstrate and use, as a function of completing courses in the program, and serve as necessary components to success in classes outside of the ESL program, as well. While the ESL program is not required to connect program-level learning outcomes to campus-level outcomes, we would encourage reviewing the campus Integrated Learning Outcomes; there is likely natural overlap in the two sets of outcomes, and finding ways in which the work being done in the ESL curriculum also contributes to campus initiatives would strengthen both the perceived and actual connections between the program and campus.

While understandable that the program has not completed assessment of the LELGs, it would benefit the program to perform assessment of their own programmatic learning outcomes. This would allow the program to have evidence for their strengths and find potential areas for development or revision. This should be implemented prior to the next Academic Program Review.

The program indicates interest in longer-term tracking of student success. The APR Council would strongly encourage such an initiative and recommend working with the staff of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to develop the method for that, as well as providing the appropriate data. This type of ongoing long-term tracking could provide valuable information for the program, as well as identify additional curricular partners or areas for professional development, helping instructors to provide productive learning experiences for International students, outside of the ESL program. There may be programming or resources (perhaps a set of best practices?) that instructors outside of the ESL program would benefit from, to allow them to better work with international students for whom English is not a first language.

The self-study suggests that the ESL program would like to explore additional one-credit courses that would expand the curricular offerings to students. Greater detail on the demand for these, the type of courses, and the plan for staffing these would allow the APRC to more strongly advocate for this need. Further clarification would also be needed on the approval process for such courses.

The English as a Second Language program serves as an important tool for students who travel thousands of miles to attend UWS, in a new culture and language. This support is likely a crucial element of their success. The program also aids in the university's commitment to Global Awareness – more discussion of its indirect support to this High Impact Practice could be included.

Library Science

The Library Science program at UWS serves multiple audiences – students enrolled in degree programs within the field (minor, certification, or graduate degree), the general student population, and faculty/staff.

The Library Science Program provides a unique disciplinary opportunity for students, especially those interested in entering the educational field. As such, the program works consistently to maintain alignment with changing DPI standards as well as professional expectations from the broader discipline. This is done through continuous representation at TEAC and at regional/national conferences where library science curriculum is examined as a key focal issue. The program also maintains alignment with the mission and values of UWS by participating in the department's review of their own mission and outcomes. As a minor and graduate program, they were not required to participate in the Liberal Education Learning Goal assessment practices but did incorporate a number of the goals into their own program's learning outcomes for students.

While enrollment and graduation rates for the program were too low to meet minimum System standards, this does not seem to be a reflection of low quality or effort. The Library Science program effectively integrated several High Impact Practices into their curriculum (AS-L, URSCA, Internships). The program also worked to expand the nature of their offerings, to increase enrollments, by offering classes via Distance Learning, partnering with UW-Eau Claire to offer coursework via ITV (Interactive Television Network), and joining the UW System Library Education Consortium, with UW-Eau Claire, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Madison, and UW-Whitewater.

While multiple innovations were made to how classes were offered, who they were offered to, and what was being offered, it seems the demand (especially in light of changing standards for K-12 educators) for the educational offerings of the program is not sufficient to maintain its existence on our campus. We commend the program for working to 'teach out' the remaining 20 students in the program, as well as maintain the high standard of work done in service to the campus at large.