Department of English

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

(2017)
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Strategic Initiative I: *Enriching Educational Experiences to Enable Student Success*

**Goal 1.1:** Sustain the pattern of growth and development at undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Goal 1.2:** Give students the opportunity for more meaningful interaction with faculty and peers.

**Goal 1.3:** Provide enhanced opportunity for international study

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**Goal 2.1:** Increase the local, national, and international visibility of our scholarly and creative endeavors.

**Goal 2.2:** Increase the number of faculty applications for external funding.

**Goal 2.3:** Increase collaboration with local, national, and international entities

Strategic Initiative III: *Ensuring Access and Affordability*

**Goal 3.1:** Increase timely progress to degree

**Goal 3.2:** Make classes more affordable

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1. Introduction

The Department of English offers an undergraduate degree in English, with possible concentrations in Creative Writing and Professional Writing, an M.A. degree in English literature, and a Ph.D. degree with a focus on cross-cultural, transnational approaches to English language and literary studies, with coursework required in U.S. Latina/o literature and the theory and practice of teaching composition. Graduate certificates in Creative Writing and Rhetoric and Composition are also available to students. An interdisciplinary certificate in Linguistics is pending final approval and will be available to our students as well.

The Department offers courses across a broad range of topics, from the literary and critical analysis of British and American literature to the multietnic literatures of the U.S., from linguistics and rhetoric to creative writing. Faculty strengths include Latina/o Literature, African American Literature and Language, Native American Literature, in addition to traditional American Literature, British Literature, Creative Writing, Comparative Literature, Rhetoric & Composition, and Linguistics.

2. English Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Our Department’s mission, vision, and core values reflect the purpose of our department (Mission), what we aspire to be (Vision), and the guiding principles that we will use to reach our goals (Core Values).

Mission Statement

➢ to commit to an educational endeavor with a focus on literature, culture, and language
➢ to contribute to the literary, linguistic, and cultural scholarship in local, national, and international venues
➢ to teach and mentor students to read analytically, think critically, and write effectively
➢ to use our varied departmental expertise to serve our community

Vision Statement

The Department of English will continue its commitment to intellectual and creative excellence while providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be articulate, literate, and productive members of society.

Core Values

While our mission is multifarious, and our vision ambitious, we are committed to working within the broader principles outlines in UTSA Blueprint 2020 to achieve them. While
achieving some of our goals will require additional resources, we are committed to developing creative solutions to some of our challenges within current budgetary constraints.

3. **English Strategic Advantages**
The Department of English is the largest and most robust humanities department in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts and the home of the oldest Ph.D. program in the College. The Department has a signal role to play in helping the University achieve Tier 1 status through the prolific and wide-ranging scholarship and creative production of our faculty, by fostering the research of our doctoral students, engaging with our community and region, and connecting with institutions worldwide. Our contributions to the university and college research mission continue to be significant. Faculty members have been awarded a number of prestigious fellowships, grants, and awards from such organizations as NEH, NSF, NEA, MLA, and the Ford Foundation. Two faculty members have been designated as Ashbel Smith Professors; a number have been Chancellor’s Council and Fulbright awardees; our Creative Writing faculty have garnered numerous awards including NAACPS Tejas award, the BkMrk prize and the Elixir Press Antivenom Prize. In addition, a number of our doctoral students have been awarded Ford Foundation Fellowships, Smithsonian Institute, and other prestigious external fellowships.

The department currently houses five faculty endowments including the Sue E. Denman Distinguished Chair in American Literature, the Brackenridge Endowed Chair in Literature and the Humanities, the Celia Jacobs Endowed Professor in British Literature, the Pearl Lewinn Endowed Professor, and the Jack and Laura Richmond Endowed Faculty Fellow. Over the past several years, faculty have been awarded the highest honors at UTSA and within the University of Texas system—including three Regents’ Awards, and numerous President’s Distinguished Achievement Awards. Most of our faculty members have national and international reputations for their research and creative pursuits.

Faculty from the Department of English also make substantial contributions to university administration and governance. We provide the Director of the Women’s Studies Center, and an Assistant Director for National Fellowships in the Honors College. Faculty have spearheaded a number of important, nationally-recognized programs including the African American Studies Spring Symposium, African American Literatures and Cultures Institute, and the International Conference on Historical Linguistics—to name just a few.

Our department plays a large role in contributing to the cultural enrichment of our community. The establishment of the Brackenridge Distinguished Visiting Professorship in 1987 has provided nearly thirty years of outstanding lectures and classroom visits by renowned scholars from the world’s leading universities. The Friends of Shakespeare have sponsored over thirty residencies of the Actors from the London Stage. Our Creative Writing Reading Series sponsors readings by renowned poets and authors, providing the inspiration for students of Creative Writing and members of the community alike. The department currently houses three journals: *Open Words*, *American Letters and Commentary*, and the award-winning, student-run journal, *The Sagebrush Review*. Our PhD students periodically organize a research conference that brings outstanding graduate students from across the state and beyond to UTSA.
The Department of English is poised to contribute to UTSA’s foundational themes as outlined in Blueprint 2020. We are not only committed to recruiting diverse faculty and graduate students, but also to embedding these ideals in our curriculum—which emphasizes cross-cultural and transnational approaches to literature, especially at the graduate level. With regard to globalization, the Department of English sponsors a biennial study abroad course in London that has been active since 2011 and department faculty organize and teach in the COLFA Semester in Urbino program that has expanded from sending students to Italy annually to once a semester. We encourage international links on many levels, with Mexico and other Latin American countries, with Europe, and with nations around the world. Furthermore, our graduate programs foster the development of transformative leadership, training our students to be dedicated educators and visionary citizens. This commitment has been institutionalized through the establishment of service learning as an essential component in our doctoral curriculum. We are confident that our department is providing students and the community with the kind of cultural enrichment and first-class educational experiences expected of a Tier 1 institution.

4. English Strategic Challenges

Currently, we have 441 undergraduate majors, 50 MA students, and 19 PhD students served by 20 full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members. The faculty to student ratio is currently 26:1, an unacceptably high ratio for a Ph.D.-granting program, and well below that of our aspirant institutions. The specialized expertise and advanced credentials of our T/TT faculty mandates that they must teach and mentor graduate students; as a result, we rely disproportionately on NTT faculty to teach most of our lower-division classes. This reality is neither sustainable in the current budgetary environment, nor does it allow our undergraduate students to benefit from our excellent T/TT scholar-teachers. Consequently, class sizes are larger—meaning that the essential writing component in these classes is necessarily diminished. Moreover, many of our undergrads do not encounter a tenured or tenure-track instructor until the later stages of their degree—sometimes not until their final semester at UTSA. Finally, we have significant gaps in coverage of major literary periods and genres due to our dearth of faculty, which has been exacerbated due to retirements and attrition without replacement hires. Like the college, we need to decrease this ratio if we are to provide a quality education to our students, continue to produce research and creative works of the highest quality, and function at the level of a Tier 1 institution.

Therefore, to help promote UTSA to Tier I status and to enable successful execution of the Strategic Plan, the Department of English, like COLFA, needs the following:

- more T/TT faculty
- continuing commitment to and greater financial support for our graduate programs
- greater investment in faculty research in the form of release time, travel funding, and research support
5. Strategic Initiatives, Goals, Action Items, and Metrics

To meet our vision and fulfill our mission, the Department of English is committed to pursuing five strategic initiatives, encompassing 13 goals. Our initiatives reflect our support for and contributions to Blueprint 2020.

**English Strategic Initiative I: Enriching Educational Experiences to Enable Student Success**

**Goal 1.1:** Sustain the pattern of growth and development at undergraduate and graduate levels.

To increase growth at the undergraduate level, we need to continue to reinforce the relevance of an English degree in today’s globalized society. By introducing an ensemble of new CORE courses, we hope to recruit more undecided students into the major, and to the several minors we offer. We already provide our undergraduates with career workshops featuring invited speakers from a number of fields, all of whom emphasize the value of the skills obtained during their course of study as English majors.

We have established a strong tradition of graduate education in our department, and to date have graduated 38 doctoral students—most of whom have attained faculty appointments at colleges and universities across the state and beyond. Our MA students pursue a variety of career paths and many go on to attend some of the best PhD programs in the country including Berkeley, UCLA, and NYU. The establishment of our endowed faculty positions has considerably enhanced the reputation of our graduate programs, and has enabled us to expand our graduate offerings and to increase the diversity of our students by ethnicity and gender. We need an increased commitment to funding our graduate students, especially at the PhD level, to sustain the number of students in the program, recruit top prospects from across the country, and maintain and enhance our competitive position nationally. It is our hope that our graduate students will leave our programs with a nuanced understanding of the discipline, incisive critical thinking skills, and the ability to become transformative leaders in their own right.

**Goal 1.2:** Give students the opportunity for meaningful interaction with faculty and peers through smaller classes, enabling a stronger focus on writing at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

The Department of English is committed to preserving the quality of faculty-student interaction that has always been a crucial part of our success in the classroom by reducing class sizes and thereby fostering meaningful interaction between faculty and students and among students themselves. This will serve two goals. It will foster an increased awareness of diversity and stimulate productive conversations regarding these issues; and it will enhance student writing.

**Goal 1.3** Provide opportunities for international study and travel for students, and for other sources of international connection.
In the future, cultivating diversity and the appreciation of other cultures in an increasingly globalized society will require not just the close scrutiny of literary texts and an in-depth understanding of the cultures of England, Europe, and the Americas, but immersion in them. We currently offer study abroad programs in London and Urbino (Italy), and are looking into the feasibility of another one in the Caribbean and restarting yet another in Spain. Several faculty members have held Fulbright lectureships in locations such as Russia, Bulgaria, and France and regularly present their research at numerous international venues. Another faculty member is organizing a major international conference that will draw linguists scholars to San Antonio from around the world. In the future, we wish to encourage international links on many levels, especially with Mexico and other Latin American countries, and we already have faculty making important contributions to UTSA’s Mexico Center.

**English Strategic Initiative II: Serving Society through Creativity, Expanded Research, and Innovations**

**Goal 2.1:** Increase the local, national, and international visibility of our scholarly and creative endeavors.

The Department of English has been prolific in the publication of books, refereed journal articles, reviews, and works of creative writing. Nearly all of our faculty have at least one book published by a reputable university press some with world-class presses such as Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press. All have placed articles in leading journals in their areas of specialization. Faculty present at national and international conferences on a regular basis, and have established strong reputations, even in the face of inadequate travel and research funding. By 2020, we expect that our research and creative production will continue to increase.

**Goal 2.2:** Increase the number of faculty applications for external funding.

Our Department has been very successful in its quest for grants, both individual and programmatic, including an NEH grant to fund a bicultural summer institute and an NSF grant to support a panel on Endangered Languages. Our faculty have received grants to undertake archival research and participate at symposia at the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Henry E. Huntington Library, and various gatherings sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities. In addition, five of our Ph.D. students have been awarded prestigious Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowships. While English faculty do not have the opportunity to compete for the high dollar grants available to those in STEM fields and the social sciences, we plan to encourage the accumulation of the numerous smaller grants available to us, which will greatly benefit our research productivity.

**Goal 2.3:** Increase collaboration with local, national, and international entities

The Department of English maintains a number of strong ties to universities in France, China, Italy, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. These collaborative activities allow us to
leverage and compound our own limited resources for the benefit of increased faculty
publication and student success.

**English Strategic Initiative III: Ensuring Access and Affordability**

**Goal 3.1:** Increase timely progress to the degree

UTSA has a unique and diverse student body, and some undergraduate students have had
difficulty completing their programs of study because their classes are not available at times
when they seek to take them. We have gone some measure in alleviating these issues
through efficient scheduling, a streamlined course progression, increased summer offerings,
and regular communication with advising to better determine student needs. We will
continue these creative efforts to ensure students complete their degrees on time within
current fiscal constraints. Furthermore, we will continue to experiment with online
education, and offer more courses online and in hybrid format so long as these modes of
delivery do not detract from the content and quality of the class. While it may never be
possible or desirable to obtain a UTSA English degree online, it will be possible to take
several required and elective courses over the internet.

**Goal 3.2:** Make classes more affordable.

Although we have limited control over these issues at the departmental level, we will
continue to search for more scholarships and other opportunities for these students including
work-study and reader-grader positions.

**Goal 3.3:** Ensure competitive graduate funding

Financial exigencies are especially acute at the PhD level and we are committed to full
fellowship support for all incoming doctoral students at nationally competitive levels. We
support our Master’s students as much as possible through teaching, research, and
administrative assistantships and through a number of competitive awards and scholarships.
We seek not only to increase the number of funding opportunities available to our MA
students, but to increase awareness about the numerous funding sources that are available for
graduate study.

**English Strategic Initiative IV: Serving the Public through Community Engagement**

**Goal 4.1:** Continue to develop the Department as a Center of Excellence in Literatures,
Language, and Culture.

The Department supports a rich and vibrant culture in the arts and humanities including the
annual performances of the Actors from the London Stage, the Brackenridge Distinguished
Visiting Lecturer Series, the Creative Writing Series, SA Reads, Kindness Counts, and
numerous other literary readings and lectures, student production of a literary journal, and
other educational and outreach programs. For example, the Department will contribute to San Antonio’s Tricentennial celebration by supporting the week-long series of panels, free and open to the public, entitled “Las Lenguas de San Antonio a 300 Anos: Reconstructing the Linguistic Roots of a Multicultural City.”

**Goal 4.2: Continue to engage community employers through internships and other cooperative learning experiences.**

The Department currently offers approximately 30 internships per year with public and private entities including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the State Capitol in Austin, Rackspace Hosting, Gemini Ink, and the San Antonio Express News. We also invite numerous employers to campus to discuss internship and career possibilities with students. Our students work in local law firms, government agencies, testing firms, and non-profits.

**Goal 4.3: Continue to serve as a resource for sharing global understanding and perspectives through international faculty and global research initiatives.**

We have hosted international research scholars from countries such as China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Our faculty reciprocate by presenting at conferences and symposia worldwide, in addition to participating in a variety of global research initiatives. In addition, the research of many of our faculty has been recently translated into French, Arabic, Spanish, among others.

*English Strategic Initiative V: Expanding Resources and Infrastructure*

**Goal 5.1: Retention and Recruitment of World-Class Faculty**

One of the ongoing themes of this report is the need for more tenure-track faculty to achieve our strategic goals. We also seek to retain our excellent faculty through active mentoring, financial support for professional activities, and opportunities for professional development. Increased awareness of diversity and fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment where we all respect each other’s unique and varied contributions to the department will be essential to our ongoing success.

**Goal 5.2: Continue to advocate for appropriate classrooms, class sizes, and formats**

While classroom space is not critical at this time, we need to enhance the classroom spaces we occupy by installing and using the technology needed to teach our classes effectively in 2017 and beyond. Teaching literature and culture in the twenty-first century is not only about an arid engagement with printed texts, but must incorporate the use of sound, video, and other multimedia platforms. We are also committed to expanding online education and encouraging hybrid courses, where appropriate.

**Goal 5.3: Enhanced Administrative Processes and Support**
Our administrative staff serve the department admirably. We must ensure that they constantly have the training and resources they need to support faculty in an expanding and changing department, and within a developing institutional culture with a heavier burden on reporting, transparency, and assessment.

6. Department of English Key Indicators

The following metrics will serve as indicators of the Department of English’s overall progress in achieving our vision and meeting our strategic goals. Each indicator will be measured against past performance and compared with our aspirant institutions during regular program reviews.

**Department of English Strategic Initiative I: Enriching Educational Experiences to Enable Student Success**

- Count the number of graduate degrees granted
- Assess amount and quality of writing by undergraduates
- Track graduate and (to the extent possible) undergraduate students after graduation

**Department of English Strategic Initiative II: Serving Society through Creativity, Expanded Research, and Innovations**

- Track faculty publication
- Count the number of grants and awards received
- Assess the number of faculty in relation to the university’s five goals to advance our research mission

**Department of English Strategic Initiative III: Ensuring Access and Affordability**

- Compare enrollments in morning, afternoon, evening, weekend, and online classes with previous years.
- Track the number of students receiving scholarships and other financial support, noting the amount they receive.

**Department of English Strategic Initiative IV: Serving the Public through Community Engagement**

- Collect data from annual reports on participation in community outreach.
- Determine the number and quality of events and exhibits annually; number of attendees; and the degree of public and professional recognition and publicity garnered through these departmental activities.

7. Call to Action and Accountability for the Department of English

For our Strategic Plan to be successful, we must follow through to incorporate the Department of English’s initiatives into our everyday management, operations, and decision-
making. The intent of UTSA is to operate as an integrated whole, with each element and component contributing to the University mission and vision, collaboratively and in a holistic fashion. This approach will transform the institution and allow us to achieve our short and long-term goals. Thus, we will become a catalyst and crucible for promoting diversity, advancing globalization, and training the leaders of the future. We will invite and involve all stakeholders—including, faculty, staff, students, and the broader community—to contribute to our mission and benefit from the innovative change we seek to implement. This approach reflects the notion of citizenship imbedded in our statements of mission, vision, and core values. Citizenship in its truest sense involves a shared responsibility and contribution to the welfare of our entire community.