

June 30, 2020

**PROFESSOR YINGJIN ZHANG, Chair**  
**Department of Music**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for Literature

Dear Professor Zhang,

At its June 12, 2020 meeting, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) discussed the Department of Literature's 2020 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review committee and thanks the Department for their response. UGC found Dean Della Coletta's response particularly helpful in addressing concrete actions that will be taken to address concerns raised by the report and the Department. The Council's comments centered on the following:

*Workload inequity*

The Council feels the need to reiterate the importance of exploring the workload inequity within the Department, and congratulates the Department on steps already taken through the Teaching Equity Committee. We hope that this work continues and produces tangible results.

*Faculty hiring*

Though there is currently a hiring freeze due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council stresses the importance of the Department's plans to hire an LSOE in Spanish in 2020-2021. More generally, we would concur with the Dean's assessment that addressing the very real structural problems around language instruction will require further hiring and more institutional investment at higher levels than seems likely.

*Morale*

It is clear that there may be discrepancies between the morale portrayed to the review committee and the morale that exists within the Department. The Council is encouraged by Dean Della Coletta's statement that the Department's future move to the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood will provide an excellent opportunity for community building, morale boosting, and a renewed and collective sense of accountability and participation.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Spring Quarter 2021. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review committee and the Undergraduate Council. We look forward to hearing about the progress made by the Teaching Equity Committee, the progress on hiring an LSOE in Spanish, and the move to the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Anthony Burr, Chair  
Undergraduate Council

Attachment

(1) Undergraduate Program Review Report and Response for Literature

cc: S. Constable  
M. Corr  
C. Della Coletta  
J. Moore  
R. Rodriguez  
M. Sidney  
J. Teranes

## Review Committee Report

### UGC Literature Departmental Review, March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020

FAO UGC Chair Prof Anthony Burr

#### Introduction

The Literature Department at UCSD encompasses education in writing, literatures, languages, and cultures, with multiple majors offered. The department currently offers four undergraduate majors: Literatures in English, Literatures in Spanish, Literature/Creative Writing, and World Literature and Culture. World Literature and Culture is a newly approved major formed in the consolidation of the previous 11 majors, as recommended by the last Review Committee. This new major merges previously small majors that attracted from zero to a dozen students (e.g., French, German, Italian, Russian, Literatures of the World, Cultural Studies, and the Composite Major).

Partly due to a national trend of decreasing humanities majors and partly due to UCSD's student demographics, the total number of Literature undergraduate majors dropped to 233 in spring 2015. By fall 2019, however, the number had recovered to 347. Over half of these majors (54.2%) are concentrated in Literature/Writing, with 188 students enrolled as of fall 2019. The second largest major is English, with 99 students or 28.5% of total Literature majors. English is the only discipline that is visible in the US News & World Report's graduate school rankings of best English programs (#42 in 2019). It has maintained such national visibility with approximately 15 English faculty. By comparison, peer institutions usually have 50 or so faculty in an English department. At the beginning of Fall 2019, the department had 42 ladder-rank faculty, down 17.6% from 51 in 2011. Despite such a decrease, the faculty has managed to either increase its national rankings (Creative Writing) or maintained them steadily (English), thus contributing to the UCSD's overall #28 ranking in Arts & Humanities per US News & World Report's 2019 Global University Rankings. The department is currently requesting seven new FTEs in a range of areas.

The Department serves the University as one of the few units offering upper-division courses for students of languages. Literature faculty teach writing in the Department as well as in several of the colleges. Students from all over campus also take offerings from the Cultural Studies sections to fulfill diversity requirements. Some of its classes are extremely popular, with, for example, upper-division Asian film classes regularly attracting ~400 students per class. Teaching evaluations are generally extremely positive both for Literature courses and their instructors.

This review found that some major problems identified in the last review had been comprehensively addressed, although others persisted. In particular, the departmental curriculum has undergone comprehensive overhaul, as recommended by the previous review committee, and by all accounts to great success. The size and complexity of this undertaking should be acknowledged and its success lauded. However, the problems of workload, communication, and morale largely remained evident in the current review, as well as a few of the problems stemming from the complicated relationship between Linguistics and Literature on the matter of language instruction. It should be noted at the outset, however, that these morale problems do not seem to be filtering down to the students, who are overall, at least going by CAPE reviews, extremely happy with their courses and instructors.

### **A1. Strengths of the current operation of the Program.**

The consolidation of the majors has facilitated a clearer administrative structure for the department, with four section heads now corresponding to each of the majors. Undergraduates now understand more clearly where to go for subject-specific advising. We would like to point out right away, however, that the website has not kept pace with the changes: the 'Majors' page continues to list the previous 11 majors (<https://literature.ucsd.edu/ugrad/major/index.html>). This needs to be addressed right away. WE would also like to point out that there seems to be no consistent term used for the 'Writing' major, which is sometimes (including in official documents) referred to as 'Writing', sometimes 'Literature / Writing', sometimes 'Literature / Creative Writing', etc.

There are also several positive initiatives currently underway aimed at mitigating the morale problem. The faculty retreats, instigated by the previous chair and continued by the current one, are also proving highly constructive. The faculty report feeling energized after these meetings, and they have had some ongoing impact. For example, new committees such as the Faculty Equity Committee have emerged as result of them.

### **A2. Weaknesses of the current operation of the Program.**

As was noted in the last review, the source of the program's strengths are also often the cause of its weaknesses. Literature is a large, heterogenous department, and while this means it encompasses a number of related disciplines and fields, it also embodies competing concerns and its overall structure is difficult to navigate by almost all concerned. The operational structure is further complicated, moreover, because the first year of instruction in most languages is outsourced to Linguistics, while instruction in others remains in-house. In addition, the remainder of language instruction is performed by non-Senate faculty who are not, and it transpires largely cannot, be involved in decision-making in a straightforward way. The Department thus finds itself in the difficult position of being a 'guardian' of languages on campus, but without the ability to maintain full control of this purview. What is more, even where it can maintain control, it has often found it difficult to do so without alienating central parties (such as non-Senate faculty, on which more below). Overall we found that the department is marked by low morale, and something of a culture of suspicion between faculty and staff.

One principal root of the morale problem seems to be that faculty generally feel overworked. Evidence suggests that they are correct to feel this way. Literature has one of the highest teaching loads in the university, with ladder-rank faculty being expected to teach 4/5 in any two-year period. As far as we know, only Theater has a similarly heavy requirement. Further, four courses must be taught in any year in which a quarter of sabbatical is taken. Some faculty members remarked that such an ungenerous requirement was not befitting an R1 institution. We agree. Faculty also reported that substantial service obligations were not adequately compensated by teaching relief. For example, the position of Director of Graduate Studies, a two-year position, was rewarded with only a single course release, with the additional caveat that that course release may not be taken concurrently with the role (which is, frankly, illogical, as such release is intended to compensate work done at the time the position is held). This compares unfavorably with other departments on campus. In Philosophy, for example, there is a course release given per year of service as DGS and this release is taken concurrently with the role. The same is true in departments with similarly sized graduate programs in other University of California divisions. In the departmental response to the last review it was stated that the Chair was considering a policy of allowing a significant service role to count as half a course per year, or one

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

over two years; unless there was previously no service relief whatsoever, it sounds as if this was not implemented.

Compounding this core morale problem is that many faculty feel overworked relative to others within the department. All parties concede that some uneven distribution of workload is simply unavoidable given the nature of the subjects taught and the department's ambition to provide a varied and comprehensive education within it. Those teaching large student courses in Asian film, for example, can expect significantly more student emails per day than those teaching seminars in Chaucer. Part of the reason for this unevenness lies in facts about changing student demographics and interests over which the department has no control. But the numbers here can nevertheless be striking. As noted in the departmental self-evaluation, one faculty member taught 10 undergraduate students over three years while another taught 515 in a single year. (It should be noted also that seven faculty in Literature/Creative Writing are responsible for half the majors.) Connected to workload inequities related to undergraduate education is the fact that some faculty have substantially more opportunity to teach graduate courses than others. The departmental policy is that a faculty member should expect to teach no more than one graduate course in a two-year period. Even this is conditional on enrollment. But some in in-demand fields and sub-fields were teaching a graduate course a year. Although graduate teaching is usually considered desirable and, in fact, fundamental to the mission of a research university, it should be noted that the uneven distribution of graduate teaching and the graduate mentoring that normally goes with it also has a relevant downside in terms of workload. Even some junior faculty in in-demand areas were on up to eleven dissertation committees.

As noted, some workload inequity is simply inevitable. Some of those with whom we spoke even went so far as suggesting that all that is needed is for those who are not impacted to show 'sympathy' toward those who are. But this attitude is not universally shared, and, as noted above, there have been efforts to better quantify these inequities and if possible mitigate them. These are charges specific to the recently formed Faculty Equity Committee. This committee, however, reports being hampered in its efforts by a lack of clarity on what the official policies, as opposed to merely long-standing practices, of the department are. Without this information they cannot make recommendations around real institutional—as opposed to merely presumed—constraints. They have reported a lack of cooperation by the MSO, who they describe as at times dismissive and even obstructive of their efforts to find policy formally codified somewhere. We should take this opportunity to remark that several other faculty members, and independently of this particular issue, described the relationship between the MSO and the faculty as 'unproductive and adversarial.'

An issue that was repeatedly raised in connection with overwork was the departmental practice of automatically requesting caps on courses to be lifted if the course has a waitlist. This practice is contributing not only to real increases in workload but also to a sense of diminished faculty control over their time and instructional responsibilities. For example, one faculty member found themselves in the position of having to mark 60 papers a week, given how the enrollments of their classes intersected with reader thresholds, when they had not allocated time for this in their quarter planning. When we pressed the MSO on the status of this policy, she said that it was policy that the executive committee had decided on a couple of years ago, although it would probably be hard to dig up the relevant minutes. In any case, she added, the matter was now out of the department's hands, as lifting caps in this manner was now mandated by the EVC. This sounded strange to our ears, as it is not policy in either Philosophy (where the default is not to lift caps without professor's permission) or History (where the default is to increase, but faculty always have right of refusal). Further factors were

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

cited in connection to lack of faculty control and administrative overreach: for example, a decision by administrative staff that a student dissertation written in Spanish was not eligible for a departmental award. This decision, though overturned, was seen as a prime example of staff involving themselves in matters of an academic nature.

In the course of our discussion, the Committee uncovered several factors that we believe are contributing to this perception that the administrative staff are uncooperative or even secretive with respect to the distinction between practice and policy that seems to lie at the heart of so many concerns. The first is that attendance at faculty meetings is generally poor, with at most 2/3 in attendance even for a hiring decision; reportedly about 25% of faculty rarely reply to emails. While some of this comportment is not entirely surprising given the breadth of interests within the department, some were adamant that the perception of a lack of democratic accountability was rooted in a lack of individual participation. The second is that minutes of meetings are not distributed among faculty. While the Committee had some difficulty determining what exactly the practice was, it seemed that meeting minutes were regarded as largely confidential, were not generally distributed, and that faculty had to request to access them (and without, it seems, any guarantee that the request would be granted). The Committee objected that if this is the case, then the documents concerned are not strictly speaking 'minutes,' which in principle have to be affirmed by those present at the meeting; they are rather the Chair's and MSO's account of what had been discussed. In any case, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that this somewhat unusual practice surrounding departmental records was contributing to the general culture of suspicion. Thirdly – and we believe very importantly — it became clear that the MSO and her office were themselves highly overworked, having been two staff-members down over the last couple of years and working without either a graduate or undergraduate advisor. (A new undergraduate advisor was hired just two weeks prior to the review.) As such, it is not at all surprising that the MSO had only limited resources to contribute to requests for tangible evidence that a long-standing practice has its roots in a formal decision that was perhaps made decades ago.

At this point, we turn to a matter that emerged as a distinct weakness of the current operation of the department: the fact that it has little control over the content of first-year language courses, which are outsourced to Linguistics. Further, the department has diminished control over the intermediate-level language instruction as this is almost exclusively the charge of non-Senate faculty. The major problem that we see posed by the former issue is continuity between the first-year and intermediate curricula, and therefore we postpone discussion of this to Section B2. The latter issue is more organizational, and so we will go into some detail about it here.

The background is that almost all language courses in the department are taught by Unit 18 lecturers, that is, Non-Senate Faculty (NSF). The one exception is a Senate faculty member who occasionally teaches LTGK1. Most of this teaching is at non-introductory levels, as introductory courses are outsourced to Linguistics; Latin, Greek, Russian, and Korean, however, are housed in Literature from start to finish. Lecturers undertaking language instruction for the department report feeling left out of the decision-making that has gone into the overhaul of the majors, and that they often hear about changes that affect them simply through 'word of mouth' or even directly through the course catalogue (e.g., in the case of an upper division Latin course that was cancelled). As an example of how they can be left out of deliberation on matters of consequence to them, they reported that some were recently told to attend a meeting on the restructuring of the 2a-2e sequence which was initially presented to them as a 'consultation' meeting; on the day, however, it was repackaged as an 'information' meeting in which the proposed changes were simply reported to them. They report

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

feeling sidelined and isolated in the department in general. This was in fact the first time that many of them had met. They further informed us that there had been more 'give and take' with the previous Chair, who ran a quarterly meeting with the lecturers and that the current chair had abolished this practice. When asked what would enhance their quality of their working life, one replied simply 'Respect,' and this was met with wide assent.

It strikes the Committee that the situation is more complicated than either side presents it. The current Chair abolished the meeting because it turned out that it was in contradiction with the union contract, which prohibits them from being forced to attend anything not pedagogy related without extra compensation. If this is so, the termination of the quarterly meetings by the Chair is understandable. Moreover, the department is aware of the problem, and indeed one of their proposed 7 FTE is an LSOE in Spanish, part of whose contract will be to act as an academic liaison between Senate and non-Senate faculty for the language in question and in a way compatible with the union contract. Admittedly, the Committee was unclear as to why it was that the Unit-18 lecturers could be invited to an information meeting – indeed, invited to this Review meeting – but in principle could not be invited to relevant program meetings. However, what is certain is that the problem of communication between the broader department and these crucial members of it is one of which the department is aware. While departmental leadership is taking measures to mitigate this problem with regard to some languages at least, more needs to be done.

A further issue that deserves mention concerning the practice of using Unit 18 lecturers for language instruction is the converse of the above – namely, that the department has little control over, or even awareness of, the content of its language classes. Anecdotally, we were told that upon the retirements of some Unit 18 lecturers, the department has sometimes learned that the methodology and textbooks used were some 30-years old and widely regarded as outdated; and in the case of a recent and untimely death, it was found that there was no departmental record of the syllabi or textbooks used, with a resulting scramble to maintain continuity. Some of this seems again somewhat unavoidable given the nature of the Unit 18 contract. Nonetheless, it did seem to the reviewers that there is much room for improvement here.

A final issue that deserves note is that since 2015 the department has lost five Unit 18 lecturers with continuing appointments and whose salaries were entirely funded by the campus (2 in Creative Writing, 1 in English, and 2 in Classics). Replacing instructors in these courses requires the hiring of temporary lecturers, who are paid for out of the department's own carryforward funds. This is not sustainable in the long run. Since a significant proportion of students taking these courses are not Literature majors, this also means that the department is paying out of pocket for students housed in other departments.

### **B1 Analysis of strengths of the curriculum**

A major achievement of the department since the last review has been its curricular reform, a multi-year process formally begun in fall 2015 and fully implemented beginning fall 2018. This process involved 2 major steps: (1) revising the secondary language and some elective requirements (approved by the Academic Senate for implementation beginning Fall 2017); and (2) reducing the number of majors offered from 11 to 4 (approved by the Academic Senate for implementation beginning fall 2018). The first step brought the department more into line with comparable institutions. The second step was a significant streamlining of the major offerings, which are now the following: Creative Writing, Literatures in Spanish, Literatures in English, and World Literature and Culture. This

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

streamlining has made the selection of majors far easier for students to navigate and assists with annual curriculum planning. The reorganization of the majors, moreover, in the view of the present review committee, seems to largely address concerns expressed in the prior review about low enrollments in some of the language-based majors.

Almost everyone described consolidation as an extremely positive move. Administrators reported that it has helped with student morale, with the students now feeling more of a 'collective.' Faculty have found it easier to predict what courses they can expect to teach, partly because there are fewer classes with perilously low enrollments. The revised language requirement is also seen as a positive by almost everyone. Overall the Committee judged that whatever may have been lost in the consolidation was more than compensated for by what has been gained. For example, Italian literature is now universally taught in translation. While this is doubtless a loss in certain respects, the change has also meant that other students in the department, e.g., those in English and Creative Writing, can now take Italian literature classes for both edification and credit. This wider presence of Literature students in a variety of world literature classes was reported as a positive outcome by all.

A fairly recent and constructive addition to the curriculum is a course entitled 'Careers for Literature Majors.' This course has been running for three years, and although listed as a senior seminar, the faculty member convening the class regularly emails all students confirming that any Literature major will be admitted. Together with the new 'Careers' tab on the website, this course helps address the recommendation made by the prior review committee that more should be done to help Literature majors gain a sense of their career prospects.

We note also the existence of a nascent 'Assessment Committee' whose aim is to help faculty better articulate what they take to be the central learning objectives associated with their courses. The actions of this committee are temporarily on hold, as the committee is formed collaboratively with a member of the Center for Engaged Teaching who is currently on medical leave. Notwithstanding, the 'Assessment Committee' struck us as a very positive development with respect to goal of providing students with a clear account of the learning objectives and core competencies associated with the current curriculum.

### **B2 Analysis of the weaknesses of the curriculum**

Four main curricular weaknesses strike the Committee as noteworthy. The first is the issue of continuity in language instruction between the departments of Literature and Linguistics. The second is some irregularity in language instruction in Spanish, combined with what seem to be some missed opportunities with respect to the Spanish program. The third is the issue of class size in Creative Writing. The fourth is the issue of TA support in upper-division courses.

#### 1. Cross-Divisional Continuity

UCSD is unusual in that instruction in most languages taught at UCSD is distributed across two departments located in two different divisions. Perhaps unsurprisingly this causes challenges of educational organization, accessibility, and continuity. It seems that the very fact of this set-up remains a source of concern and even resentment for some within Literature. For example, since students tend to follow teachers, some interpreted the fact that language instruction tends to begin outside of Literature, where the advanced classes are taught, as an expression of a lack of commitment by this



## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

institution to advanced language instruction in general. However, most seemed accepting of the general set-up and wanted only to minimize the particular problems it causes.

Chief among these problems is an apparent lack of continuity as students progress from the introductory classes 1a-1d taught in Linguistics to the first of the advanced level courses 2a-2e in Literature. The relevant background here is that 1d is designed as a terminal course, while either 1c or 1d qualify a student to be admitted to 2a. The content of 1d substantially overlaps with that of 2a in Spanish, French, and German (students in Italian will proceed straight from 1c to 2a). Two colleges, Revelle and ERC, require four quarters of language instruction as part of their college requirements. Taken together this means that those who want to continue to intermediate-level language instruction in Spanish, French or German but – perhaps simply by force of inertia – complete their four required courses in Linguistics will find themselves essentially duplicating a course. It strikes us that this is largely just an advising issue, but things here are not helped by the fact that students reportedly don't know where to look for any of this information. (For example, it is unclear even whether it is housed somewhere on the Linguistics or the Literature website, and we ourselves could not find it.)

As well as this problem of continuity manifested as 'duplication,' a different issue is that course 1c in Linguistics does not seem to be preparing students adequately for 2a in Literature, or such is the perception among many in the latter department. Two TAs in Spanish agreed that students enrolling with only 1c behind them were struggling from the beginning – something likely exacerbated by the fact that other students in the class would have taken 1d (perhaps because they were not advised that this course was terminal), and hence had already covered the material. All in all, they remarked that teaching 2a in Spanish made for a very difficult classroom dynamic. Importantly, the general sentiment that Linguistics was not adequately preparing students for 2a in Literature was echoed by the Unit 18 lecturers teaching French and German at the intermediate level. In addition, we heard about certain other curricular discontinuities, such as that the 'Heritage Korean' course 115, taught in Linguistics, was actually easier than 2a Korean course in Literature. Several members of the department noted independently that part of the problem here is that Literature has no say in whether AP credits, for example, will be accepted for credit at the 1a-1d level. Without clear standards for a placement test, it was felt that an (unhelpfully) broad range of abilities in language classes was somewhat inevitable.

A final lack of continuity – though here the issue is again one of 'duplication' – was that Linguistics is preparing a 'Beginning Spanish for Heritage Speakers' course, while Literature already offers a 'Heritage Speakers' course. This was presented as a further example of the lack of communication between the two departments on their course content, but also as an example of problems within the Spanish program that will need to be addressed as part of UCSD's efforts to become a 'Hispanic-serving institution' (on which see below).

In sum, given the cross-divisional complexities of language instruction at UCSD, it seems there needs to be a conversation about how to create a more seamless transition from 1c to 2a in several languages; about how best to communicate to students the different intentions behind 1d and 2a; and about how to maximize the course offerings available to UCSD students by minimizing unnecessary duplication across the two departments.

### 2. Spanish

Two main issues here seem worthy of foregrounding. The first is that there is a feeling that unique opportunities are being lost at UCSD and that they ought to be cultivated instead in order for the campus to succeed in its ambitions of becoming a ‘Hispanic-serving institution’ (one criterion of which is that 25% of students identify as Latinx). For some context here, UCSD currently has 30 majors in Spanish, while Cal State St. Marcos has 200. As an R1 institution in a unique transborder location, it is hard not to see this disparity and the lack of commitment it suggests as disheartening. Boosting writing resources in Spanish is seen as potentially an important step towards this goal.

A further obstacle to realizing the full potential of the curriculum in Spanish is the quality of instruction in Spanish. In fact, it seems to be something of an ‘open secret’ within the department that some of the TAs the language are ill-equipped to do so. (For example, we were told that recently an orientation meeting had to take place in English because there was one TA present who could not keep up with the conversation in Spanish.) The roots of the problem here seem to be the unusual practice of hiring Spanish TAs on 35% contracts and that overall there is a shortage of appropriately skilled and trained TAs. Given that tuition remission and benefits only apply at 50%, this means that the department has to work hard to ensure that an average of 50% is taught in any given academic year. But it also means that it is difficult to recruit other well-qualified PhD students, for example from History or Social Science, into these roles and instead the department must recruit Non-Student Teachers or master’s students from the School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), for example, who are often not the best qualified. As a result of these various factors, the quality of Spanish teaching in the department has been compromised, and this even though there have been qualified TAs who wanted the work. The TAs themselves are very frustrated by the arrangement and how hard it is to make ends meet, especially when they are (apparently) generally also the ‘instructor of record’ on the course with full responsibility for maintaining Canvas, etc. Along with the faculty, the TAs also complained about the scheduling ‘rigidity’ that results from the 35% contract. For example, when a course was waitlisted and some TAs wanted the work, they were told that ‘the percentages will never change’ and thus a new section could not be opened up. Some undergraduates were forced to enroll for an extra quarter as a result of this decision, and the fact that ‘such a reasonable request was refused’ was quoted as part of the reason why a ladder-rank faculty member recently separated early.

It is our understanding that the practice of hiring TAs on 35% contracts will have to end as part of a campus-wide policy, so much of this will perhaps be moot. But as one faculty member put it the ‘devil is in the details here’. In any case, both the TAs and the faculty feel that the lack of flexibility of TA allocation in response to fluctuations in need goes beyond this constraint, and so this change of policy will not be a total panacea.

### 3. Creative Writing

It was remarked in the last review that class size in Creative Writing courses was a problem, and we found that little had changed in the interim. Creating writing cannot be taught effectively in a class of 23 (the current cap for creative writing seminars; note that the departmental policy of automatically lifting caps is not applied here). We note that the Association of Writers and Writing Programs recommends that creative writing classes be capped at 15. While this might seem ‘aspirational’ for a large public university, we would point out that both UCLA and UCI are largely in conformity with this guideline. For example, at UCI upper-division introductory writing workshops are capped at 16 and advanced workshops at 12. These caps are both down from 18 and 16 respectively in 2018. At

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

UCLA both writing and poetry workshops are capped at 13. An important disanalogy between these institutions and UCSD, however, is that neither UCLA nor UCI offers a major in Creative Writing. Given this difference, it is not entirely surprising that there is additional pressure to provide a sufficient number of seats for majors and thus to raise caps at UCSD (where 7 faculty in Creative Writing teach a major with approximately 50% of the department's students). Nevertheless, faculty in the program clearly feel that the student experience is being compromised: teaching feels more like 'triage' work than 'competitive teaching,' and instructors have been forced to move to small-group models where there is no real 'expert.' As already noted, Literature students seem generally very happy with their courses and with their professors. But as we all know, students make their evaluations from a very limited perspective, and there is reason to think that the education they are receiving in their individual creative writing classes falls short of comparable institutions.

The Department has proposed two out of their seven proposed new FTEs in the area of Creative Writing. This will take the total number of Writing faculty to nine. Obviously, this will help ease the strain of teaching 188 majors (to cite the current number) with such intensive needs. Nonetheless, it is hard to see how the quality of instruction can be significantly improved without a lower cap on enrollments.

### 4. Readers and TAs

There is some confusion and frustration over the policy of TA/Reader assistance in large upper-division classes. At the moment, upper-division classes of above 40 are entitled to a reader (and more as the class passes increments of 40), but none other than the large Asian film classes are allowed a TA (the crucial difference being that the TA must attend classes whereas Readers cannot be required to do so; there are no sections associated with any upper-division courses). It was felt that given the nature of most and perhaps all of the classes taught in Literature, it is essential that everyone with responsibility for grading to attend classes. Some faculty reported having to assign multiple choice tests, for example, instead of more proper writing assignments because a Reader would lack the necessary context to grade papers fairly and helpfully. The Committee was given to understand that TAs were permitted in the large Asian film classes because of problems of student discipline posed by the sheer size of the class. Faculty, however, are understandably unsure why an exception can be made in this case and not in other upper-division courses, especially since instructional quality is being compromised as a result. The graduate students noted also that they were keen to TA in the department, as it was seen both as less onerous than teaching in the colleges, more intellectually stimulating, and more relevant to their professional development. If more resources to hire TAs is forthcoming, there would likely be no shortage of available labor.

Finally, worth noting with respect to the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum overall is how the Department integrates transfer students into its majors given current curricular requirements. It seems that there have been some very positive developments here: for example, a new PATH initiative applied to the 21 most popular majors across the UCs resulted in some very clear criteria for English students (although only to English students) as to which 6 courses must be taken at college to guarantee a degree in that subject at any UC within 2 years. Our (admittedly limited) understanding is that this PATH initiative was a pilot, and we hope that something similar may happen to other majors offered by the Department. One more problematic issue that faces transfer students in majors other than English is that of completing language requirements in the two-year period they plan to be at UCSD. The new language requirements mean that six quarters of instruction are required to

complete Spanish, for example, while only three quarters are needed for Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. This can be a problem for transfer students, for whom it is very difficult to schedule six classes to fulfill a language requirement. Thus, those who may have a background in Spanish, for example, will generally end up choosing Latin or Greek and not their first-choice language. The Department ought to reflect on the implications of this odd disparity, particularly for UCSD's ambitions to become a Hispanic-serving institution.

### **C. An analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the department in the context of campus and University policies**

One clear strength of the Department is in its contribution to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mission of the university both in its composition of faculty and in its course offerings. All seven recent faculty hires were underrepresented minorities / women, and the department continues to emphasize diversity as a focal point both of its three current searches (Chicanx Studies, Latin American Gender and Sexuality – Southern Cone, and Mediterranean Studies – Latin) and of the new FTE proposals submitted to the UCSD Three Year Faculty Growth Plans. Regarding courses, the Department offers 13 DEI courses, making it the third most active contributor at the department level to the satisfaction of the DEI requirement. However, as suggested by the Undergraduate Council in the 2013 review, several programs and minors previously housed in Literature (such as the Chicano/a Latino/a Arts and Humanities minor and the Third World Studies program) have been moved into the new Institute for Arts and Humanities, and although the Program for the Study of Religion will also migrate there, that process is not yet complete and it remains the sole program still housed in Literature. We would add, however, that faculty in Literature continue to be active collaborators (and sometimes directors) in these and other programs, such as Classical Studies, Japanese Studies, and Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES). Literature TAs also mostly work in the college programs.

The ways in which the department is impacted by enrollment policies cannot be assessed by this Committee without a better understanding of what those policies are. As noted above, this is a matter that is under investigation by the Equity Committee, and the implications here have already been outlined.

Regarding facilities, some TAs reported some inadequate classrooms. In particular, the rooms of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of literature were too small for language classes, which are capped at 25, as there is inadequate seating. Sometimes chairs are brought in, adding a further hazard to rooms that appear to be occupied over and above their maximum seating capacity and are thus out of compliance with safety regulations. We also heard that room WLH 2110 had no functioning wifi or projector during the fall, meaning that TAs were unable to do their jobs given that the course content is online. Eventually they were transferred to an adequate space, but much instructional time was wasted.

Another issue the TAs wanted reported was the way that campus-wide initiatives to reduce contract cheating were affecting their workload. The recommendation is that TAs look at notes and drafts prior to the submission of assessed work: more specifically, that a 25% TA gives 2 iterations of process feedback on 5 short papers of 4-5 pages, of which there are ~25 per class. In workload equivalent this is going from 2 to 5 assessed papers. Thus, while this recommendation is well-intentioned, it should be acknowledged that it is placing additional strain on TAs and that it ought to be compensated.

**C. Recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the description and analysis**

1. The Committee recommends that clarity be gained on the extent to which the 4/5 teaching load is negotiable and with whom. It is unclear why this is the standard teaching load in the Department. Input from the Office of Undergraduate Education should be sought.
2. Efforts to increase transparency in decision making should continue. To this end, we recommend that minutes of meetings be approved by vote, generally available, and only in exception circumstances redacted. The department Chair should also update the department handbook every year. The staff should endeavor to explain their decision-making regarding the allocation of TAs, for example, as well as they can and with reference to explicit policies and guidelines.
3. Clarity needs to be sought on the rationale for the current policy regarding enrollments (*viz.*, the automatic requesting of the lifting of caps). If the department does have more freedom in this than currently and communally believed, the lifting of a cap after the beginning of the quarter should be at the discretion of the instructor of record.
4. The culture of suspicion between faculty and administrative staff should be acknowledged and addressed. Faculty need to understand that staff have been over-stretched and appear to be acting in good faith but with limited resources. Staff can go a long way to relieving tensions, moreover, if they can point to policies guiding their decisions, which have at times struck faculty as arbitrary. There should be continued efforts to recruit a graduate advisor and as much support as possible given to the new undergraduate advisor, who presumably faces a large backlog. The move to the new building in Fall 2020 should be embraced as an opportunity for a culture change and a fresh start.
5. The efforts of the new Faculty Equity Committee should be supported by providing them as much information as possible as to workload inequities and the grounds for policies that they judge to exacerbate these inequities. Overall disparities in workload need to be taken seriously by the department and efforts made to mitigate them where possible. A more fine-grained measure of workload than a mere course-load model should be developed. If it turns out that there is flexibility over the 4/5 course-load requirement, the Department should consider whether this might be used in a way that would mitigate some existing workload inequities.
6. Efforts should be reignited to find adequate teaching relief for substantial service roles. The more predictable enrollments and more stable curriculum resulting from the successful consolidation of the majors should prove helpful in this connection.
7. The distinction between 2a and 1d courses in French, German and Spanish needs to be made clearer to the students, both in advisory contexts and by better foregrounding on the website. The department should reach out to the relevant advisors at Revelle and ERC in particular.
8. There should be more open lines of communication between Linguistics and Literature with regard to the language curriculum. For instance, perhaps the Department can have a designated representative who meets once a year with a correspondent in Linguistics.

## UGC Literature Departmental Review March 2020

9. Efforts need to be made to increase the coordination between Senate faculty and Unit 18 lecturers. The proposal for a new LSOE in Spanish, part of whose job will be academic coordination, is a positive step here, but other languages require similar administrative oversight. The Committee would like it to be noted that a common model in language and composition across UC is to have some Unit 18 lecturers have one or more course releases to do academic coordination. For example, in Chinese studies at UCSD, 25% of salary is coordination and curricular development. Moreover, this portion of salary is not covered by the union contract, which means that the coordinator would be able both to attend to attend meetings with the chair and other departmental administrators and call meetings of Unit 18 teaching staff. In any case, it is clear the department has to do something: language programs have been running with no coordination to the detriment of all involved.

10. 35% TAships need to be abolished and replaced with a more standard and sensible arrangement that allows TA recruitment to be competitive and fair. Faculty and TAs should be allowed greater input on where TA resources should be directed.

11. The new LSOE in Spanish should work with PATH (Preparing Accomplished Transfers to Humanities) representatives and the program for Latin American Studies in order to develop a cutting-edge curriculum for incoming Latinx students that is also maximally accessible to transfer students.

12. The department should aim at a reduction in class size in creative writing classes. While still above the ideal, faculty said that around 17 would be a great improvement.

13. The Department should consider whether some Readers can be promoted to TAs to facilitate the assignment of more pedagogically meaningful and contextual tasks to undergraduates and to provide more professional experience for PhD students.

14. The Department website needs to be updated their current roster of majors (specifically, the 'Majors' page in the 'Undergraduate' section), and there should be efforts to standardize the way that the 'Writing' major is referred to.

### Review Committee

Professor, UGC Member and Program Review Chair Kerry McKenzie, UC San Diego

Professor Kuiyi Shen, UC San Diego

Professor James Steintrager, UC Irvine

26<sup>th</sup> March 2020