



College of Arts and Sciences

Institutional Program Review Report to Board of Regents

B.S. in English for Information Systems

Date of Onsite Visit: April 20, 2006

Reviewer: Dr. Patricia Freitag Ericsson, Ph.D.
Assist Professor, Digital Technology and Culture/Technical Communication
Department of English
Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164

Strengths and Limitations Identified by Reviewer

Analysis of Trends in the Discipline

Dr. Patricia Freitag Ericsson, external reviewer for the English for Information Systems (EIS) program, indicated that EIS fits a national trend for more interdisciplinary work in higher education.

Analysis of Academic Programs and Curriculum

Dr. Ericsson noted that one of the main strengths of the EIS program is its versatility. Because of this, it can be used to prepare students for a wide range of career choices. While she recognizes the desire for faculty to update the curriculum, she warned not to lose the incorporation of technology nor the interdisciplinary nature of the degree program.

She also recommended that the curriculum update be overseen by a senior faculty member who should be allowed time and compensation to work on the program.

Analysis of Program Enrollment and Student Placement

The external evaluator recognized a drop in enrollment in the last few years. She suggested that the decline may be due to weakness in recruiting efforts. She suggested that the faculty work with administration and the university's marketing staff to develop a recruitment plan.

Dr. Ericsson indicated that student placement was not a concern.

Analysis of Faculty Credentials

The external reviewer did not address this section in her comments and no concerns were noted.

Analysis of Academic and Financial Support

Dr. Ericsson reported that the program would benefit from additional full-time faculty. In addition, she noted that class size is an issue for quality delivery of a degree program. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) standards for postsecondary composition class size recommends caps between 15 and 20 for 100-level courses and not more than 15 for remedial courses. She also recommended that faculty not teach more than two sections of composition each semester.

Analysis of Facilities and Equipment

The external evaluator reported that current facilities and equipment were adequate.

Analysis of Major Field Assessment

Dr. Ericsson suggested that current assessment activities are not adequate. She recommends that the current portfolio system be evaluated for effectiveness. She also argued that the assessment be locally developed and controlled. She felt that, because of the unique nature of the degree, use of any outside assessment tool would not be advisable.

Analysis of Strategic Planning

Dr. Ericsson suggested that the faculty take the next year to consider changes and update the EIS program. Upon completion of the curriculum changes, she recommended that a five year delivery plan be developed.

Overall Evaluation of the Strengths and Limitations of the Academic Program Being Reviewed

According to Dr. Ericsson, the strengths of the program are excellent placement with employer surveys indicating that the program is valuable. She suggested that the degree's under-enrollment is its greatest weakness, but could be the result of name/identity issues, the need for updated curriculum, and a lack of marketing.

Reviewer's Recommendations for Change

Dr. Ericsson recommended the following changes:

- Update curriculum
- Reconsider degree name
- Provide support for faculty to research and update the curriculum
- Add additional full-time faculty positions to support growth of program
- Utilize assessment data, including graduation and student enrollment numbers
- Technology is excellent, but will need to be re-evaluated and updated periodically for continued integration of newer technology
- Laboratory facilities are adequate; software needs may change and require updates.

Part 2: Institutional Response to Reviewer's Recommendations for Change

Curriculum: *Update curriculum , including reconsidering degree name*

- The EIS faculty has scheduled a special day-long retreat to reconsider the name and identity of the degree; define the career potential, knowledge, skills, and abilities of EIS graduates; and review and revise the curriculum to meet these outcomes.
- The EIS is discussing several ideas to enhance recruitment, including a day-long or summer workshop to bring high school students to the DSU campus to participate in a variety of multimedia activities and to meet and interact with DSU students and faculty.
- The College and the EIS websites are being revised to better explain and market the program.

Faculty Resources: *Provide support for faculty to update process*

- To enable faculty collaboration in the updating process, all EIS faculty will be provided time for a day-long retreat. Any further support will be determined during this process.

Faculty Resources: *Add full-time faculty positions to support growth of program*

- In "Analysis of academic and financial support," Dr. Ericsson notes that EIS faculty may at times be overloaded due to heavy composition teaching loads. She cited research which suggests that enrollment in composition classes should be capped at 15-20 for 100-

level courses and at 15 for remedial classes. The College has accepted that recommendation and will request sufficient FTE to support those enrollment caps.

- Dr. Ericsson also cited research that suggests faculty should teach no more than two composition courses in one semester. While it isn't likely that additional faculty will be hired, a similar outcome can be obtained by having all English faculty share responsibility for teaching composition classes and for teaching the courses in the major. This change would also allow faculty more opportunities to collaborate in course development, resulting in richer and ever improving curricula.
- As a part of curriculum revision discussions during the day-long retreat, the faculty will also analyze the need for additional full-time faculty, based on Ericsson's recommendation that additional full-time faculty be hired with specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to help grow the program, rather than hiring additional, temporary part-time faculty.

Curriculum: *The degree is viable and can grow if the appropriate steps to assure its currency are taken.*

- Dr. Ericsson, in the "Executive Summary of Findings," recommended that the program seek to maintain its interdisciplinary nature. One way of maintaining the interdisciplinary aspect of the program would be to expand the social science element of the program by adding curriculum that addresses the sociological and psychological effects/impact of new media, as well as new communication demands and opportunities. This will be further explored at the EIS retreat.
- In addition, Dr. Ericsson noted in "Academic Program Evaluation" that, as the curriculum is updated, the student assessment process must be revisited. She recommended that assessment continue to be locally developed and controlled and that "curriculum development and assessment processes proceed hand-in-glove." Therefore, the issue of assessment portfolios, particularly the difference between student assessment, program evaluation, and professional portfolios, will be also be discussed at the EIS retreat, with the goal of recommendation a new plan of action relative to student and program assessment.

Student enrollment and completion: *Student enrollment is low, but items above suggest ways in which that issue can be remedied. No data about completion was provided, nor was this an issue identified for consideration in this review.*

- The EIS faculty will request the completion and placement data from the DSU Assessment Office to inform curriculum and recruitment decisions. This remains a concern and will continue to be a focus for EIS faculty discussions. Currently, the faculty are considering a day-long workshop for high school students, improvements to the English Department website, creation of publications that maintain the spirit of the DSU website and convey the vitality of our program.

Technology integration: *This element is excellent. As the degree is updated, even more technological integration may be considered.*

- To maintain the level of excellence noted by Dr. Ericsson, faculty intend to continue, as an ongoing activity, to integrate technology into EIS classes and to be leaders in the region and in their disciplines in effective integration of technology.

Faculty numbers and background: *Faculty backgrounds are excellent. Faculty numbers need to be increased to support the program.*

- As mentioned above, the faculty will discuss the reviewer's staffing recommendations during their retreat. If new faculty are needed, the recruitment focus should be on identifying skill/knowledge/abilities needed both to support and to grow the program.

Laboratory facilities: *Computing lab facilities appear to be adequate. Software needs may change and require updates, especially as the degree is updated.*

- A new software program that is increasingly being used in industry, Adobe InDesign, has been purchased and faculty will be trained in its use during a two-day workshop in Fall 2006. Specialized computing lab facilities and appropriate software for technical writing, desktop publishing, web design, and multimedia applications will be maintained and supported by the College of Arts and Sciences.