Dakota State University Program Review
30 April 2024

Academic Program Review: Bachelor of Science Degree Program in English: *English for New Media, English,* and *Digital Content Creation.*

College Offering Program: *College of Arts and Sciences*

Institution: *Dakota State University*

On-site visit: 15 April 2024

External Reviewer: Dr. Robert E. Kibler, Professor of Literature and Humanities, Minot State University

Executive Summary of Findings

The Program in English at Dakota State University is a strong one. It has talented and engaged faculty committed to making sustained and positive contributions to students in the major and students at DSU overall. The Program consistently shows a nimble approach to curricular challenges and consistently addresses the threat of low student numbers. Its program in Assessment is second to none, and it closes the Assessment Loop each academic year. It is a confident and fearless faculty, used to dealing with external stressors, but diligent in its efforts to continually improve, adjust, and accommodate, always seeking a positive way to increase student numbers and contribute to the overall institutional mission. To this end, it has marvelously integrated technology with literary and critical content and continually refines the kind and level of integration in its search to serve the institutional mission. If one approach does not work, the DSU English Faculty ready for another. And always, high academic standards for themselves and their students govern their actions. They constitute a valuable asset to the University overall, and if given space to work, will prove even more valuable yet as time passes.

There are some clear challenges for them beyond low student numbers. The number of students in their Composition courses remains too high to be effective; their footprint on the university campus and in the community too limited, and their overall faculty number is stressed with Dr. Berry's promotion to a Deanship. She must be replaced if the Program in English is to implement its new curriculum and start up a new path forward.

Dr. Robert E. Kibler

Schedule of On-Site Visit

English On-site Program Review
Monday, April 15, 2024
Robert Kibler, Minot State University
8:00 Dr. Blessinger will walk Dr. Kibler to Heston Hall 309
8:15-8:45 Provost Hoey/Associate Dean Berry – Heston Hall 309
9:00-9:30 Jeanette McGreevy-Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Policy
https://dsu.zoom.us/j/96833867415 - Heston Hall 309 - Haley Larson will pick up
10:00-10:30 Sarah Rasmussen-Director of Online Education – Karl Mundt Library 204 - Haley Larson will pick up
10:30-12:00 Free Time – Science Center 132
12:00-1:00 Lunch with English faculty, Science Center 132 – Dr. Berry, Dr. Blessinger, Dr. Larson
1:00-2:00 English faculty, Science Center 133
2:00-2:45 English majors, Science Center 133
3:00-3:30 Campus Tour – Mr. Richardson (pick up in Science Center 133 and bring back to Beadle Hall)
4:00-4:45 Provost Hoey/Associate Dean Berry/Dr. Justin Blessinger – Heston Hall 309
Driving from North Dakota

Reservations at Best Western Plus Lakeview Hotel, 456 SE 12th St, Madison – April 14 & 15
Confirmation: #LH10074545500 (Phone 605-427-2110)

Program Evaluation

Program Goals and Strategic Planning and Program Goals Relative to Institutional Mission

The Program in English is currently revising its goals in keeping with the institutional mission. In 2020 it created two tracks—the traditional *English Education* track, and the *English-New Media* Track. After only two years, the state expressed concerns that enrollment goals were not being met through the program change. So the Program is revising its revision, mostly based on the reality that the national trend continues to move away from the study of English Literature, despite the analytic and conceptualizing skills associated with it being valued in the general workplace. As part of the program changes, English cut its curriculum from requiring 90 credits in the major to 51 credits for English and from 90 to 80 credits for English Education. It also created a new interdisciplinary major, *Digital Content Creation* along with a revamped and disciplined traditional program in *English Literature*.

There is the great hope that the new name will resonate with those creating marketing and promotion materials, to help boost enrollments. It is further hoped that the lean major in *English Literature* will benefit in an ancillary way from the effective marketing of the *Digital Content Creation* major. DSU faculty in the Program in *Digital Content Creation, English Literature*, and *English Education* clearly understand and are responding to market trends in strategic ways. They have their finger on the pulse of trends.

It is all about increasing the footprint, and on campus, English faculty are facilitating student work designed to this end. The DSU literary magazine *New Tricks* appears in print and online, and the student newspaper, *The Trojan Times,* likewise serves the entire student body online. Together, these two initiatives illustrate the general means by which the Program in English makes itself essential to campus and community life. They serve as a baseline for so many other efforts such as the poetry slams, open mic nights, guest speakers, *et cetera.* All such work is essential to the health of campus life for everyone at DSU, while not at the same time directly increasing English Program enrollment. There is likely an indirect effect, but we live in challenging times for the liberal arts, and indirect effects are not measurable.

There are likely national trends affecting the flat enrollment rates in the Program in English, while at the same time, separate from the degree in English, the skills it provides are those touted as essential qualities businesses great and small affirm as necessary for employees to bring with them to the workplace. So the challenge for the University and the Program alike is to find the right fit of skills linking student and employee interests and needs in ways that increase

enrollments. The Program in English has yet to figure out the right combination—but really, no one yet has done so.

Perhaps the freshly lean traditional *Major in English*, and the new interdisciplinary major in *Digital Content Creation* will move the needle towards an increase in student numbers. Certainly, the combination of traditional coursework in literature with courses in *Digital Collection and Curation, Graphic Communication, Web Design*, and *Digital Media Communications* seems smart, and sets the degree in *Digital Content Creation* up for success. But if not, it is also quite clear that the Program faculty shows initiative, flexibility, and a nimble willingness to keep seeking strategic solutions to the problem of enrollment. It is doing what it can to survive and remain purposeful to the whole institution, which very clearly wants its graduates well rounded, creative, and technologically proficient.

Perhaps the Institution and the state should consider giving the Program in English time to do its work, because without it, DSU trends towards becoming a high-end technology shop, which is something quite different from an institution of higher learning, one just as committed to the development of the entire person as it is to the skill-based needs of the state and nation.

Program Goals Relative to Institutional Mission

Dakota State University embraces the concept of providing a challenging and innovative experience across its four colleges. Each college is designed to create a group of related majors that focus on particular areas of study. In keeping with this intent, the College of Arts and Sciences mission notes:

According to the promotional info, students experience traditional topics like chemistry, art, history, theater, and writing with a tech twist in the College of Arts and Sciences.....where students not only learn new things, they become part of 'something extraordinary" Opportunities to unleash potential and creativity posit a dynamic operative norm in the College of Arts and Sciences, and central to that norm is the Program in English.

In keeping with the Institutional Mission and the Mission of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Program in English notably offers the Bachelor in Science degree. The BSE is most appropriate to the Program in English because as a Program, it uniquely elevates its degree of technological integration to course content over other English programs nationwide. Likewise, the Five Pillars of the Institution's Strategic Plan all resonate in the course content and overall pedagogical and practical approaches to teaching, learning, and building on display in the most recent 2024 English Program Review. The Program Faculty actively complies with the Institutional mandates in the 5 Pillars, putting their program content under the pertinent pillars.

Program Goals Relative to Current National Trends and Forecasts for the Discipline.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that in 2021 there were 1,815,820 people employed with a degree in English Literature, making a median $56,000 in annual wages. Further, those with the

degree have by that time gained 59, 687, 450 jobs in all fields, with a median income of $63,000. 64% found employment in Education, management, finance, office administration, art, design, entertainment, and occupations related to the media (https://www.bls.gov/ooh/field-of-degree/english/english-field-of-degree.html.). Not much has changed since 2021. The projected growth in employment fields pertaining to English Literature and Writing show an 8% growth in careers in law, 4% in post-secondary teaching, and 7% growth in K-12 teachers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Field of degree: English, https://www.bls.gov/ooh/field-of-degree/english/english-field-of-degree.htm (visited *April 17, 2024*). Other sources note the overall versatility of the English Major, serving as preparation for careers in journalism, law, public relations, human resources, and writing (https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/newsroom/liberal-arts/what-is-an-english-literature-degree-and-what-can-i-do-with-it). Places such as the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point considered eliminating English, along with History and Philosophy but were unable to do so for fear of the overall impact on the educational environment left in their absence. The trend to eliminate is one that English professors find inexplicable, especially at a time when there appears to be an increasing appetite for public contemplation of lofty issues. Amanda Claybaugh, Harvard's Dean of undergraduate education and herself an English professor, suggests that the general fall in educational levels nationally has resulted in a downward spiral for the English degree because students today are struggling to understand basic sentences, and cannot tell a subject from a verb. Basic stuff ---(https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/the-end-of-the-english-major). If this is the case, then clearly the problem with English is larger than English, and university systems and institutions would do well to consider that the problem needs to be addressed rather than buried along with the English degree. Really that simple. Education in America needs to come back, and as it does, interest in the English major and the value of the English degree will again rise. DSU's Program in English needs to be there when it does. When English rises again as a degree, those programs offering majors an integrated technological experience, of necessity, will serve as the leading edge for the degree—because technology is likely going nowhere any time soon.

There is also another factor to consider of value not only to the English degree overall, but to DSU in particular, with its technological focus that draws a large international mostly male student body. English is the only global language, having the largest number of total speakers worldwide. Given this, as G. Thomas Couset suggests, English is prime for a global rebranding as a chief means towards critical engagement with topics related to our shared global predicament. Doing so would mean a change in content, but not a change in intellectual or critical function. Perhaps this should be considered in any new revisioning of the revisions in English. And at the same time, the liberal arts, generally, have drawn a more gender balanced student population. Appealing to internationals with both technical and intellectual content may draw more students to campus and also address the issue of gender balance. Something to think about (https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2023/09/29/proposal-revive-english-major-opinion).

Program Resources

Effective Use of Resources to Meet Program Goals

I have every sense that *English for New Media* faculty are always thinking of effective means by which to use their resources. They are all of them keen on optimization. They are aware that the program has a low number of enrolled and graduating majors, and are working overtime to find ways to work within the fiscal and physical limits imposed upon them to create positive change. I think the extra-curricular activities in which all tenured and tenure track faculty are engaged speak to this mindset of optimization.

Faculty—Staffing Levels and Credentials

During the on-campus visit, I met with Drs. Berry, Blessinger, Larson, and Instructors Hueners-Nelson and Richardson. I did not have an opportunity to meet with Dr Sewell from English Education. Since the visit, I have reviewed faculty credentials and found an impressive bunch. All of the tenure and tenure track faculty hold degrees from universities with strong academic programs in English and Writing, and all show an impassioned and professional engagement in their disciplines. All are doing their job to stay current, offering students contemporary approaches to subjects germane to the disciplines of Literature, Education, and Writing. What is more, all have clearly aligned their chosen disciplines with the technological emphases of DSU overall--from their work in the Digital Humanities Program to a collective focus on multi-modal communication and beyond – even writing educational software to serve the contemporary need. It is most impressive that even adjunct faculty are engaged in work beyond the classroom, serving on governing boards and working with museums. A fully engaged faculty is a healthy faculty.

What is more, DSU English faculty work together to solve problems and consider improvements to their collective and individual work. They have a healthy respect for one another, and in my observance, a developed trust in one another as professionals and as people. This level of collegiality is too rare in academia and speaks well to the character of DSU faculty overall. There are external stressors that hurt the Program, such as the statewide decision to track individual classroom student withdrawals and failures—a decision that speaks to a deleterious inclination towards micro-management—but faculty appear to have a shoulders back and chin up approach to such difficulties. They will continue doing their jobs as best they can.

There is of course a concern over staffing. Program Faculty rightly express concern over too many students in their Composition courses, which fill to 24 students per section—way too many, by formal measure. The Association of Departments of English recommends 15 students per section, and certainly no more than 20 (https://www.maps.mla.org/Resources/Policy-Statements/ADE-Guidelines-for-Class-Size-and-Workload-for-College-and-University-Instructors-of-English-A-Statement-of-Policy) In kind, the Conference on Composition and

Communication (CCCC) recommends no more than twenty (20) students in the Composition classroom and notes as preferable a classroom of fifteen (15)
https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting#principle6 :

> Institutions can provide reasonable and equitable working conditions by establishing teaching loads and class sizes that are consistent with disciplinary norms. No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Remedial or developmental sections should be limited to a maximum of 15 students. No English faculty members should teach more than 60 writing students a term. Institutions can also provide these conditions by paying instructors a reasonable wage and providing access to benefits. Institutions should provide resources necessary to effective instruction, including office space to meet with students individually, computers and network access, and office technologies (such as photocopiers). Institutions should also facilitate instructor access to personnel and units that can inform their practices and offer helpful efficiencies such as librarians, writing centers and directors, and teaching and learning centers. Institutions should also foster department and program cultures that recognize instructors, whether in appointments that emphasize research and scholarship or in those that focus fully or primarily on teaching or administration, as scholars and full members of the discipline. Institutions should ensure that all members of a department or program have the opportunity to participate in shared governance.

Further, Faculty express concern about a potential loss resulting in Dr. Berry having accepted the position of College Dean. Her work is considered by all faculty as essential to the forward momentum of the Program, and her faculty line, it is feared, will not be filled with a new hire, thus cutting tenured faculty by 25% and serving as probable cause for even larger class sizes— no small deficit to overcome for a Program rolling out a newly envisioned curriculum.

Classroom Facilities

I was given a tour of Beadle Hall, where most Program courses are taught, as well as most other buildings on campus. Beadle Hall is a beautiful building with the history of the campus in its bones, but its old-style classrooms, its 1950s tiled and creaky flooring, and its narrow hallways do not structurally comport with the innovative and technologically based curriculum offered by the English Program. I understand the building is to be renovated, and it is hoped that any renovation keeps the historic value of the campus in its structure, while opening up the interior to complement the innovative nature of the Program overall.

Laboratory Facilities and Equipment

Students have laptops issued to them at DSU, and there are computer labs on campus. Literary Magazines and newspapers are digitalized, and as part of the *English-New Media* curriculum, students receive formal orientation integrating course content with the technological means for creatively structuring content. All of this is very positive. At the same time, I do think there is more that can be done to offer students technological outlets for their academic and intellectual expression. How about a student podcast? Or a radio segment broadcast in town? Perhaps my impression is weighted by the condition of Beadle Hall overall, where technology little figures, or perhaps such activities as podcasts are in the works and I just did not ask the right questions.

But podcasts are inexpensive ways to increase student engagement with both technology and content for the good of all. Builds the footprint.

Financial Support

Faculty generally feel that they have financial support for their academic work. There are funds for faculty to attend conferences and faculty *cv's* confirm they have opportunity to keep current through formal presentations on university, state, and national scholarly levels. I made no enquiries beyond ones concerned with funding for conferences and sabbaticals, because both are essential to faculty health and the currency of course content. All tenured faculty have been able to secure grants somewhere along the line, so the university environment is such as to encourage faculty to explore external funding. Travel to conferences, time for scholarly production, grant writing—all of these suggest a dynamic and healthily supported faculty. I am sure everyone would like to be paid more than they are now.

Program Curriculum

I find the Program Curriculum sound. Both its newly remodeled Major in *English* and its interdisciplinary Major in *Digital Content Creation* combine the traditional, vetted content in Literature with the new world of our digital reality. Both Majors are exciting and mutually interdependent. I would love to see more courses housed in each major, but we are in a period of time where increasingly, what is demanded nationally and clearly in South Dakota, is cut cut cut. Program evaluation thus must consider weighing the lesser of the many evils coming in the form of reductions, understood in light of the need to keep the Program viable and purposeful for the students, the institution, and the state. I applaud the decision to keep two British Literature and two American Literature surveys because students need them for a baseline of knowledge in life and further study. They also need them for teacher education examinations such as the *Praxis*, which rely heavily on knowledge germane to the surveys. Too often Programs in English embrace the experimental over the traditional. Both together make for a sound program, but when a program is pressed to cut, the traditional offers students more traction than does the experimental overall—in English as in life. So what can yet be done to improve the Program, which is tantamount to asking how can it become leaner than now? Combine *World Literature* I and II into one course? Combine *Introduction to Literary Criticism* with *Modern Grammar*? If possible, given state Educational Standards and Practices, combine *Media Studies* with *Selected Authors*? If deemed necessary. None of these combinations are in themselves sound, but they may perhaps become unavoidable ones—**until the national trend changes**. Despite its non-academic content, I would fight to keep Creative Writing, because it likely feeds the literary magazine and the student newspaper, so in this way benefits the institution as a whole—a necessary goal. And often students in other disciplines are drawn into creative writing classes.

The marriage of traditional coursework to coursework creatively engaging technology is masterfully in evidence in the DSU English Program, and very much in keeping with the dominant technology mission of DSU as a whole. I note that English 405 and 283 cross the divide between Majors. Are there any others that can serve the interests of both? The more, it seems, the smarter.

Technology Integration

The Program in English is very much aware of its place on a university campus whose top academic mission is to create a new generation of technologically centered professionals. As such, students in *English for New Media* take two courses designed to integrate course content and technology. In addition, a new course is in the works to help students understand the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)--from Grammarly to Generative Chat GPT. I can think of no more appropriate new course for Program students and for society. As a result of my visit to DSU, this AI course is one that I will recommend be created in my own English Program, because it is precisely what students need now. Dr. Larson's digitized Literary Magazine and Newspaper, and Dr Blessinger's work with *AdapT Lab* for Accessible Technology, his *Goto* navigation assistance app, and his *Go Baby Go* Program confirm a technologically proficient learning environment in English. Further, Blessinger's work with Dr. Olson to develop how faculty can digitally submit assessment data for all to see, scored by agreed-upon rubrics, suggests the degree to which the Program in English is committed as much to transparency as to the technological integration of course content. This commitment is in evidence in the curriculum both for the major in *New Media* and the newer major in *Digital Content Creation.*

The Major in *Digital Content Creation* is a master stroke for a program seeking to remain viable and purposeful on a high-tech campus. But it also may have an innate weakness. It seeks to serve everyone, with courses in management, film editing, business, and professional communication required in support. I see the desire to entangle many majors within the discipline, but remains unclear how these supporting courses from many other disciplines actually help build a cohesive major. Taken as a whole, *Digital Content Creation* is a wee bit eclectic, attempting to be all things to all people. I understand the impulse.

Perhaps much of what seems eclectic in the *Digital Content Creation* major can be systemized or discriminated by the creation of *Certification Programs in Digital Content Creation*. Certifications would show support courses both in and out of the major, drawing even more students. Certifications, which come in packages of 9-12 credits, could serve both English and other disciplines simultaneously. Were these support courses recognized both as parts of certificates in other disciplines, and parts of a new major simultaneously, the benefits of the new major may be compounded.

I understand that one of the problems with *English for New Media* was the lack of desire on the part of English students to integrate with technology, and of students in technology to find interest in Literature, but I think more than the two courses ought to link the two newly split disciplines of *English Literature* and *Digital Content Creation*. More links may make either

Major more appealing to those in other disciplines: and allow for key courses in separate Majors to feed the likelihood of more interest in English-based certifications. It would also make both Majors interdependent, sharing more of the same students in the classroom.

Program Assessment

Appropriateness of Assessment Measures, Activities for the Discipline.

The DSU Program in *English for New Media* has a sound and even impressive approach to assessment. The entire curriculum moves towards the creation of student portfolios that highlight both the process and culmination of student work within English. The portfolio provides a clear snapshot of progression for students, faculty, and stakeholders. Within the portfolios, students house documents showing their ability to analyze and critically respond to a variety of texts, as well as their ability to express themselves clearly and effectively in writing. The program invites students to work in both traditional literary texts and multi-modal texts germane to the technology-rich world understood as *new media*.

Snapshots of student portfolios include comments related to the Program rubrics, instance by instance, student by student. The digital snapshot also includes personal evaluative notes on students by the faculty with whom the students have closely worked, offering a more intimate understanding of the work behind the sometimes too objectified rubrics, which only tell how students 'meet' or 'exceed' expectations set.

Significantly, the snapshot evaluation of student portfolios serving as exit exams and uploaded through the software Drs. Blessinger and Olson developed, serves as assessment material made instantly and permanently available to all stakeholders. As I understand it from the faculty, the digitized student performance rubrics become the focus of faculty discussions concerning strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, overall. As faculty members are now in the process of redesigning their curriculum, it is quite clear that as a faculty body, they act on discussions concerning student portfolios and exit exams, thus closing the assessment loop. Very impressive.

Major-Field Assessment Activities, Relative to the Program Goals.

The *College of Arts and Sciences* notes its goal of helping students immerse in research, armed with imagination and passion. In keeping with these arch goals, the Program in English seeks to combine research, skills, and the creation of digital content to prepare students for the fast-growing industry of media production in the new digital age. To this end, students in English leverage traditional content skills such as storytelling through digital technology, web design, and software applications such as *HTML, CSS*, and *Java*. The Program's stated goal is to prepare students to work in the ever-changing world of communications in an ever-changing digital landscape. By helping students strengthen their ability to think and communicate within the framework of digital portfolios, and creatively engaging them in web-based product design and content creation--all work that houses traditional literary products in digitized space--the

Program well does the job of fitting its curriculum to its own goals, to the goals expressed by the *College of Arts and Sciences*, and to the overall goals of the University. Likewise, the sub-program of *English Education* entails these same skills necessary for students to become effective teachers in the classroom—and the outcomes identified for *English Education* comport with those used across the nation. By creating digital rubrics to assess the progress of every single student within its program, and by uploading assessment data to a transparent digital platform for stakeholders and members of the public alike, the Program in English is on the cutting edge of assessment nationally. I know of no program that does more.

Program accreditation.

The Program in English, like DSU overall, is accredited by the *Higher Learning Commission*. It is notable that the software designed by Drs. Blessinger and Olson were featured at a *Higher Learning Commission* forum regarding how best to create an efficient and transparent means for evaluating and storing assessment data. In this way, the Program in English speaks well on behalf of the entire University to its accrediting body.

Student Support/student Enrollments

Student Recruitment Efforts

English faculty have sought students where they can get them. They have targeted the well-supported computer sciences program, hoping to attract some of those students to the English course offerings. To this end, they have developed alluring courses in computer hacking, and a course integrating Artificial Intelligence and Writing. They have sought partnerships with other departments, reduced the required number of courses in the Major, and marketed themselves to businesses and organizations as a think-tank, where people learn to research, evaluate, and prioritize. Since English Faculty are not themselves professional marketers, they are left with their content as the chief means by which to draw students. And their content is not only sound but important to other disciplines. Beyond their formal level of expertise, faculty volunteer for staff-specific *Discover DSU Days* year-round, help with *Summer Camps for Middle Schoolers* exploring career options through a program called *Dakota Dreams*, present to visiting groups, teach *ACT exam reviews* and basic reading skills at the local high schools, and staff workshops on technology and writing. All of this may constitute only indirect recruiting, but faculty are making a name for themselves in the community, and there is every sense that sooner or later--especially at a university embedded in a community--doing so pays off.

Part of the challenge facing DSU English is the same one facing English Programs and others nationwide: *Transferenc*e. Students do not readily see the utility of skills learned in one academic locale for use in another. So a student aces a Comp II course but writes a lousy paper in Art Appreciation. No one knows quite why. The challenge is to somehow bridge that divide, and whatever means will eventually be found to do so nationally can likely also be used to compel students from other disciplines to realize that their critical evaluative needs are

absolutely to be met in English. But so far, there is no recognition of how to solve the problem of transference on a national or institutional scale. We will probably create a statue for the person who opens the pedagogical doorway to solving the transference problem. In the meantime, DSU English is doing everything in its power to stay strong, pertinent, and marketable.

Student Enrollment Numbers, Student Graduation Rates, and Student Placement

Enrollment numbers are low in *English for New Media* (see page 11 in the self study, 2024). Fifteen (15) Majors in 2016 has turned into ten (10) Majors in Fall 2023. This is a clear problem, especially with a state mandate to graduate 5 students per year to remain viable as a discipline. The Program in English currently averages 3 graduates per year over the last 7 years. Something must be done. Barring the witless option of eliminating a major that lends intellectual weight to the entire university enterprise, what? It seems to me that Program faculty are doing what they can, while perhaps reacting too quickly to criticism from external stakeholders to make drastic changes for the sake of change to show quick response in uncertain times. Yet as a study, it is the likeliest bet that English, central to University study since its 12th century beginnings in the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, is not going anywhere. So it needs to hold on for better times, which seemingly in the cycle of life, tend to happen, eventually.

In the meantime, the University may consider that if programs such as English are cut for not meeting technical and somewhat arbitrary benchmarks, then soon enough Dakota State University will be all technology all of the time, and in keeping with that identity, have a student body comprised very nearly of all men. As it is, the majority of students on campus are male, creating an imbalanced campus environment. There are 2230 males, and only 1279 females. By contrast, the student body is more balanced in the *College of Arts and Sciences*, having 130 female students and 185 males. These ratios suggest that the *College of Arts and Sciences*, including English, may serve as the pathway to a more gender-equitable campus environment. How? Certainly not by eliminating its low-enrolled programs. It is worth noting that the *College of Arts and Sciences*, which has returning student rates over 7 years averaging slightly above 86%, does not compare to the 100% rate of returning students in English (save for one outlier year, 2020, where only 50% returned). Despite the low numbers, the right kind of things must be happening in English for it to consistently keep its students. Indeed, in talking with students in English, they feel a definite loyalty to the program.

Student Support Services

While student support services did not directly come up in our discussions among the English Faculty, it is more than a little clear that the collegial environment within English offers its students the right kind of community in which to learn and grow. What is more, Dr Larson's work with students to create a newspaper and a literary magazine, and Dr. Blessinger's work to provide total access through his *EASI* software, his *Barrier Free Learning* focus, and his *Go Baby Go* Programs speak to a faculty commitment to students, separate from, but doubtless in

complement to what the University offers them overall. There is also a Writing Center, and very clearly, strong advising, within the Program.

Academic Advising

I met with one of Dr. Berry's advisees who had changed majors from games and theory to English. This student has been on campus for four years and serves as a leader in the dorms. But mostly, this student extolls the role Dr. Berry and other English faculty have played in her career choices. They have given her a home away from home, offering her support network, and are responsible in part for the general positive attitude she keeps while attending DSU. She loves the Program. She loves the professors in the Program, and knows they are there to help her in any way they can do so. And she loves attending *Dakota State University* and is a little saddened over her pending graduation. In keeping with the student's assessment of the Program, it is worth noting that there was not one faculty member whom I met in English that had a negative attitude. All were committed to the students, to each other, to the institution, and overall, to the work. They were not looking backward, or reflectively, off into the woods.

Program Strengths and Areas of Improvement

All told, DSU's Program in English is strong. It has excellent and committed faculty holding degrees from academically respected institutions. It has worked diligently to marry its content to the technological focus of the institution. It shows great care for its students and for its own program assessment, based on student work. Most significantly, it shows a collective commitment to the work of the Program and the work of the University and demonstrates a remarkable ability to modify in its attempts to thrive. I can see really no areas that need improvement, beyond what may be a continued need to modify, seeking always that golden combination of coursework, teamwork, marketing, and collaboration that will result in more students within the program. And the program needs more students.

There are likely things the Program in English can do to strengthen its hand, increase its footprint, draw in more students, and gain more stability and responsibility on campus. I will address these in my recommendations.

Recommendations for Change

*More Involvement with SD Literacy Framework Group

Last year, the S.D. Department of Education reached out and gathered a group of educators, including Dr Kate Anderson, to develop the literacy framework. She worked with Crowser, Dr. Kim Buechler, Amber Muller, Elizabeth Parce, Deb Zebill, and Jennifer Newcomb.

Additionally, to support the framework, they developed implementation guides for districts and families to support them.

The group, which collaborated with an advisory team and the S.D. Dept. of Education, held writing retreats and monthly Zoom meetings, and regularly communicated and shared resources.   ….. The framework includes six components: leadership for implementation, assessment/data-based decision-making, professional learning, classroom instruction, tiered instruction, and Department of Education literacy supports. If it is not already, the Program in English should be a part of this effort.

*More Dual Credit Options in the High Schools, Monitored by English Program Faculty.

As I understand it, DSU offers Dual Enrollment to High School students on campus only. The Program in English may consider expanding such options to include allowing qualified High School Teachers in English to teach the introductory course in Composition within the High Schools themselves, subject to Program faculty oversight. *The Higher Learning Commission allows those with 18 graduate credits in a discipline to teach in that discipline, and further, for those who need to teach but do not have the credentials, being enrolled in continuing graduate education courses allows them to teach while working on obtaining the credentials. As I understand it, there is already a graduate program in place that could be utilized to draw prospective new teachers from the High Schools. Work would need to be done to allow such offerings in the state, and possibly, to create a financial incentive mechanism for students to enroll in graduate courses. But it can be done and the Program in English would experience an expanded role within state education. Important. Most pointedly was the HLC allowance for those working towards the 18 graduate credits to teach. If that contingency is still in place, it may be advantageous to develop teaching networks in the High Schools that the Program in English may build and oversee.

*I have not been able to confirm that HLC still requires 18 graduate credits in the major and also allows those actively pursuing those 18 credits to teach, but such was the case as recently as last year, when I did communicate directly with HLC, What materials I did recently find on its website suggests that HLC may have loosened their policy rather than made it more stringent. But I will have to leave it to you to discover.

*Create Certification Programs.

Across the state of North Dakota, Certification Programs are flying into university programming. Students and employers want them. They can be transcripted, and understood. While DSU has neither Concentrations nor Minors, were they to have these, Certifications, such as Minot State University's Certificate of Writing in the Discipline have been formally interpreted as not competing with a 12-credit Concentration in English, for example, because Concentrations and Certifications serve differing needs. Students can apply for and receive transcripted versions of both, using the same credits. What is more, such Certifications make it easy for other disciplines to promote. Our own Certificate requires 12 credits for example 6 for the two basic Composition Courses, and 3 for a Technical Writing Course taught by an English faculty member but is a

loose dialogue with faculty members in each prospective student's discipline, to write a technical project based in the discipline, plus one more 3 credit course already part of the student's discipline that faculty in the discipline agree to consider "writerly" for having a clear and persistent writing component to it. All of this means a student can get a Certificate for Writing in the Discipline of Computer Science, Elementary Education, Nursing, Kinesiology, Psychology, or anything really, by simply taking one more course than is required of them anyway for their degree—the English-based Technical Writing Course. We also now have a Certificate in Grant Writing that is offered to undergraduate and graduate students simultaneously, sitting in the same classroom, but meeting different academic requirements. The more of these we offer, it seems, the more students want them, and faculty in other disciplines are willing to sign on. Again, this builds the footprint.

*Create a Minor and Concentrations.

Minors and Concentrations are ways in which students with a casual interest in English can participate in English, and get credit for doing so, while not having to formally declare for the major. It would likely add to the number of students who participate in English courses of all kinds. It would also serve as a backstop to Program elimination, whereas the standing Major either stays or goes as a whole.

*Ensure that all data related to student Full Time Equivalencies (FTEs) remain part of any discussion regarding the Program in English.

With two required Composition courses on the DSU campus, both the number of students enrolled, as well as the revenue generated for the university, are significant. Both need to be continuously associated with the weaker Program in English. Cato always started any comment to the Roman senate with his famous *Carthago delenda est*—Carthage must be destroyed. Likewise, I think all English Faculty need to constantly remind all stakeholders in every way possible that *English teaches all of the FTE-rich courses in Composition,* so while the former is currently enrolled in small numbers, the latter more than makes up for its financial deficit. So there is good reason for a university to continue such an arrangement. The program embodies the Liberal Arts programming that lends intellectual weight to the entire academic enterprise, and Composition offers strong critical and organizational skills across campus and entails a high number of FTEs for English. It would probably be worthwhile for the Program to determine the full economic value of Composition to DSU by using the multiplier rate the state system uses for ascertaining the financial impact of tuition dollars (both in-state and out-of-state) beyond the actual cost of running the Composition courses. Adding in the English Program would likely show the negligible cost of running English alongside the revenue-rich courses in Composition, all taught by the same faculty. The Program as a whole is highly likely revenue-positive.

*Better Integrate the Online Coursework with On-Campus Coursework.

It seems a strange decision to separate online coursework and scheduling from Program scheduling. The Program can benefit from a closer integration of online courses with on-campus ones. I recommend that faculty in English regularly teach online classes, which likely fill quickly and add to each faculty member's overall FTE count. Doing so would increase FTE production per faculty member, and allow English faculty more quality control over online versions of their courses taught online. In my own experience, there are all kinds of online courses, some well-designed, most not. English should ensure quality control of its online courses.

In keeping with the need to address low student numbers in English, perhaps some Composition courses can be designated *literature and technology-intensive*, and count towards the degree in *English* or *Digital Content Creation*. Doing so may allow faculty to create a differing rotation of courses required for the degree, and likewise, a differing schedule of courses for faculty that may produce higher FTE totals for each. It may well serve to have a clear goal as to how many FTEs each faculty member should produce each year, and as a Program, try to hit that goal. Conversely, it should be stressed that FTE count is something that should be measured at the Program level, not at the level of each faculty member. Be that as it may, given the 4X4 teaching load and the downward pressure to reveal and inevitably explain student drops and failures in each class, English faculty members should seek to hit the FTE goal at the individual level, while arguing against any individual standard and for a Program standard. Maybe faculty members can teach three service (Comp) courses and one content course one semester of each year, thereby upping the FTE count per faculty member through the addition of another Composition course. This could happen in a more palatable way if Composition Courses could gain the *intensive* label, serving thus as part of the major by including more literary content in the teaching of writing than is typical. I make this suggestion in the face of stressfully low student numbers in the English major at this time. Otherwise, I would not.

*Identify the points within student academic career progressions where they depart from the discipline.

With low numbers in the major, it is difficult to see trends. Assuming increased numbers, however, it may be fruitful to then track where in their academic progress students jump off of the English or English Education ship. At my own university, we have determined that we lose students between the second and third year, and so attempt to lessen the trend through interventions with marginal students at that time in their degree progression. We have also seen exceptionally talented ones feel disenchanted with coursework mid-progression, and help them find value in courses pitched to students who need a lot more help with the work than do they. How can those students find value sufficient to stick with it? There are always ways.

*Continue being bold, creative, engaged, innovative, and willing to change and take risks to survive and thrive. In all ways. RK