

## **UI Department of English Strategic Plan**

April 2020

### **Preamble**

The Iowa Idea of blending creative and critical practice within a single academic program has a long and venerable history in the UI Department of English. Over the past century, English faculty and alumni include distinguished creative writers, as well as prominent literary critics and scholars who have helped found movements such as New Criticism, feminist literary studies, postcolonial theory, African American literary and cultural studies, and poststructuralist theory.

Today, English is a strong contributor to humanities and arts teaching and research at the University of Iowa. The Department is home to two undergraduate majors, English and English & Creative Writing, with a combined enrollment of approximately 900 students, the top-ranked MFA program Nonfiction Writing, a nationally ranked MA/PhD program, three distinguished journals, and the General Education Literature in English program. Creative writing and literary analysis continue to be areas of departmental strength, as well as book studies, visual culture, performance and media studies, and environmental and digital humanities.

English is also a prominent hub of the Writing University and the City of Literature, thanks to alliances with other units on campus. Our initiative over the past decade to build departmental strength toward a constellation of writing genres is visible in our undergraduate degree in English & Creative Writing which launched in 2016. The degree involves collaboration between English, the Nonfiction Writing Program, and the Writers' Workshop, and cooperation with the Departments of Theatre Arts, Cinematic Arts, and the Translation Workshop. In addition, three years ago the Department launched the undergraduate Literary Publishing Track, with a collaborative curriculum featuring courses from the UI Center for the Book and the Magid Center for Undergraduate Writing, as well as English. Book studies and contemporary literature are likewise among the strengths of the English MA/PhD program around which the Department recruits talented graduate students. Finally, graduate students from many arts and humanities departments cross paths as Teaching Assistants in the General Education Literature program, housed in English.

The Department of English Strategic Plan honors the innovative history of our programs, while also seeking to build faculty strength, and thereby heighten the Department's profile as a destination for diverse students from around the country and the world and an integral part of the Writing University.

### **Mission**

The UI English Department promotes the serious and disciplined study and production of writing and literature as an art form, an expression of cultural commitments, and a means of participating in civil society. Embracing the idea that "good readers make good writers," we view the study of literature and culture as foundational to teaching the craft of writing. Our Department values cultural, global, and aesthetic diversity. Our curriculum includes celebrated masterpieces by familiar American and British writers, as well as provocative reclaimed literary works from the

past and contemporary works that are shaping the future. Our classes also explore the power of language in work that speaks from and about diverse U.S. ethnicities and global Anglophone communities. We take a similarly expansive view of writing pedagogy, with coursework in the full range of critical and creative modes, from memoir to short story and radio essay. Our Department advances the practice of the Humanities in contemporary society through teaching, writing, and scholarship centering on literature and the written word.

### **Vision**

The UI Department of English Strategic Plan outlines our vision to meet the evolving needs of our students and our field, while remaining true to our longstanding values of innovative instruction in a small-class setting, world-class research, and pathbreaking creative work. We believe that permanent faculty can best provide the instructional excellence which our 900 undergraduate majors deserve and serve as the practitioner-teachers that make a great research university. For this reason, our top priority is replenishing and diversifying our faculty, and we will seize every opportunity to partner with other units to make new hires, particularly in areas likely to recruit minority faculty to the University. As the home of two destination majors, we consider it crucial to provide our undergraduates with enhanced learning opportunities, career preparation, and internships, and we will be seeking the help of CLAS as we pursue these goals. We also look forward to building synergies with other units in the Writing University, including through a Dean's Strategic Investment proposal aimed at establishing several endowed chairs in writing. At the graduate level, our focus is on revising our PhD with the help of the AAU PhD Education Initiative and the Humanities for the Public Good Initiative. We will also work to secure funding packages for all our graduate students that are on par with peer institutions. In addition, we will boost engagement with literary expression from the past and present through world-leading scholarship and creative writing. Although our goals are admittedly ambitious, we are confident we can meet them with the support of CLAS.

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS –

***Goal: Elevate our status as a destination major by providing our undergraduates with excellent instruction in writing and literary studies, while helping prepare them for life after graduation.***

**Strategy: Expand opportunities for students to learn from national and international leaders in their fields in creative writing and literary critical research.**

### Critical Tasks:

- Boost the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty teaching our majors. (See Appendix: Hiring Plan.)
- Hire a fully qualified senior professor as Director of English and Creative Writing.
- Support English faculty research and publication efforts.
- Strengthen the Literary Publishing Track as a bridge between our two majors.

### Indicators for Success

- Increased English Department tenure-track and tenured faculty from historic low of 30.5FTE to at least 39FTE to provide expert teaching for ca. 900 majors.
- Maintenance of a low faculty-to-major ratio with a majority of classes taught by permanent faculty.
- Director of English and Creative Writing hired.
- Bolstered support for the Literary Publishing Track.

**Strategy: Enhance learning opportunities and career preparation for undergraduate students in both our majors.**

### Critical Tasks:

- Explore RA-ships and other opportunities for high-achieving undergraduates to work closely with faculty (instructional track and tenure-track).
- Facilitate appointment of our most outstanding recent graduates in appropriate postdoc-style positions, including Provost Visiting Writers.
- Create more opportunities for students to meet with distinguished visitors and alums.
- Increase the number of internship opportunities and prestigious scholarships and awards.
- Expand Study Abroad opportunities (with support of Office of Study Abroad).
- Hire internship and outreach coordinator.

### Indicators for Success:

- Creation of new opportunities for high-achieving students to have meaningful contact with faculty, distinguished visitors, and alums.
- Creation of new postdoc-style positions for recent graduates.
- Increased student participation in Study Abroad and internships.
- Increased number of prestigious scholarships and awards won by our undergraduates.
- Hire of internship and outreach coordinator.

**Strategy: Strengthen coordination with other contributors to The Writing University.**

Critical Tasks:

- Increase coordination between writing units, guiding students to the most appropriate majors, certificates, and minors.
- Share opportunities for student instruction and professionalization developed by different writing units.
- Partner with other contributors to The Writing University in a proposal for a Strategic Investment to create new faculty lines to support writing initiatives.

Indicators for Success:

- Better coordination of events on campus through the master calendar available at The Writing University website.
- Better coordination and sharing of information between different writing units.
- Better visibility of creative writing and writing-intensive options on MyUI course listings.
- New faculty lines to support The Writing University.

## GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS –

***Goal: Update and Strengthen our graduate programs.***

**Strategy: Revise our PhD to help prepare our graduates for diverse careers.**

Critical Tasks:

- Build new tracks in areas such as pedagogy, nonfiction, and publishing.
- Develop internships for our PhD students to enhance the new tracks.
- Build alumni network to enrich the tracks.
- Pursue other promising ideas as they emerge from the AAU PhD Education Initiative and the Humanities for the Public Good Initiative.

Indicators for Success:

- Development of new tracks in PhD program.
- Creation of new internships and alumni network for our PhD students.
- PhD students get satisfying jobs.

**Strategy: Work with Graduate College and CLAS to secure funding packages for our graduate students on par with our peers.**

Critical Tasks:

- Work with Graduate College and CLAS to secure funding to provide a 2-course/year teaching load for our TAs with pay and benefits comparable to our peers.

Indicator for Success:

- Provision of funding by Graduate College and CLAS to support competitive packages for our graduate students.

**Strategy: Build faculty infrastructure for graduate program.**

Critical Tasks:

- Partnering with other units when feasible, hire faculty to teach core areas of our graduate curriculum that are now unstaffed or understaffed due to attrition.
- Partner with other contributors to The Writing University in a proposal for a Strategic Investment to create new faculty lines to support writing initiatives.

Indicators for Success:

- CLAS approves new hires to teach and direct dissertations in understaffed areas in our graduate curriculum.
- Increased English Department tenure-track and tenured faculty from historic low of 30.5FTE to at least 39FTE.
- New faculty lines to support The Writing University.

## RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY –

***Goal: Support faculty and graduate student research and discovery.***

**Strategy: Expand the opportunities for synergy in creative writing and literary critical research.**

Critical Tasks:

- Boost the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty.
- Support English faculty publication efforts.
- Facilitate appointment of our most outstanding recent graduates in appropriate postdoc-style positions.

Indicators for Success

- Increased English Department tenure-track and tenured faculty from historic low of 30.5FTE to at least 39FTE.
- Increased number of nationally and internationally recognized publications produced by English faculty.

**Strategy: Enhance research support and professional development for faculty (instructional track and tenure-track).**

Critical Tasks:

- Offer creative course and service loads to accommodate faculty attention to research, writing, and scholarship.
- Expand mid-career fellowship opportunities for associate professors who are carrying the burden of program leadership while maintaining an active research profile.
- Work with CLAS to offer release time, incentives, and guidance for faculty who are applying for major grants and innovative professional projects.
- Work with CLAS and Graduate College to reinstate RA funding for PhD students and create graduate administrative positions to help professionalization.
- Explore how we may best support the research of every faculty cohort, including senior and instructional track faculty.
- Work with CLAS and Provost's Office to restore guaranteed CDAs for tenured research-active faculty.
- Work with CLAS to provide more staff support so faculty can better attend to their research mission.

Indicators for Success:

- CLAS and Provost's Office restore guaranteed CDAs for research-active faculty.
- CLAS provides enhanced staff support.
- CLAS and Graduate College provide funding for RA-ships for PhD students and new graduate administrative positions to help professionalization.
- More fellowship opportunities and course releases for faculty carrying heavy administrative loads and/or applying for major grants and innovative professional projects.

## ENGAGEMENT –

***Goal: Expand our current outreach initiatives and create new ones by seeking partners both on and off campus.***

**Strategy: Strengthen our established outreach initiatives.**

Critical Tasks:

- Enhance GEL community service partnership with ICCSD and the students of Grant Wood Elementary.
- Bolster NWP community-based writing instruction.

Indicator for Success:

- Expanded participation of GEL and NWP in these community service initiatives.
- Enhanced financial support from the University for these initiatives.

**Strategy: Support new outreach initiatives for faculty (instructional track and tenure-track), graduate students, and undergraduates.**

Critical Tasks:

- Support and collaborate with Humanities for the Public Good.
- Expand faculty opportunities for partnerships with the Digital Studio and other entities that foster outreach and public humanities work.
- Encourage instruction-based outreach programs targeted at undergraduate majors.
- Encourage internships and career diversity for graduate students who are interested in community-based and nonprofit sector work.
- Create events in which graduate students share their research with local alums.
- Hire internship and outreach coordinator (with support of CLAS).

Indicators for Success:

- Increased collaboration between English and Humanities for the Public Good, Digital Studio, and other entities on campus that foster outreach and public humanities work.
- Increased number and variety of outreach opportunities for our majors.
- Increased internships and outreach opportunities for graduate students interested in community-based and nonprofit sector work.
- CLAS provides English Department with funding to hire an internship and outreach coordinator.

**Strategy: Promote connections between the English Department and departmental publications' communities of readers, writers, and scholars.**

Critical Tasks:

- Publicize English Department journals, faculty-edited book series, and significant publications within CLAS and broader University.
- Promote events and lectures related to department publications across campus and on social media platforms.
- Gather data about impact of departmental journals, faculty-edited book series, and faculty publications.

Indicators for Success:

- Increased awareness and appreciation of English Department journals, faculty-edited book series, and significant publications within CLAS and broader University.
- Stronger ties between English Department and departmental publications' communities of readers, writers, and scholars.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION and COLLABORATION –

***Goal: Diversify our faculty and students and support DEI initiatives both within our department and across the University.***

**Strategy: Recruit and retain diverse faculty.**

Critical Tasks:

- Extend diversity recruitment initiatives as part of the department's routine conversations about hiring.
- Rebuild excellence in African American literary and cultural studies through cluster hires.
- Partner with other units whenever possible to run searches in fields likely to include candidates from underrepresented minority groups such as Latinx, African American Studies, and GWSS.
- Establish mentoring program for newly hired underrepresented minority faculty.

Indicators for Success:

- CLAS authorization of diversity hiring initiatives and new lines in fields likely to include candidates from underrepresented minority groups.
- Hire multiple specialists in African American literary and cultural studies.
- Achievement of faculty demographics that approximates student demographics.
- Expanded collaborations with partner units.
- New mentoring program for newly hired underrepresented minority faculty.

**Strategy: Recruit and retain diverse graduate students.**

Critical Tasks:

- Hire diverse faculty to create an appropriate community for diverse graduate students.
- Develop departmental diversity recruitment and retention strategies for graduate programs.

Indicator for Success:

- Increased number of graduate students in our department from underrepresented minority groups.

**Strategy: Encourage faculty participation in DEI initiatives.**

Critical Tasks:

- Encourage BUILD certification training for all faculty, staff, and graduate instructors.
- Continue holding regular departmental events on topics relevant to departmental climate regarding DEI and DEI approaches to pedagogy.
- Encourage faculty participation in SRP.

Indicators for Success:

- Increased numbers of faculty, staff, and graduate instructors with BUILD certification training.
- Continuation of departmental events on topics relevant to departmental climate regarding DEI and DEI approaches to pedagogy.
- Increased faculty participation in SROP.

**Strategy: Diversify our undergraduate curriculum.**

Critical Tasks:

- Work as a department to incorporate diverse and inclusive material and pedagogy in all our courses.
- Establish Multiethnic Literatures requirement for the traditional major.
- Increase faculty diversity to provide appropriate community and learning environment for our diverse student population.

Indicators for Success:

- Inclusion of more diverse materials throughout our curriculum.

**Strategy: Expand international collaboration.**

Critical Tasks:

- Collaborate with UI partners such as International Programs to support international scholars who wish to work with our faculty.
- Support international faculty exchange.

Indicator for Success:

- Increased collaboration between departmental faculty and international scholars.

## **Appendix**

### **English Department Hiring Plan 2019-20**

#### **PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR FALL 2021** (search during 2020-21)

Creative Writing (associate or full)

African American literature and culture

Latinx, Native American, or Asian American literature and culture

#### **PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR FALL 2022** (search during 2021-22)

Digital Humanities/Book Studies

Literary Studies of Gender and Sexuality

#### **PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR FALL 2023** (search during 2022-23)

Creative Writing: Poetry

Modern British Literature and Culture

Creative Writing: Nonfiction Writing

#### **PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR FALL 2024** (search during 2023-2024)

Writing for Digital Media

Environmental Humanities

#### **PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR FALL 2025** (search during 2024-2025)

Creative Writing: Fiction

Contemporary World Literature