To: David Smith, Director of Assessment
Via: Enrico Pontelli, Dean, Arts and Sciences
From: Liz Schirmer, Interim Head
Date: 11 October 2017
Subject: 1-, 2-, and 5-year plan for Department of English

Below please find a five-year plan for the department of English, pursuant to our program review of 2016-17. The plan laid out below was developed by English department faculty and discussed by myself, Dean Pontelli, and Dean Pollack on October 11, 2017. In summary, the external review report describes a productive department with a strong record of faculty achievement in teaching and research. In addition to identifying areas of particular strength, such as our dedicated faculty and healthy PhD and MFA programs, the report includes suggestions for improvement, which inform the goals outlined below. The report offers a number of strategies for maximizing program health with limited resources. Nonetheless, a recurrent theme is the reviewers’ call for higher levels of funding and staffing to support department faculty, students, programs, also reflected below.

Five-Year Plan for the Department of English:

1-Year Goals (2017-2018)

- Address immediate staffing needs for the MFA program and advocate for a tenure-track hire to support the graduate and undergraduate curricula and advising in Creative Writing
- Address staffing concerns about the writing center as encouraged in the external review.
  - According to the review, “Good writing centers provide a valuable service to faculty and graduate students as well as undergraduates, and as such should be supported by the university as a whole.”
- Conduct personnel searches for the approved tenure-track hire in 20th and 21st-Century American Fiction and Film, a Visiting Assistant Professor in Fiction, and a permanent Department Head
- Review PhD program policies and student status to support students’ progress toward graduation and maximize limited advising resources
- Consider the impact of university initiatives on our students and programs, particularly:
  - ongoing revision of the General Education program on the statewide level
  - NMSU Strategic Initiative to Advance Experiential Learning
- Consider the external review’s recommendation to develop more democratic approaches to department governance. In particular, the department might discuss the role, composition, and title of the Advisory Committee as established in the bylaws, especially in relation to the role of the DH.
• Develop a new job description for the Director of Undergraduate Studies, including a
  new model of formal faculty mentoring for English majors and new initiatives for
  recruiting English majors.
• Assess library collections in order to advocate for the acquisition of key resources in
  English fields
  o As the reviewers noted, “We are concerned that NMSU’s library is so
    underfunded that it is unable to buy books needed by this department to do
    research.”

2-Year Goals (by end of spring 2019)
• Develop strategies for the long-term growth of the MA program in English. In
  conjunction with increased support for GAships, the department might discuss:
  o maximizing resources by increasing flexibility of electives and scheduling and
    consolidating or streamlining the MA emphases
  o decreasing reliance on split-level courses for MA and MFA students, many of
    whom completed BAs here
  o recruiting more strong students to the MA
• Brainstorm possible areas for growth and interdisciplinary collaboration in graduate
  programs to maximize limited resources and increase student learning.
• Advocate for increased funding for additional GAs, with the dual goals of supporting our
  graduate programs and the university writing program
  o The external reviewers recommend that the department “extend assistantship
    offers to no fewer than 20 new students each year, spread equitably among degree
    programs.”
• Discuss how to address General Education concerns, including:
  o addressing the need to lower course caps that exceed national best practices for
    writing courses. Citing NCTE’s recommendation of no more than 20 students in a
    writing class, the reviewers suggest 22 “at most” as an intermediate goal for
    reducing excessive course caps.
  o Consider developing more 200-level offerings that serve the current General
    Education program
  o addressing the need for quality General Education instruction and the concern to
    reduced exploited labor by advocating for increased GAships and college track
    lines
      ▪ the reviewers note that “Nationally, the working conditions of temporary
        faculty have received a great deal of attention and many universities have
        worked to reduce reliance upon this exploited labor.” They recommend
        that “no more than 6% of the department’s staffing should come from
        temporary faculty.”
• Seek administrative support in a plan to encourage support and retention of strong
  faculty. In particular, the department might discuss:
  o exploring equity issues raised by existing English salaries and teaching loads in
    all lines in comparison with departments across campus
  o advocating for salaries that compare with peer institutions
    ▪ "the inability to offer stronger salaries has hampered the department’s
      ability to hire and retain faculty...both the tenure-track and college-track
      faculty are underpaid relative to peer institutions"
• maintaining existing and seeking new opportunities to reduce teaching loads to support faculty research, creative productivity, and service.

5-Year Goals (by end of spring 2023)
• Reach faculty numbers and diversity recommended in the external review report, including:
  o “the creation of at least 2-3 new tenured or tenure track faculty lines—in addition to any replacement lines due to the department because of attrition.”
  o “making a diversity hire a priority,” and considering additional diversity hire possibilities given the loss of faculty since the external review.
  o achieving increased retention of existing faculty
• Review our undergraduate curriculum. Possible topics for discussion might include:
  o reducing the major to 36 credits
  o increasing flexibility by moving toward distribution requirements rather than required courses
  o consolidating or streamlining tracks
  o continue to advocate for tenure-track hires to support the undergraduate program.
• If applicable, implement any approved revisions of the MA in English (see above, under 2-year plan)
• Revise the bylaws as needed to increase democratic participation within the department and implement any agreed-upon changes to departmental governance.
  o As the external reviewers note: "We recommend that the department revisits its bylaws with the aim of assuring greater shared governance. This should include separating the Associate Chair position from the Writing Program Administrator position and shuffling the composition of the Advisory Committee to deemphasize the Head’s role in determining its members."