

Review of the MFA Results and Report on Curricular Change

B. A. English

Spring 2004

Reviewing results of student comments on the 2001-2002 SLU Exit Exam, we find our English Majors well satisfied with the quality of their degree program: 81.8% rated themselves "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the quality of their degree program, while 86.4% rated themselves "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the overall quality of the English Department. In the area of opportunities to interact with faculty outside of class, 86.3% of English Majors were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied," while 77.3% were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with faculty interest in the students' academic development and 81.8% were equally pleased with the quality of instruction in their advanced courses. English Majors gave some of their highest ratings to English Departmental advising, with 86.4% judging themselves "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their advisor's concern for their academic goals. One student's narrative comments expressed appreciation to Dr. Mary Sue Ply, English Major advisor: "I owe her many thanks and believe that she is a credit to the university."

Further providing assessment of our Majors' competency in language and literature, the English Department maintains the policy that all English Majors must maintain at least a C average in all major classes in order to graduate.

In the area of scholarly research and criticism, the department continues to require a thorough knowledge of research and MLA documentation format beginning in English 102. Critical papers and/or research papers are required at every level of the major courses, and these are also evaluated for correct use of MLA documentation. Well over 80% of our Majors anticipating graduation in the next two semesters have a B or better in LS 102, also demonstrating research competency. In fact, 95.5% of our English Majors judged themselves "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their ability to use library resources in the field of English.

In the area of plans after graduation, 13.6% of English Majors taking the 2001-2002 Exit Survey already had a full-time job, with 54.5% seeking a full-time position. Over 27% of English Majors had been accepted or were awaiting acceptance into graduate school, while 59.1% planned to attend graduate school in the future.

Improving our English Majors' global awareness and multicultural knowledge, the English Department is now conducting a search for one tenure-track position in the field of World Literature/Classical Literature/Literature of the Americas with stress on issues of race and sexualities from a global perspective. This new position will expand current teaching in global issues in our department and add to the many courses specified in our Assessment Plan focusing on literature and culture from a global perspective. They will only add to the many courses specified in our Assessment Plan focusing on literature and culture from a global perspective. Meanwhile, our faculty encourages students to take advantage of the several Study Abroad programs offered by SLU which will provide valuable real-life encounters with the places and people inspiring our literary studies and will add to research and classroom experiences.

One possible area for improvement, according to student ratings in the Exit Survey, concerns the encouragement English Majors feel they received from faculty with regard to finding employment in their field, with 36.3% of respondents describing

themselves as “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied.” Though the English Department cannot make great changes in present job market fluctuations, our faculty can offer students suggestions of the many professions and fields for which a student is prepared with an English degree. In Spring 2004, the Writing Center offered a panel discussion for English Majors on “What I can do with an English degree.” Such discussions should continue.