June 5, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mark H. Gromko, Vice Provost for Academic Programs  
Program Review Committee  
Donald Nieman, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Thomas L Wymer, Chair

RE: Response to PRC Report

CC: English Department Full-time Faculty

Responding appropriately to a document of this sort at this time of year has not been an easy task, but I have met twice with available Department members, made drafts available to all, and solicited and incorporated suggestions and revisions from many. The result, I believe, faithfully represents the Department’s views.

The following discussion follows the order and is based primarily on the “Recommendations” of the Program Review Committee Report, with occasional reference to its “Findings.”

1) A more focused and integrated mission statement.
We agree. Our mission statement has not been revised for some time and would benefit from a careful reexamination, and we can do so, as suggested, by the end of next Fall. As indicated below, however, our notion of what constitutes an appropriate focus differs from that of PRC. And though we consider our graduate programs to be important, we anticipate that our revised mission statement, in keeping with that of the University, will emphasize the importance of our undergraduate programs, any focus on which is conspicuously lacking in the PRC report.

2) Graduate Programs
We agree that “The Department ought to develop its graduate program by building on existing strengths,” but we disagree with the assumption in the PRC findings and recommendations that several of our programs are lacking in strength to the degree of expendability. That assumption seems to be based on a number of misunderstandings about the nature of English departments, misunderstandings that lead to several contradictions within the PRC report.

The External Reviewers’ Report, on the other hand, begins with this statement:

English departments in public institutions like Bowling Green State University are typically large and complex. They include a variety of degree programs and
activities and include in their mission very substantial service to other degree programs, particularly through composition, general education, and instruction in English for speakers of other languages.

Their view of the complex and multi-faceted nature of English Studies is based on a national perspective, but it is also true of major university departments of English in Ohio, as the following table illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>PhD Programs</th>
<th>MA Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent State University</td>
<td>2, in Literature &amp; Literacy and Rhetoric &amp; Social Practice</td>
<td>5 concentrations, in Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, Teachers (like an MAT), TESL, Comparative Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami University</td>
<td>3, English &amp; Am Literature, Literary Theory, Rhetoric &amp; Composition</td>
<td>5 concentrations, in Literature, Creative Writing, Composition &amp; Rhetoric, MAT, M of Tech &amp; Sci Com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
<td>1, 20th Cent English &amp; Comparative Literature</td>
<td>4 concentrations, in Literature, Creative Writing, Linguistics, Professional Writing and Editing</td>
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As difficult as it may be to find a sense of common cause with such a variety of programs, that is what English departments do in universities like BGSU in size and stature. The greater problems we have had in doing so reflect the fact that we have remained seriously understaffed for the last decade, our efforts at recovery having been matched by continuing losses.

Indeed, there is a strong basis for a sense of common cause within the Department which is endemic as well to English Studies, a real symbiosis and interdependence among such programs and their varying humanistic, critical, creative, and practical emphases, as well as a reinforcing feedback between graduate and undergraduate programs. That symbiosis is especially evident in our undergraduate programs. The Integrated Language Arts program, which accounts for our largest single group of majors, especially illustrates the complexity and comprehensiveness of English Studies. ILA students take courses in literature, composition, linguistics and grammar, and creative writing, and will need all in the context in which they will teach. In addition, many of our other students link major/minor or double major programs within the Department, with varying combinations of literature, creative writing, and scientific and technical writing.

Similar interdependence is found in graduate programs. The Rhetoric and Writing PhD program utilizes and draws strength from the Department’s MA programs. To begin with, it accepts well-qualified graduates of the department’s MA and MFA programs—students who have, over the years, made strong contributions within the PhD program. The program requires courses in linguistics and literary theory, and its cognate option means that some students develop concentrations in literature, technical writing, or TESL. Indeed, the option to take such concentrations is an important part of Rhetoric & Writing students’ professional preparation, which serves to make graduates more marketable and which also serves as a recruiting tool for attracting good doctoral students to begin with. Because of their work with literature, TESL and technical writing faculty, Rhetoric & Writing students sometimes develop scholarly and
teaching interests in these areas, and they sometimes ask faculty from other areas to serve in addition to the two Rhetoric & Writing faculty members our policies call for on dissertation committees. Because MA program courses, and the faculty contacts they promote, are integral to the PhD program, ending any of those programs would weaken the quality and competitiveness of BGSU’s Rhetoric & Writing PhD.

Similar synergies exist among other graduate programs. Within the department, for instance, the Teaching of Writing (a Rhetoric & Writing offering) is required in the TESL MA and elected by other MA and MFA students. Creative Writing faculty see the MA program in literature as providing a vital dimension to the MFA, providing students with a broader context in which to place their own original work, and some literature courses are taught by MFA faculty. The growing interest in globalization being pursued by the Technical Writing program opens up connections with the MATESL program—a student recently completed a dual MA in the two programs. Although the MATESL and ESL programs are distinct in many ways, fruitful synergies exist between the two, including that fact that MATESL students provide staff for ESL placement testing at minimal cost, while MATESL interns staff 3-4 sections of undergraduate ESL classes every year, doing so as part of their program and without compensation. MATESL can also offer valuable options to secondary teachers pursuing an MA (see 5 below).

The kind of focusing on “centerpiece” programs that PRC recommends, however, is something that is more typically done in English departments on the doctoral level, as Cincinnati has done in maintaining a variety of MA programs, including a broad-based Literature program, while defining its PhD as concentrating on 20th Century Literature. A centerpiece program that operates to the exclusion of others, however, is not likely to be a healthy program. That other programs serve to nourish a centerpiece program is apparent in other departments as well in our own university. Chemistry, for example, boasts its Center for Photochemical Sciences, which feeds significantly into its graduate program, yet its MA and MS programs “offer thesis research opportunities in the traditional areas of organic, inorganic, analytical, physical, and biochemistry” (BGSU 2000-2002 Graduate Catalog, 79).

What we have on the MA level in English is a number of highly viable “niche” programs, the development of which over the last few decades has anticipated the more recent call by President Ribeau for just such programs. The University’s concern for focused innovation should not ignore or short-change existing niche programs that seek to maintain their innovative edge.

As for the recommendation (2.c.) that the Department not have a separate MA program in literature, the literature faculty enjoy serving the needs of graduate students in Creative Writing and Rhetoric and Writing, but the primary interest of most of these students is not literary study. American Culture Studies students tend to have a greater interest in literature, and there are a number of faculty in the English Department with an interest in culture studies. So cross-listing graduate courses with ACS makes good sense—and has been done for many years. In fact, the many collaborative relations of our programs with others outside the Department make fundamental contributions to and hence are part of the strength of both—Literature with Women’s Studies, Theatre, and Ethnic Studies as well as ACS, collaboration that includes cross-listing courses and serving on and chairing dissertation and thesis committees; Technical Writing with the Masters in Accounting and with the College of Technology (on the undergraduate as well as graduate level); MATESL with foreign language departments. These are all programs that profit from collaboration among independent programs. None is likely
to profit from one absorbing the other. The elimination of any of the Department’s MA programs, then, would have repercussions for departments and colleges across the University.

More specifically, eliminating the MA program in English and replacing it with some sort of fuller “integration” with ACS would only preserve a portion of what was the English MA and would undermine the kind of breadth in literary studies that is necessary for even a respectable undergraduate program. Nor would it meet the needs of those literature faculty who specialize in British or postcolonial literature, or those who prefer and practice approaches to literature other than culture studies. For these faculty, maintaining a separate MA in English is essential to their intellectual vitality and careers as active scholars. Nor would such an approach satisfy the needs of many of the students we can attract who will be seeking courses in literature.

The MA program should perhaps be redesigned so that it doesn’t appear to overlap so much with the ACS MA—and so that it attracts better students. But eliminating it would weaken the existing synergy between graduate and undergraduate programs and undermine the collaboration between literary study in English and other departments. It would have an absolutely devastating effect on a literature faculty already demoralized by the loss of the doctoral program in literature. It would also make it much more difficult to attract strong job candidates (with real scholarly potential) to the English Department or to retain the strongest and most marketable of those we have or might in the future attract.

On this issue, therefore, we look to the choice PRC offers in its Findings section between greater collaboration among units and reducing the number of graduate concentrations as a means of making better use of resources. We choose the former—though PRC seems to prefer the latter. We do so for two major reasons: first, because the latter choice is not likely to serve and is more likely to undermine PRC’s recommendation for an integrated departmental mission; and second, because we agree with experts in the field of English Studies as exhibited in the portion of the conclusion of the External Reviewers’ Report which states, “While the complexity of the Department can present a challenge for the Department itself and for administrators outside it, we believe abandoning any of the Department’s current programs would not serve it or the campus well.”

Certainly there is room for greater collaboration among units in the Department, but our strategy in preparing the Department self-study seems to have obscured the extent to which we—and the profession in general—already do collaborate across sub-specializations, or are increasingly prone to do so. The many existing programmatic interconnections cited above provide a sound basis for greater cooperation, and there are other stimuli we might capitalize upon. For example, successful recruiting efforts for new faculty are increasingly dependent on flexible boundaries between some specializations. Technical communication specialists, for example, typically come out of rhetoric and composition PhD programs and are attracted to BGSU in part because of the hope of some degree of participation in our rhetoric and composition doctoral program. Creative writers expect to participate in our MA literature program as well as in the MFA.

Finally, issues associated with Program Review have already inspired an increased spirit of collaboration in the Department—at least as indicated by numbers of department meetings, 5 so far in 2002.

We will, therefore, continue to explore modifications to graduate programs that might promote increased viability and integration, and, as suggested in the PRC Report,
we will report on on-going activities and on any new initiatives we might come up with by the end of next fall.

3) Position Requests
Future position requests will be made on the basis of the revised mission, and we will do so as well on the basis of programmatic development and priorities. For at least the last two decades this has, in fact, been an A&S College policy, which we have followed. But it is difficult to understand how replacement of lost faculty will not be a factor. We have long operated under the directive that replacement positions are not automatic, but faculty losses due to resignation, retirement, or administrative assignment are often an unavoidable part of the context out of which position requests are made. Indeed, sometimes agreements involving faculty reassignment or reaffiliation are made with the promise of replacement positions. We expect faculty losses, therefore, to continue to be a factor when relevant.

The recommendation in PRC Findings that requests for Literature faculty “must be related to plans for the faculty to participate in existing graduate programs” is answered in 2 above.

4) Prioritize Initiatives
This is something else we have always done perforce, in keeping with College policies, and in the context of the Department as a whole. It will be done also in the light of our revised mission statement.

5) Integrated Language Arts
The Department has long been committed to offering the literature courses necessary for the success of ILA students. Those that ILA students take, with the exception of 343, Adolescent Literature, are the same courses taken by BA Literature students and are taught by the same literature faculty, while other faculty are likewise heavily involved in the ILA program in courses appropriate to their discipline (see 2 above). Additional examples of faculty involvement in ILA include:

- Several faculty in Rhetoric and Writing (Alvarez, Blair, Calderonello) have been involved in course development for the last year in connection with the Partners in Context and Community grant, which targets improved middle and secondary school teacher preparation.
- Two literature faculty (Begum and Meyers) and one in R&W (Carter) are also participating this summer and next fall in the same program.
- Several faculty (Alvarez, Blair, Calderonello, Wymer) have been serving for the last 2-3 years on subcommittees of the Teacher Quality Success Initiative branch of the TQSP program.
- One faculty member (Blair) served on the GEAR-UP team of professional development consultants from A&S and Education, attending weekly meetings of middle school teachers, observing classes, and conducting grant-writing workshops.
- In summer and AY 2002-03 one faculty member (Blair) will coordinate an eportfolio initiative with first-year students in the Partnerships in Context and Community Learning Community and will serve as an online facilitator for faculty enrolled in PCC’s web-based professional development system, Discover CTL.
As for the reference in the PRC Findings to our determining “how important ILA is to the over-all objectives of the Department,” as indicated above, ILA students constitute by far the greatest numbers of our majors, and commitment to the preparation of teachers of English (which remains what ILA graduates primarily teach) is still nationally seen as a major concern and responsibility of the profession of English Studies and has been recognized as a major commitment of this University and Department since their inception.

That ILA students are not adequately prepared in literature is due not to the comprehensiveness of the courses or the quality of instruction, but to the design of the program itself. I am happy to say that the College of Education is dealing with this problem, has met this spring and is continuing to meet this summer with representatives of the major departments involved in ILA, and has agreed to program changes that should correct the situation. These include:

• Requirement of both British Literature surveys (264 & 265) instead of a choice of only one,
• Requirement of either ENG 261 and THEA 348 or ENG 262 and THEA 347 (the ENG and THEA two-course world literature/world drama series) in place of a one-course choice from a larger group of courses that included these,
• Revision of the options for the diversity choice that emphasize literature (ENG or THEA), with the additional option that a student’s program will qualify as a minor in English if the choice for this group is an ENG course (310 or 314)—having an official minor is especially important for students who want to teach out of state,
• An additional requirement that students must pass the Praxis II exam before admission to the Methods course,
• A raise in requirements for GPA in the major to 2.8,
• Open acknowledgement that timely completion of the program presupposes well-prepared students and that others may have to take additional courses.

These meetings have already improved relations between the Department and the College of Education, though changes are still pending final approval by the respective departments and the College of Education. But the program thus revised will be more in line with student needs, especially in terms of passing Praxis II, and are expected to substantially improve the outcomes of the ILA program.

The greatest promise for increased involvement of the Department in teacher education, however, is on the graduate level. New teachers are now required to complete a masters degree within seven years of graduation in order to obtain permanent licensure, and most of them hunger for a discipline-based program. They constitute a ready, fee-paying audience if we can work out ways of reaching them. We can adapt our own Plan II MA for this purpose as well as provide courses for students in the College of Education’s MAT program. As ILA teachers, however, these students would be interested in the full range of our graduate courses, including work in literature, TESL, and writing, both composition and technical communication. And the range of available choices would be part of the attractiveness of such a program. This is, in short, a potential growth area that could serve to strengthen all our graduate programs, feed back fruitfully into our undergraduate program, and be highly cost-effective for the University.

6) Reassignment Policy
We will explore this, though a new policy is probably not necessary since it is largely covered by the University Charter (the section on Affiliation, which covers department compensation for faculty otherwise “released from their usual . . . responsibilities to participate in . . . activities associated with or for extradepartmental or school units,” B-I.A). Part of our problem is simply that most of us, both faculty and administrators, have not paid enough attention to the Charter. The only policy change necessary, therefore, would be our insisting on the provisions of the Charter when the possibility of re-assignment comes up again, and being more specific about replacement by a tenure-line position when the loss warrants it. It is not otherwise appropriate for a department to oppose the professional development goals of its members when their qualifications seem appropriate. However the department must insist on appropriate compensation for any resulting loss.

As for encouraging outside assignees to return, our options are limited. We definitely expect the return of at least one. Some are less certain and may return at some indefinite future time, or not. Some faculty with outside assignments are highly unlikely to ever return. While we would welcome the return of any of these and have already made that clear, it is difficult to see the appropriateness of encouraging anyone to leave a position with which he or she is satisfied. Even more inappropriate would be to exert such pressure when the individual involved is being actively encouraged by University administrators to remain, which is often the case.

7) Doctoral Teaching Loads
The Department has long followed a policy much like that recommended by PRC. Our “default teaching load” for tenure-line faculty is in fact 3/3, while the load for graduate faculty is 3/2. Over the years a number of tenured faculty less interested in research and not interested in graduate teaching have accepted the 3/3 load. We have also provided an additional course release (usually off the 3/2 graduate faculty load and resulting in a 2/2 load) for faculty heavily involved in dissertation advising. The 2/2 load has included some faculty in programs other than Rhetoric and Writing (recall that such involvement is cited in 2 above), but this degree of release has been rare, never having been extended to more than 2-3 individuals/year, and only 1 such release is scheduled for next year. In addition we have provided two research release courses to new tenure-line faculty during their probationary period; in the past we were able to grant an occasional release to tenured faculty who could apply on the basis of a special research project, but this has not been done for several years since probationers have been given priority and faculty turnover in English has been great enough for us to average 7.7 probationers a year over the last 6 years. The College has announced a policy that limits such releases to one for the 6-year period for probationers beginning fall 2002, though it is not clear whether that will make any research releases again available to tenured faculty. Add to this the fact that teaching demands on graduate students have made graduate research assistants a rare faculty privilege in the past and a virtual impossibility in the present.

Our existing policy, therefore, seems to be more than consistent with PRC recommendations, and far more rigorous than that of many departments. If, as the PRC Report notes, a 2/2 load is not an entitlement in some doctoral departments, we have reason to believe it is virtually so in most. In the spirit of equity, therefore, we believe that policies with regard to teaching loads ought to be examined and made public on a college-wide basis. The English Department has experienced recent reductions in support staff, in our operating budget, and in faculty administrative release time, all in the
name of consistency and equity among A&S departments. If our policy with regard to administrative release time was more liberal than that of some, it could be seen to have compensated to some degree for our more stringent limitations on research releases and support. That balance, we believe, no longer obtains.

We plan, therefore, to develop a clearer and more reasonable policy, but we hope to be able to do so in the context of fuller information provided by the College of its various departments’ practices and policies.

8) Expanded roles for Literature faculty
Pending hires will make increased involvement of Literature faculty in General Studies Literature (GSL) possible to a small degree. But the literature faculty are already heavily involved in the Integrated Language Arts program (see 2 and 5 above); in this respect, recommendation 8a seems based on a fundamental misunderstanding. The literature faculty have been generally unable to participate as fully as they would like in the General Education program simply because there have been too few of them even to staff the courses required for English majors. Offering large lecture sections of English major courses (with or without “breakout” sections) would be impossible, since there are currently not enough majors to fill such sections. Further, offering large lecture sections of GSL courses (again with breakout sections) would be impossible without recruiting more graduate students with a literary focus. And, of course, eliminating the MA in English (see 2c above) would hardly achieve that end. Getting more strong lecturers and tenure-line faculty into the GSL program would be an excellent way of persuading more students to major in English—and to improve the literary education of general students. But this worthy goal could be achieved only if the number of literature faculty were increased.

Finally, while recommendation 8 purports to “expand” the role of the literature faculty of the Department, it actually works to marginalize them, reduce their importance, and subordinate them to other faculty in the Department. It makes no mention of the English MA or the undergraduate English major (which are of critical importance to both the University and the literature faculty). Like recommendation 2c, it encourages the literature faculty to devote all their time to serving students who lack a primary interest in literature (Gen Ed students, ILA majors). It also encourages these faculty to devote more time training other individuals to teach literature (many of whom lack a genuine interest in doing so)—when these faculty ought to be teaching literature themselves. Most importantly, it overlooks the fact that faculty in any field are dependent for intellectual enrichment and inspiration on students whose primary interest is the field itself, not some related field. Would the Sociology faculty be satisfied teaching sociology primarily to General Education students and non-Sociology majors? Would the History faculty be satisfied merely serving the needs of other departments and General Studies students—and participating in graduate programs only other than their own?

Both recommendations 2c and 8 seem based on a vision of the role of the literature faculty which is disrespectful of them, reductive of them, and wholly unable to provide the sort of teaching environment which faculty need in order to grow intellectually, be inspired to continue to teach, and maintain their scholarly momentum.

9) Writing Across the Curriculum
The Department endorses the PRC recommendation that a Writing Across the Curriculum program should be developed, and that the Rhetoric & Writing faculty should be involved in its design and administrative organization. It is pleased to see that pro-
gress is already being made along these lines and that long standing efforts by the De-
partment in this direction (going back to the 1980s) may finally receive sufficient sup-
port.

This spring the Dean devoted a meeting of A&S Chairs and Directors to a pre-
liminary exploration of need and likely support from College programs; he has met
with Rhetoric & Writing faculty and several other key individuals to discuss ap-
proaches; and he has provided support for a study by a Rhetoric & Writing faculty
member (Carter). Rhetoric faculty members, beginning in 2001, developed a number of
grass-roots WAC initiatives that are now underway, e.g.: discussions of WAC ap-
proaches in the advanced writing pedagogy course, two summer WAC courses, several
Gradstep workshops, a fall writing administration course, and follow-up spring 2003
activities.

By its very nature, Writing Across the Curriculum extends beyond any one de-
partment. But the Rhetoric & Writing program, and the English Department as a
whole, wants to be actively involved in the development and operation of an effective
WAC program. Of course resources of various kinds will be necessary to make in-
volve more than a discretionary “volunteer” activity on the part of faculty and
graduate students.

10) General Studies Writing
In the fall of 2001, Rhetoric faculty members developed a document (which the Chair
discussed with the Dean) dealing with ways Rhetoric & Writing faculty could relate to
GSW in the future. This document is being revised and updated, and discussions will
continue in light of the PRC recommendation to develop a proposal “within the limita-
tions described in the findings.”

Since most anticipated means of individual participation in GSW are uncompen-
sated, discretionary activities, we wonder about the requirement for a formal proposal
to be approved by the Chair and then the Dean. Formal review and approval may
make more sense for that part of the requested report detailing with “objectives with
regard to GSW.” But on this point some conflict exists in the PRC Finding’s simultane-
ous acknowledgement that lack of authority over GSW complicates Rhetoric & Writing
involvement, and its conclusion that GSW autonomy makes such authority inapprop-
iate. Perhaps the Dean’s recommendations will help clarify the kind of “objectives with
regard to GSW” that are appropriate: voluntary connections by colleagues with experi-
ence and expertise relevant to first-year writing, or more formal matters of policy and
governance.

On some matters of policy and governance—those involving faculty expertise
and department authority—we already have a clear understanding. Since first-year
writing is part of the field usually called Rhetoric and Composition, GSW directors
should hold doctorates in this field. The English Department has a Rhetoric and Com-
position faculty, a PhD program in the area, and a long history of involvement with the
GSW program. So some English-GSW connections are clear. Faculty rank/tenure of a
GSW director should be in the English Department, so that the director’s experience
and doctoral background in rhetoric and composition can strengthen the PhD program
(and other programs) and so that collegial, supportive relationships can develop natu-
really with other rhetoric faculty. The Department and its specialist faculty members
should have central roles in recruiting and hiring the faculty member who serves as
GSW director; possibly the directorship could rotate among interested, qualified mem-
bers of the rhetoric faculty. The Department and its tenured faculty should be involved
in evaluation, promotion, and tenure of the faculty member serving as GSW director. Such matters will inform the broad objectives we are likely to propose with regard to the GSW program.

11) **Assessment**
The Department intends to follow the recommendation that it continue developing its assessment efforts. A first step likely in the fall semester is joint discussion of the PRC recommendations and our own and the Dean’s response by members of The Central Advisory Committee, the Graduate Committee, and the Undergraduate Committee.