

## **E. Action plan for the English Studies Department's Programs**

In the next five years, we plan to build upon existing strengths and improve the English Studies Department in a number of ways. Our vision for the future intends to incorporate changes with

our discipline, to expand in areas that need change or growth and to address the national phenomenon of declining enrollments, particularly in the arts and humanities.

**1. We will work to create new assessments in more of our classes concerning student work that will complement and extend existing assessment of our course objectives.** Additionally, we will continue to work on developing more concentration-specific assessments. We will also seek ways to incorporate student feedback, developing some tools to gauge student comments and utilizing feedback from alumni. We will look for opportunities to find out more about how students within our concentrations utilize the skills we teach them in the workplace.

**2. We will develop and expand existing initiatives within the department.** These include expanding our Internships outside the campus and continuing and growing the Writing Associates outreach. We will continue plans for our Speech minor and formalize a proposal for that will enhance students' academic options in this area of study. We will also expand our current curriculum development in cultural studies, contributing to our own concentrations and to the many other interdisciplinary minors English Studies supports, for example, Film Studies, Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Disability Studies.

**3. We will continue to showcase the exceptional work of our faculty and students.**

Our very active faculty and their engagement with our students in campus activities will be further extended in extra and co-curricular activities. We will seek continued institutional support for events we

create -- like our Cormier Symposia and our Poetry and New England Writers Series to encourage even greater levels of student participation. Further, to highlight the tremendous strength of FSU as an institution, we will promote our ongoing English Studies faculty research and scholarship on campus and in at large in both the Fitchburg and Massachusetts community.

#### **4. Each of our three concentrations has a specific plan in mind.**

Implicit in the future vision of the Literature Concentration -- which emphasizes reading and critical thinking, teaches the analysis of genre and form, explores the scope of literature, the history of its ideas and its tradition, educates in research and information literacy and equips students with the knowledge and skills for understanding and analyzing texts of all kinds -- is to strengthen our students' connections to the discipline, to scholarship in the field, and to career opportunities. This training is achieved through emphasizing, in addition to academic offerings, conference presentations on and off campus, participation in the Sigma Tau Delta Honor Society, English Club, workshops with faculty, other co-curricular activities, and through student publications. This concentration has expanded course offerings in global literatures and cultures, adding Latin American literature to its global coverage that includes (as well as British and American) the literatures of Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia as we continue to prepare students to become accomplished professionals and engaged global citizens.

The Secondary Education Initial Licensure concentration, committed to developing knowledgeable, skillful, caring, and ethical educators, seeks in the future to promote a greater number of secondary education students graduating with Bachelor of Arts degrees (incorporating a language) rather than Bachelor of Science degrees; specifically, this concentration would like to see an increase in second language competency among our graduates since teacher candidates who can speak multiple language are better able to support and serve the students and families

living in many Massachusetts communities. In addition, their vision includes strengthening our collaboration with the middle school program (currently housed in the Education Department). Because students in our secondary education program work synergistically with middle school teacher candidates, they share a number of courses and develop ongoing dialogues about education. This synergy is valuable, and our professors in this field would like to support students who are engaged in pursuing an initial licensure in 5th- 8th grade English. We hope to continue to strengthen and further develop relationships between the community and the university by offering more professional development workshops for local secondary school English departments, and are in the process of exploring the possibility of creating and offering onsite graduate-level coursework for secondary education teachers.

The Professional Writing concentration seeks to challenge students to innovate with language. It aims to help graduate see themselves as producers of texts as they study the process and the products of other writers, analyze rhetorical situations, and interpret cultural contexts while they practice and experiment with a wide range of styles and genres. Their current vision involves reorganizing and assessing course offerings in creative writing, professional writing, journalism and rhetorical and cultural study in accordance with their reiterated emphasizing having curricular requirements be more flexible and responsive to their students' needs.

**4. As a department, we will seek to develop projects that will expand our community outreach which helps attract students to FSU and our major since enrollments in the arts and humanities is an increasing challenge nation-wide.**

Our department is already involved in several ongoing projects that raise the department and university's profile, and which contribute to community outreach. Our High School Writing Competition that reaches out to area schools and their teachers continues to be health with over 50 people attending this year. Our Writers series and Film series are open to the community. Additionally, our Secondary Education teachers are

seeking to strengthen and further develop relationships between the community and the university by offering professional development workshops for local secondary school English departments both onsite and at FSU. We also seek to build stronger ties between our university paper and the outlying community, both in the way of coverage and through the creation of more professional local internships.

#### **5. We will examine reasons for students' non-completion in English Studies.**

SSC data has made easier the task of tracking student non-completers. We now need to further probe the reasons and to track cause surrounding student retention in English Studies concentrations. We hope to use the SSC data in future that is specific to our department to address the areas in which we can help our students – majors and minors -- so as to increase our students' success and maintain the health of our major.