Accomplishments

As you have heard, increasing public awareness of Indiana State University’s accomplishments is crucial to building student enrollment, influencing policy makers, and developing a place of pre-eminence in the Midwest. What do you consider to be your department’s accomplishments for the 2006-2007 year that will contribute to this effort? [Please list in priority order and limit to no more than 8.]

1. Scholarly Activity. Members of the English faculty continue to be productive, being recognized in local, regional, national, and even international contexts; by association, ISU’s reputation is enhanced.
2. Teaching Effectiveness. Members of the English faculty are recognized for the quality of their teaching; comparative data on SIRs show that they perform above the ISU average; members are selected quite often for teaching awards (a Caleb Mills winner this year, joining three previous winners); even Rateyourteacher.com shows our faculty in a good light.
3. Student Performance. Students in all strands of our curriculum show measures of success, whether they include a 2006 Hines Medal winner, graduate students heading to doctoral programs, student teachers receiving high ratings, or high percentages of students making the Dean’s List.
4. Faculty–Student Engagement. One of our strengths is the active connection between faculty and students. Faculty and students collaborate on projects, attend conferences together, work together on some committees, and work together on publications. All of these suggest the closeness that exists among those who work in the Department.
5. Program Development. We are working to enhance the programs in the Department. We are not reconfiguring the curriculum because the basic structure and sequence are good; however, we are working toward creating stronger sequencing of content within the courses and finding ways to avoid the repetition of experiences. Further, we are creating more—and more varied—General Education offerings (i.e., Literature and Life courses addressing new topics of interest).

Research and Scholarship

What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of research and scholarship that is focused primarily on contributions to practice and discipline-based scholarship? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?


Grants, Contracts & Off Campus Professional Service

What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of grants, contracts, and off campus professional service? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?

In recent years, we have made minor strides in grant-getting (which is no surprise since the fine arts and humanities do not have the money allotted in the sciences). More faculty are learning to navigate grant-getting waters and are, increasingly, becoming more ambitious. Although I have encouraged grant writing, this year’s grants were small and ISU based: GRANTS: Stan Evans, Liberal Learning in Action Grant, Center for Public Service and Community Engagement. Stan Evans, Project Director. Project Title: “Human Rights Day 2006: A Community Outreach to Seventh Graders.” Awarded November 2005. Doug Martin, University Arts Endowment Grant, for a poetry manuscript entitled Into the World Over and Over. Office of Sponsored Programs. Indiana State University, 2005. Nan McEntire, Center for Teaching and Learning: Instructional Development Grant, 2005 (Funding for folk musicians, visit to Indiana State University). Nan McEntire, Director. “Experiencing Indiana Folk Music Firsthand” awarded February 2005.

Teaching

We would like to highlight innovative approaches to teaching. Has your department developed any pedagogies or practices you’d like to share with us? Please describe briefly.

We are, at heart, a text-based discipline with rather traditional teaching methods—made even more traditional by the demands placed on teachers by class sizes. Teachers try collaborative work, for example, but find that forming groups when the class has forty-five students in a not-so-spacious room is sometimes unproductive. That said, more and more English faculty are exploring ways to
use technology with their classes—when they can get their classes scheduled in the “smart rooms” allotted to us. Additionally, more and more faculty are using the Internet to create what once would have been “reserve readings” and to create discussions groups/blogs.

Course Scheduling/Enrollment Management

What have been your greatest challenges in scheduling courses to meet student needs this year? How were you able to overcome them?

Because of strong enrollments in both strands of our undergraduate major and the sheer number of Basic Studies courses we need to offer, the very process of aligning the schedule is a challenge, albeit a straightforward one. The most complicated and frustrating challenge, however, is the staffing of classes (typically Basic Studies courses in composition) with insufficient funds. We have a suitable number of able temporary staff, but we cannot fully predict whether we will be able to cover the classes that are currently unassigned (for instance, eight sections of freshman writing classes are, at present, unstaffed; if we get no more funding for adjuncts, I’ll simply have to merge sections up to enrollment limits or cancel some of those sections). This element of enrollment management is, without question, the greatest challenge. With a fairly small graduate program, it has also been challenging to provide programmatic course coverage, while at the same time providing a teaching rotation among faculty with graduate standing.

Outreach

What are the outreach opportunities for your discipline? (non-traditional modes of delivery and timing, etc)

The Department carries the majority of courses offered in the Correctional Education Program’s bachelor degree curriculum and also offers several General Education literature and writing courses through Web-based and Distance Education technology. See above.

Strategic Initiatives

Development Activities

What steps have you taken to support development activities in your department? How can your efforts be supported?

Department development can be encouraged in a variety of ways: I have begun work with the Foundation Office to enhance the Schick Lecture Series. We will be working to discover ways both to increase awareness of the program throughout the region (for example, by advertising at colleges and universities within a 200-mile radius) and to enhance the series itself: provide enhanced technical support for the presentations, create a more professional environment for the lectures by upgrading the lecture room, correlate the speakers with course offerings, create archival records of the entire series, and so on. In conjunction with the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, the Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Committee, we will regularize course offerings and develop more predictable course sequences—in a sense, creating a four-year schedule for undergraduate offerings and a two-year schedule for graduate. I am further committed to a strong program of faculty development. This spring, I observed the classes of pre-tenure faculty and will continue this practice, along with emphasizing a strong mentoring program related to junior faculty members’ scholarship. These efforts will, I believe, ensure that junior faculty receive both developmental and summative assessments as they move through their pre-tenure years. I am committed to encouraging faculty to write grants to support their work. This spring, I ushered Doug Martin through the process of applying for a Promising Scholar Grant (he was awarded $13,000). With encouragement, perhaps we will be able to take advantage of what limited funds are available in the humanities. As part of the Arts and Sciences efforts to increase external funding of
Department activities, I have worked with Tom Sauer and Abigail Miley (see below).

Community Engagement

Please summarize your faculty’s efforts in community engagement this year.

Current activities have been strongest in two areas: creative writing and internships. The Creative writing program offers regular readings—at local restaurants, at Cunningham Memorial Library, at the Swope Gallery, and other venues—which traditionally include members from the community. Contests for local creative writers have been an even more direct approach to engaging the community. Our internship opportunities within the community have also created useful associations—with businesses and associations through the region and state. However, other activities have taken English faculty into the community. Several faculty visit local schools on a regular basis—Aaron Morales and Doug Martin go out to talk to students in creative writing classes, and I do regular presentations at faculty in-service meetings in Vigo, Clay, Parke, and Vermillion Counties. In another way, our Department’s publications—Indiana English and The Folklore Historian—serve the regional community in a special way.

Experiential Learning

We are interested in hearing about any innovative approaches you might have taken to incorporate experiential learning into your course or departmental work this year.

Within their traditional classroom contexts, faculty have created many experience-based learning opportunities. In some classes, instructors are now encouraging original research (most often based on field research, interviews, questionnaires, reviews of archival materials, and so on); we are making better use of the computer classroom as a means to provide simultaneous instruction while students produce technical, computer-generated texts; for class projects, some faculty are focusing on local contexts within national issues; some faculty are promoting a professional model for class work; some faculty are working in tandem to ensure that their courses enhance each other (while this is not team teaching in the traditional sense of several faculty delivering shared instruction, it does provide benefits as work from one class supports and enhances another).

Future Goals

Future Goals

The University is highlighting experiential learning, community engagement, and eminent programs as aspects of our campus that will attract students and resources. How is your department planning to contribute to these strategic initiatives in ways that will help ISU be recognized as a Pre-eminent University?

My goals for the Department are not very “glamorous” and certainly are not trendy. Instead, they focus on issues of academic integrity and support for people in the Department—students, staff, and faculty. Curricular enhancement: Working with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Director of Graduate Studies, and Director of Writing Programs, I want re-exam the curriculum to ensure that our offerings remain broad but that redundancy is minimized. We plan to add courses to serve developing needs, as well as drop courses, which no longer fulfill current curricular purposes. Faculty development: I want to create an atmosphere in which faculty—full-time and part-time, tenured and pre-tenured—feel that teaching is both valued and supported. Prison program: The prison program needs to be brought in line with on-campus offerings and procedures. Prison courses with English credits need to correlate with their on-campus counterparts; further, standards for and evaluation of teachers in the prison program also need to correspond to those for on-campus counterparts. Achieving these prison-program goals will be challenging, especially since so much of the program is handled outside of the Department. Quality-of-life issues: As simple as this
seems—and as hard as it will be to achieve—I want to try to maintain a collegial atmosphere within the Department as the circumstances under which we work seem to grow progressively more challenging.