



2015-16 End-of-Year Report Academic Department Success Plan

Department: English

Department Chair: Robert Perrin

Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report:
Robert Perrin

Please answer the following questions in two or three pages and submit to your Dean by October 3. Your Dean will review and advance to Academic Affairs by October 10¹ and will offer you feedback by Oct. 17. This report will help inform your 2016-2019 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 4.

1. Specific accomplishments/achievements this past year (*briefly explain using bullet points, noting any changed/adapted*):

- ***Upper-Division Advisor.*** I asked for applications, conducted interviews, and selected one faculty member to serve as the advisor of upper-division students (eliminating the somewhat random and inconsistent advising by fourteen different faculty). That means that as students leave University College, they will now work with either Jake Jakaitis (Director of Undergraduate Studies) or Jim Wurtz (Upper-Division Advisor).

Initially, we planned for Jake to handle the sophomore-year advising and then for Jim to handle junior/senior-year advising. But we ultimately decided to divide the students between them—so that students in our majors will keep their advisors (whichever one they get) for three years.

With advisement for spring 2017 a few weeks away, we'll soon see how well this works.

- ***Major Survey Courses for Freshmen.*** This fall, we put into place sections of American and British survey courses (English 240 and English 250) for freshmen only. (We have sections for other students as well.)

In the past, we offered only one section of each course, which second-, third-, and fourth-year student promptly filled. This meant that new students couldn't begin taking their foundational survey courses immediately, and that stalled their progress through the sequence of required courses.

This fall, both sections of each course (for example, both English 240 for freshman only and for general audiences) filled, with around thirty students in each. In this way, we hope to serve all of the upper-division students this year and, then, next fall, offer only one section of each course, primarily filled with first-year students.

¹ Note that the Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions.

2. Objective/Actions Not Achieved (briefly explain using bullet points):

- **Media Connections.** While we realize that media applications like Facebook and Twitter could enhance our “web presence” and potentially attract new majors, it just hasn’t happened.

The young faculty who find such initiatives appealing are all pre-tenure and wisely want to devote themselves to teaching and scholarship (and getting tenure). That leaves people like me, who neither value the worlds of Facebook and Twitter nor wish to devote time to them. Rather, we prefer to maintain the website and feel that’s contribution enough.

However, I realize that we need to figure out to get out there in the “Digital Disneyland” in hopes of attracting students through *their* preferred platforms. We’ll try again.

- **Promote Scholarships More Systematically.** This has been one of our most puzzling challenges—especially when so much financial support is at stake.

We used to simply post notices, and we’d have huge numbers of applicants. When that stopped working, we started asking faculty to announce scholarships in their classes. That worked for a while. Now, we try to contact students in every way possible, and then we still get only a small number of applicants. (For example, last year only four students applied for the Pfennig Scholarship, which averages \$2,000–\$3,000 a year and is renewable.)

We can’t figure out what the problems are (beyond the online application process, which is very confusing), but clearly we need to keep trying.

3. Looking ahead, briefly describe changes, additions, or subtractions that need to be made to your goals and/or action steps, including with respect to their linkage to student learning outcomes.

- **Stop Overselling.** I think we need to streamline our goals in order to concentrate on, maybe, one a year. To try to do more—or even to propose to do more—is unrealistic with our ever-shrinking Department.

And I think it would be refreshing to actually make a focused plan and see it through, rather than being in a state of perpetual “launching.” I will, as usual, let the Department decide which goals are the best to pursue.

- **Curricular Review.** We have begun the process of reviewing our upper-division requirements. One of the categories for both of our majors—Contemporary Literature—now includes four courses from which majors must choose one. We are exploring the possibility of having a single course with a rotation of topics; this would be easier to schedule than four separate courses (which each have a faculty rotation) and would, consequently, simplify both scheduling and advising.

4. Do you see opportunity for this project to work more closely with another department, college, or unit such that greater impact might be possible (briefly explain)?

- ***Career Center.*** We have attempted multiple times to create a useful link with the Career Center. Representatives from the Career Center came to talk to faculty who teach 300-level writing courses—the courses that include work developing résumés and professional correspondence.

We need to continue these efforts for the benefit of our upper-division students

5. Is there anything else about your initiative you feel important to detail?

- There's nothing else to share at this time.