2016-17 Department Student Success Plan Assessment Report
Department of English

Please answer the following questions in two pages and submit to your Dean by October 2. Your Dean will offer you feedback by Oct. 16 and advance final version[1] to Academic Affairs by October 20. This report will inform your 2017-18 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 3. Previous report and plans can be found at this website: http://irt2.indstate.edu/cms7/sp16/index.cfm/department-plans/.

Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report: Robert Perrin

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

   - *Department Advisor.* Jim Wurtz assumed the role of Department Advisor in Fall 2016. Essentially, that meant that students transitioning from University College to the Department would have one of two advisors—both of whom were highly invested in helping students schedule their classes and ensuring their progress toward degree completion. The fact that Jim and Jake Jakaitis, Director of Undergraduate Studies, are both so experienced and both dedicated to meeting with students in a timely fashion means that students are getting first-rate advising. That's a major improvement over our previous pattern: fourteen advisors, some of whom were less attentive than they should have been.

   - *Resurrecting Student Activities.* It's been a long time since I've had time to facilitate student activities for our majors. And, to be honest, Jakaitis couldn't find time either. With Wurtz in his new role, and with some reassigned time, he began hosting evening advisement opportunities and study sessions in the week preceding finals. At first, they were lightly attended, but, with each semester, the numbers have increased. (The snacks that the Department provides perhaps contribute to the success of these opportunities, but only slightly, I think.) In addition to the study-focused nights, we've been hosting movie nights, with pizza. The films so far—spring's *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and this month's *Nosferatu*—always have some kind of literary connection, but the primary purpose is to try to form a community of English students. It seems to be working because students are now suggesting films.

   - *Reactivated Student Organization.* After years of dormancy, our student advisory group has reemerged. When students approached me about activities, I always said that I'd be supportive but that I wasn't their designated "cruise director"; I donated money to a fund for student activity, but I don't intend to be the "planner." Most often, students would then drift away, and nothing would happen. However, six students (apparently energized by the organized activities described above) are now getting involved. They helped with the fall welcome (see below), are planning to help with Tent City, and think that we need Department tee-shirts again. They've been fun to work with and, I believe, will draw other majors into the activities.

   - *Fall Welcome/Orientation.* Returning to the pattern of Department-specific orientations has been terrific. This fall's session was outstanding. At 3:30, we had brief introductions of the "grown-ups": Jakaitis (Director of Undergraduate Studies), Wurtz (Department Advisor), Kit Kincade (Scholarship Coordinator), and me (Chairperson). Then we turned the session over to the students from the student organization. I left after my introduction, but my office is next door. I can attest to the liveliness of the session, and I can note that it continued until after 5:00. What a great way to introduce students to the Department.

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[1] Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions. Report will be shared with Trustees.

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

- ***Media Connections.*** I have to admit that I am not impressed by academic attempts to use social media. They strike me as mostly silly and mostly value-free. However, I also realize that such a response is generational—and that our students and prospective students are glued to their devices. Our Department's lack of media presence is, consequently, an issue. Here's what I said last year . . . and it's still true:

  > 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.

- ***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. **Attention areas going forward as informed by 2016-17 retention, completion, course completion ratio, credit hour productivity, and D/F/drop rate data provided as well as other Blue Report or departmental data** (*briefly explain using bullet points*).

- ***First-Year Retention Rates.*** Our numbers have gone up: from 58% in 2015 to 68% in 2016. Of course, we'd like for that to be better, but it's acceptable, and well within the normal range.

- ***Completion Rates.*** Our numbers remain remarkably constant: 85% and 84% for lower-level students for 2015 and 2016, respectively; 86% for upper-level students in both 2015 and 2016. Again, we're in a normal range, and the consistency of the results is reassuring.

- ***Credit-Hour Production.*** Our credit-hour production is okay: 13.16 (Spring 2015), 12.23 (Fall 2015), 12.85 (Spring 2016), and 12.69 (Fall 2016).

- ***DF Rates.*** I can't make sense of this data, but it compared reasonably with that of other departments: 17.49% (Spring 2015), 17.49% (Fall 2016), 19.64% (Spring 2016), and 17.6% (Fall 2016). The 19.64% is troubling, by comparison, but percentages like these can be found in many other programs.

- ***Summary.*** While it's somewhat reassuring to find that our results are consistent with what appear to be the average of ISU programs, we would, of course, like ours to be better. I will share these results with the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, as well as the Recruitment and Retention Committee.