Executive Summary: Department of English

Mission

The mission of the Department of English is to promote the study and production of literature, language and writing as powerful means of engaging with issues of society, culture, history, politics, science, and the world of ideas. Our scholarship, writing, and teaching are informed by the basic tenet that language has the power to influence how we perceive the world and how others perceive us. We teach students life-long skills of critical, creative, and socially responsible inquiry, reading, and writing—laying a solid foundation for personal, academic, professional, and civic success. We offer a BA in the English major as well as an MA, an MFA in creative writing, and a PhD.

Faculty

We have particular faculty strengths in the broad areas of 20th-Century American literature, literature of the African diaspora, postcolonial studies, medieval and Early Modern literature, creative writing, science and literature, and language, rhetoric and composition. Our faculty are active scholars; we have authored 17 books and edited 14 books in the last eight years. Our department is also renowned for its tradition of excellence in teaching. In the last eleven years, faculty have won eleven Kemper Fellowships for Excellence in Teaching as well as many other teaching awards. In 2003, our department received the Center of Teaching Excellence award for Department Excellence in Teaching.

Bachelor’s Degree

We offer three tracks in the English major: 1) literary studies, 2) language, rhetoric, and writing, and 3) creative writing. We also offer the Literature, Language, and Writing major on the Edwards campus, designed for the needs of non-traditional students. We currently have 578 English majors enrolled in our program. We offer excellent study-abroad programs to London, Northern Ireland, and Costa Rica. Our graduates have a strong record of placement in a variety of professions and vocations, as well as graduate school programs.

Master’s Degrees (MA, MFA)

We offer an MFA in creative writing, as well as a Master’s degree in one of four tracks: literature, literature and literary theory, rhetoric and composition, or English language studies. In Fall 2010 we had 48 MA and MFA students and 56 doctoral students, for a total of 104 graduate students. We have been increasing our selectivity in admissions; our “Applied to Admitted” ratio has gone from 62.7% in 2004-2005 to 22.3% in 2010-2011. Meanwhile, our “Admitted to Enrolled” yield has gone up in the same period, from 56.8% to 61.9%, suggesting that students who are accepted to our Master’s programs want to come here. The MA prepares students for PhD-level work, for teaching English in secondary schools, or for work in publishing and other private-sector career tracks. Our MFA program, launched in 2006 and designed as a 3-year program, prepares students as writers and as teachers of creative writing on the secondary and university level. It was recently named one of the “Top 25 Most Underrated MFA Programs” in the country, an indication of its growing national recognition. There is high demand for our MFA; our “Applied to Admitted” ratio for Fall 2009 was 17.1%, and 85.7% of those students who were admitted chose to enroll at KU.

Doctoral Degrees

Our PhD program professionalizes students as teachers and researchers who contribute to the production and dissemination of scholarly knowledge. It prepares teacher-scholars in the various subfields of English studies to be faculty members at the college-university level and to
produce original scholarship to the field. We offer a PhD in English with emphasis in literature, creative writing, or language, rhetoric, and composition studies. In addition, we offer a BA-to-PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition designed to take five years. Program strengths include full support offered to virtually all entering graduate students; a strong placement rate in academic, tenure-track jobs; and extensive professional development via an extensive teacher training program, job search advising and workshops, and travel funds.

Ethical considerations surrounding the severe shortage of jobs for new PhDs in English have pushed us to become increasingly selective in accepting doctoral students. In Fall 2010 our applied-to-admitted ratio was 20.5% for PhDs, compared to 60.9% in Fall 2004. Our rate of placement has been impressive, particularly given the downturn in the academic job market. Combining tenure-track and non-tenure track positions, 71% of those who received PhDs over the 2004-2009 period are now assistant (or associate) professors. Our graduate students have accepted tenure-track jobs at institutions such as Rutgers University, University of Washington, and University of New Mexico. The U.S. News and World Report ranking of our doctoral program in English is #37 out of public universities; the National Research Council (NRC) “S-rankings” put us roughly in the middle of KU’s peer institutions.

**Changes as a Result of the Review Process**

Our external reviewers noted the following key strengths of our program:

- A vibrant and energized climate of intellectual inquiry.
- Faculty strength in diverse areas of literary study, including African American literary studies, Latino/a literary studies, ecocriticism and environmentalism, indigenous nations studies, and postcolonial and African diaspora studies. These fields “offer the department the opportunity to establish itself as a center for new and transformative approaches.”
- Outstanding teaching and mentoring, at both graduate and undergraduate levels. The reviewers commented that “students feel strongly that the faculty cares about them as scholars and individuals. The sense of commitment and concern helps foster a profound feeling of community…."

The external reviewers also made some suggestions about how we might further improve our programs:

- Create a more formalized research mentoring program for our graduate students.
- Evaluate the structure of our undergraduate major requirements to consider whether alternative structures might better meet our goals for the major.
- Consider alternative funding models for our graduate students, and also consider creating an Advisory Board to help with fundraising for graduate fellowships.

The department established study groups to make recommendations to the department on the above issues by the end of the 2011-2012 academic year. We will continue to monitor time-to-degree and recruitment and placement data for our graduate students as well as to assess our undergraduate major.

**Overall Evaluation**

Our external review suggests that our degree programs are quite strong. Our students leave the BA program with strong, marketable writing and critical thinking skills. Our department is also currently responsible for three courses in the General Education sequence. Finally, we offer Masters and Doctorate programs with strong placement records; our MFA degree and our 5-year PhD in Rhetoric and Composition meet areas of high demand. Because of the strong evaluation and high demand of all of our programs, they will be continued.
Highlights: Department of English

- Our BA offers different tracks to meet student needs. In addition to our traditional track in literary studies, we offer tracks in creative writing and in language, rhetoric, and writing. On the Edwards campus, we also offer the Literature, Language, and Writing major designed for the needs of non-traditional students.
- We offer a variety of opportunities for our undergraduate majors, including excellent study abroad programs (for winter break, spring break, and summer) in England, Northern Ireland, and Costa Rica, as well as a vibrant Honors program.
- Our still-young MFA program in creative writing is highly selective and in high demand; it was recently named one of the “Top 25 Most Underrated MFA Programs” in the country by the Huffington Post, an indication of its growing national recognition.
- Our PhD program has a strong placement rate (71%) in academic jobs; we have placed our doctoral students in tenure-track positions including Rutgers University, University of Washington, and University of New Mexico.
- We offer a new 5-year PhD program in Composition and Rhetoric (BA to PhD) to meet high demand in this area; we are also one of the few institutions to offer a creative writing PhD as well as an MFA in creative writing.
- Our programs boast outstanding teaching and mentoring, at both graduate and undergraduate levels. In the last eleven years, faculty members have won eleven Kemper Fellowships for Excellence in Teaching; our department has also been honored with the Center of Teaching Excellence award for Department Excellence in Teaching.
- Our faculty members are nationally-renowned scholars. We have authored 17 books and edited 14 books in the last eight years.
- Our Center for the Study of Science Fiction is nationally recognized; the Science Fiction Institute and Campbell Conference, held on campus each year, gather scholars and writers of science fiction from around the country.
- Our two additional summer institutes, the Holmes Institute and the Institute for Rethinking Literature, are donor-sponsored, intensive two-week seminars offered in alternate summers which give our graduate students the opportunity to study with prominent, distinguished scholars from across the nation.
The KU Department of English

I. General Overview

A) Mission

What do we do and why do we do it?

Why KU has an English Department… because reading and writing shape the world.

The mission of the Department of English at the University of Kansas is to promote the study and production of literature, language and writing as powerful means of engaging with issues of society, culture, history, politics, science, and the world of ideas. Our scholarship and teaching are informed by the basic tenet that language has the power to influence how we perceive the world and how others perceive us. As scholars, we explore how literature has engaged in imaginative ways with the pressing issues of its time, and we examine how discourse and rhetoric enable social engagement and ways of understanding that engagement. As writers, we create the literature that allows us to consider imaginatively the concerns of times past and present, and the role of writing itself. As teachers, we help our students enrich their understanding of their own society as well as of other cultures by exploring the profound role of stories and storytelling, by collaborating with others from multiple perspectives, and by creating texts that place their own views in conversation with those of others. We seek to challenge the minds and to engage the imaginations of our students, to teach them to ask questions, to seek for answers, and to share the answers they discover. We encourage our students to grapple, through reading and writing, with the variation and diversity of the English language itself, with the global networks and processes of cultural exchange in which English plays a central role, and with the complexity of a culturally and commercially interconnected world. In short, we teach students life-long skills of critical, creative, and socially responsible inquiry, reading, and writing—laying a solid foundation for personal, academic, professional, and civic success.

Realizing our mission: examples

Our faculty members teach classes that draw on their own research into how literature and other forms of expression engage with pressing social, cultural, and scientific debates—about social justice, the environment, the origins of human life, and the global reach of nations. For example, Byron Caminero-Santangelo teaches courses in Postcolonial Ecocriticism that draw on his own research into how African authors have challenged Western forms of “environmentalism” and have offered, through literature, alternative visions of an environmentally sensitive future. Playwright Darren Canady’s dramatic works explore the ways American identity is constructed, challenged, and interpreted by giving voice to the stories of those historically on the margins of Midwestern life. (One of his plays, for instance, examines the heated climate leading up to the Tulsa Race Riots of 1921, through the eyes of one African American family.) Mary Jo Reiff is currently researching the rhetoric of petitions, a form of writing that seeks overtly to bring about social change, in order to explore the ways in which the petition genre potentially enables (or limits) participation in the public sphere.

B) Unit Goals and Priorities

- To be at the forefront of the intersection of textual and cultural studies approaches at undergraduate and graduate levels. Our faculty members teach and study English language
literatures within literary, national, and global contexts, and are integrating cutting-edge methodologies (ecocriticism, digital humanities, literature and the sciences, literature and human rights) into research areas including language and rhetoric, postcolonial studies, science fiction studies, queer studies, performance studies, and African diaspora studies.

- To maintain a strong research and teaching foundation in traditional fields of high demand in which we have an established, strong reputation, such as Early Modern Literature.
- To continue to build a strong and vibrant program in Rhetoric and Composition in order to support our new 5-year PhD track in this field, as well as our new undergraduate emphasis in Language, Rhetoric, and Writing.
- To build on the momentum of our still-young MFA program as well as our long-standing creative writing PhD program through a new student-run creative writing journal, visiting creative writing professors, a guest writer lecture series, and more tenure-track hires in fiction, poetry, and non-fiction.
- To promote reading and writing using diverse technologies, by integrating technologies into our curriculum and scholarship and by promoting digital initiatives already underway in the department at all levels.

C) Role of Unit

Our Role in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences:

Within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, KU’s English Department is at the core of the humanities, highlighting the “human” through our individual, one-on-one interactions with our students, our emphasis on community and global engagement, and our abiding interest in our shared humanity through the stories of others. We prepare all the students in the College for their academic and professional careers by teaching them how to use reading and writing critically to achieve their goals.

At the current time, we teach a series of three composition (reading and writing) courses required for the general education curriculum of all students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; non-majors thus account for over 80% of total departmental credit hours. (See Appendix A.) Our lower division student credit hours (this includes all courses in the First- and Second-Year English sequence) amount to over 27,000. These courses are taught primarily by our Graduate Teaching Assistants (and by graduate students who have been appointed as lecturers).

Our Role in the Discipline:

At the undergraduate level, we offer three tracks in the English major: 1) literary studies, 2) language, rhetoric, and writing, and 3) creative writing. The courses within these tracks are taught primarily by tenured and tenure-track faculty. Roughly half of our English majors are creative writing students. We also offer a vibrant Honors program. Honors students must enroll in English 498: Honors Proseminar, which offers training in the development of a longer independent research project as well as an extremely low teacher-student ratio for more high-level discussions and greater student participation (these courses cap at 12 students). They then complete their Honors by taking English 499: Honors Thesis.
At the graduate level, students seek us out particularly for our strengths in 20th-Century American ethnic literatures, postcolonial studies, medieval and Early Modern literature, creative writing, science fiction, and rhetoric and composition. We also have graduate students working in Modern British literature, 19th-Century American literature, and Victorian / Edwardian literature, among other fields. Our graduate students benefit from a culture of professionalization. The department supports graduate student conference travel and includes graduate student representatives fully in department governance through their participation in its standing committees. Graduate students who serve on department standing committees are part of our departmental voting body, and every job search committee includes a graduate student.

Our Role at the National Level:

According to NRC data, our department’s PhD program ranks as one of the highest in the nation on the criterion of “diversity” (possibly as high as #4). This is because our department has had phenomenal success at recruiting minority faculty members in a range of fields, including African American, Caribbean, Native American, and Latino/a literatures, as well as Playwriting. Our strengths in ethnic literatures and post-colonial approaches draw graduate students to KU. Fully 20% of our tenure-line faculty members are minority faculty. (See Appendix A.) Furthermore, we have had wonderful success at retaining these faculty—since Fall 1999, only one minority faculty member in the English Department has left KU for another institution (and this was because her husband did not earn tenure at KU).

Our faculty members serve leadership roles on editorial boards, national selection committees, professional associations such as the MLA, etc. Recent or current leadership roles include a) editorships and/or editorial / advisory board positions on the following journals and university presses: Composition Forum; American Speech; Precursors and Aftermaths: Literatures in English, 1914-1945; Latino Studies; An Sionnach: A Journal of Contemporary Irish Studies; Black Literature Compass; The Faulkner Journal; Mediterranean Studies; Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature; American Studies; African American Review; Explorations in Renaissance Culture; The Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education; Creighton Univ. Press; Contemporary North American Poetry Series at University of Iowa Press; b) participation on selection committees including Fulbright-Hays and ACLS New Faculty Fellows; c) professional organization leadership including: President, Charles Brockden Brown Society; Chair, Executive Committee of the MLA Division on American Indian Literatures; Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication; Executive Committee of the Faulkner Society; Council Member & Program Committee, Mediterranean Studies Association; d) service as manuscript reviewers for numerous prestigious presses and journals including PMLA, Oxford University Press, Ohio State University Press, and Notre Dame University Press, to name a few.

D) Program Size

We currently have approximately 600 English majors enrolled in our program; in Fall 2009 we had approximately 50 MA students (roughly half of whom are MFA students) and 58 doctoral students, for a total of 108 graduate students.

Ethical considerations surrounding the severe shortage of jobs for new PhDs in English have pushed us to become increasingly selective in accepting doctoral students. For instance, in Fall
2009 our admitted-to-applied ratio was 33.3%, compared to 60.9% in Fall 2004. Our current graduate program and MA-to-PhD balance allows us to offer a range of graduate courses in different fields (while meeting the College minima for enrollment). We do fairly well at placing our PhDs in academic, full-time positions, given the national situation. (See Graduate Program section.)

Our MFA program enrollment, however, is probably currently too large, given our recent faculty losses in this area. While there is high demand for our MFA (our admitted-to-applied ratio for Fall 2009 was 17.1%, and 85.7% of those students who were admitted chose to enroll at KU), there are not enough faculty to offer workshops or to serve on MFA committees. We are in dire need of more faculty lines in creative writing; otherwise, we may well have to scale back on enrollments, despite the demand.

Our program size for English undergraduate majors allows us to offer a range of classes enrolling between 12-35 students per section.

Our faculty numbers are down to 36 tenure-line faculty as of Spring 2011, from a high of 44 in 2005. This decline of almost 20% in our numbers has seriously affected the capacity of our faculty to mentor graduate students in a broad range of areas. (See “Hiring Needs,” p.11.)

E) Program Quality
The following are our self-assessments of program quality:

- PhD (traditional, creative writing, rhetoric and composition): Very good
- PhD (5-year rhetoric and composition): N/A (1st year offered)
- MA: Very good
- MFA: Very good
- BA: Very good
- Overall Program: Very good

The following are quantitative and qualitative measures of the quality of our various degree programs in English.

National Rankings

- *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of our doctoral program in English is #37 out of public universities.
- NRC (National Research Council): On the “S-rankings” we rank in the range of 45-80.\(^1\) This puts us roughly in the middle third of our group of KU’s peer institutions.

\(^1\) *Explaining the rankings:* “S-Rank: Programs are ranked highly if they are strong in the criteria that scholars say are most important.” –*Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct 8, 2010, p. A19. The latest NRC ranking system did not produce a ranked list of programs, as previous NRC rankings did; instead, the NRC accounted for statistical uncertainty by “ranking” each program 500 times. The result is a statistical range of rankings for each program (i.e. KU might rank as high as 40 or as low as 85). For a more detailed explanation of NRC methodology, see *A Revised Guide to the Methodology of the Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States* (2010) edited by Jeremiah P. Ostriker, Paul W. Holland, Charlotte V. Kuh, and James A. Voytuk, National Research Council, [http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12974.html](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12974.html).
U Wisconsin (Madison) 6-29
U Texas (Austin) 19-53
U Missouri (Columbia) 30-61
U North Carolina (Chapel Hill) 34-71
University of Nebraska (Lincoln) 41-74
U Arizona 42-76
KU 45-80
SUNY Stony Brook 76-99
SUNY Buffalo 81-101
U Colorado (Boulder) 90-105

Our program fares worse (61-100) with the “R-Rankings,” which are derived based on characteristics of programs with very high reputations. That is to say, we do better when we are judged based directly on program characteristics considered important than when we are judged by comparison to programs with outstanding reputations. This difference could be an indication that our program is actually stronger than “reputation” alone might suggest. For the criterion of student support and outcomes, our ranking is in the range of 42-85.

In terms of research activity among faculty, we rank in the 49-85 range (based on 2005 data).
U Wisconsin (Madison) 8-27
U Texas (Austin) 28-62
U Nebraska (Lincoln) 31-65
U Arizona 35-65
U North Carolina (Chapel Hill) 40-72
KU 49-85
U Colorado (Boulder) 65-91
SUNY Buffalo 79-103
U Missouri (Columbia) 83-107
SUNY Stony Brook 84-109

We believe this figure does not accurately measure faculty research productivity, however. In the past six years (since 2004), tenured or tenure-track faculty in English have authored 14 books (two more are accepted and forthcoming) and edited 13 books. At 37 tenure-line faculty (in Fall 2010), that is a ratio of roughly one authored and one edited book per every 2 ½ faculty members in the last seven years.

Other Indicators
- Our MFA program, launched in 2006, was recently named one of the “Top 25 Most Underrated MFA Programs” in the country. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/seth-abramson/the-top-20-underrated-cre_b_736052.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/seth-abramson/the-top-20-underrated-cre_b_736052.html). Considering that the program is currently only four years old, we consider this listing (with company such as Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Ohio State, and Penn State) a sign of the program’s potential.
- Faculty have been much more successful than they were five years ago at receiving major external grants. Since 2009, faculty have been awarded four NEH grants, a Smithsonian Institution fellowship, an American Philosophical Society Franklin Research Grant, and a Newberry Library fellowship, among others. Current NRC rankings on external funding

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2 “Programs are ranked highly if they have similar features to programs viewed by faculty as top-notch” (Chronicle, 8 Oct 2010, A19).
do not accurately represent our current accomplishments, although we still have much to do in this regard.

- Individual faculty have also won prestigious national awards:
  
  **Ken Irby** was recently a co-recipient of the 2010 Shelley Memorial Award, given by the Poetry Society of America. Past awardees have included: Marianne Moore, E. E. Cummings, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Pinsky and Kimiko Hahn.  
  **Maryemma Graham** has been inducted into the Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent in April 2010.  
  **Paul Stephen Lim** has had a national playwriting award named in his honor by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. The first-ever Paul Stephen Lim Asian-American Playwriting Award was awarded in 2010.

**F) Program Strengths**

Research Strengths:
We have particular faculty strengths in the broad areas of 20th-Century American literature, literature of the African diaspora, postcolonial studies, medieval and Early Modern literature, creative writing, science fiction, and language, rhetoric and composition. We also have cross-field strengths in Global and Cross-Cultural Approaches; Literature, Rhetoric, and Social Action; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Diversity Studies; Language, Literature, and Science; and Popular Expressive Forms.

Teaching Strengths:
Our department is renowned for its tradition of excellence in teaching. In the last ten years, faculty members in the Department of English have won ten Kemper Fellowships for Excellence in Teaching, the most prominent teaching award at the University of Kansas. In addition, we have won two Chancellors Club Teaching Professorships, a prestigious Byron T. Schutz Award (one of the Chancellor’s distinguished teaching honors), six Keeler Family Intra-University Fellowships (for interdisciplinary work), and a Career Achievement Teaching Award. One faculty member alone has received a Mortar Board Outstanding Educator Award, a Del Shankel Teaching Award, a HOPE award (a reward for teaching excellence bestowed exclusively by students), and an Outstanding Women Educator’s Award. For undergraduate advising during the past decade, department members have received two University-wide J. Michael Young Advising Awards and a Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett Women Mentoring Women Award. In 2003, our department received the Center of Teaching Excellence (CTE) award for Department Excellence in Teaching at the University of Kansas. In addition, in 2010 we were awarded a CTE Teaching Development Award in order to continue our Assessment project for the English major, piloted last year. (More on this under “Initiatives.”)

Graduate Program Strengths:

- **Full support for most** students via GTAships, GRAships, or lectureships.  
- **Strong placement rate** in academic, tenure-track jobs.  
- **Professional development** via extensive teacher training program, job search workshops, travel funds, and the services of the Job Placement Advisor.
Undergraduate Program Strengths:

- **Different tracks to meet student needs.** In addition to our traditional track in literary studies, we offer tracks in creative writing and in language, rhetoric, and writing. All three tracks rely on a shared set of core courses in the major.

- **Personal engagement with our students.** Students often have more personal, one-on-one experiences with English professors than with professors in many other departments.

- **Excellent study-abroad programs** including programs in London, Northern Ireland, and Costa Rica.

- **Strong placement** in a variety of professions and vocations, as well as graduate school programs.

Speaker Series and Summer Institutes:

Our department offers a lecture series consisting of three donor-supported lectures by prestigious speakers per year. These are the Eberhardt Memorial Lecture (related to excellence in writing), the Gunn Memorial Lecture (often science-fiction themed, but can be on any topic), and the American and British Lecture (which alternates annually between American and British literary studies). Recent prestigious speakers in these three lecture series have included Mexican-American writer and journalist Luis Alberto Urrea, science fiction writer China Miéville, British medievalist Larry Scanlon, and Native American writer and critic David Treuer. In addition, we sponsor a regular MFA speaker series hosting creative writers in multiple genres. Finally, the department offers three summer institutes. The Holmes Institute and the Institute for Rethinking Literature are offered in alternate summers for full graduate student credit; the Holmes sponsors a visiting scholar in either American or British literature and the Institute for Rethinking Literature sponsors scholars using innovative, cutting-edge approaches to literary study. Recent distinguished visiting professors leading these institutes have included Sidonie Smith, Susan Gubar, and Lawrence Buell. The Science Fiction Institute held on campus each summer is nationally recognized and offers graduate students opportunities to help in the programming process.

**G) 2007 Strategic Plan: Goals Met**

In our previous strategic plan (see Appendix K), we proposed several initiatives at the undergraduate level which have now been addressed: we hoped to integrate methodology more firmly into our undergraduate curriculum and to redesign our advising system in order to more actively advise a greater percentage of our majors. These goals have now been met, through the implementation of a methodologies course requirement (ENGL 308) into the major, as well as through a new system of advising orientations for our majors. Advising is coordinated through a team consisting of our Director and Associate Director (the latter is a new position) of Undergraduate Studies, as well as our Advising Specialist. In addition, we have revised all our 500-level courses to integrate a research component and have lowered class caps on these courses, converting them into “capstone” experiences for our majors. At the graduate level, we have revised our course numbering system in accordance with our plan to offer a more logical and challenging course experience for our students and to suggest sequences when possible. In the 2007 Strategic Plan, we also outlined the need for more support for graduate research assistantships and fellowships, in order to alleviate the burden of needing to teach 2 courses / semester for full support—a significant obstacle to timely degree completion. We now have a pilot program offering 9-10 semester-long GRAships to students at the dissertation stage, as well
as a one-year-long fellowship for our most competitive incoming applicants (supported by a generous donor). Another donor supports a creative writing lecture series; this was also a goal of our 2007 Strategic Plan. Finally, our admissions process has become more selective, another component of our 2007 Plan. In Fall 2009, we accepted 33.3% of doctoral applicants (as compared to 60.9% in Fall 2004); and we accepted 34.7% of Masters applicants (as compared to 62.7% in Fall 2004).

H) Strategic Plans: Targets for Change

• To further enhance research engagement among faculty, by seeking opportunities to provide release time, research-supportive awards, flexible teaching schedules, research interchanges, and other supportive programs, as well as streamlining department business so that less time is taken up with service. Faculty members also need to be more strongly encouraged to apply for internal and external funding. (See “Research Engagement Plan,” Appendix L.)

• To enhance the competitiveness of our graduate program to better serve our students, by decreasing time to degree, revising graduate curriculum, and further enhancing professional development opportunities.

• To reduce average time to degree to four years for our undergraduate majors.

We hope to increase our graduate program competitiveness and program quality by:

• **Fully funding all incoming graduate students.** We have been working on doing this, without requiring additional funding, by being more stringent with support levels for graduate students who have exceeded “good progress to degree” on the other end of the timeline.

• **Offering Competitive Fellowships / GRAships for top graduate applicants.** This always requires additional funding, although in the past year we were able to secure a major donation ($50,000 expendable) to support three first-year GRAships for highly qualified students. Related to the above, we need to continue to actively seek funding opportunities to support graduate student fellowships—for recruitment as well as at the dissertation stage, and to support graduate student travel.

• **Continuing our “Recruitment Weekend” for top applicants.** In the four years since this program began, it has been highly successful at attracting applicants who participate. Last fall, the rate of those participants who accepted offers from KU was 89%. We recruit very successfully when graduate student prospects are able to come to KU, talk to professors and graduate students, visit classes, and meet other prospective students.

• **Increasing funding for graduate student travel** to one conference per year. (This is already in the works.)

• **Strengthening** the newly-established 5-year Ph.D. Program in Composition and Rhetoric (BA to PhD). Our co-sponsorship of the 2013 National Meeting of the Rhetoric Society of America Institute is one effort in this direction, as was our recent invitation to Adam Banks, visiting Langston Hughes Professor in Rhetoric and Composition at KU (Spring 2010).

• **Revamping our “Graduate Introduction to Research Methods” course requirement** (ENGL 800) to encourage usefulness and applicability to students in different fields.

• **Revamping MA and PhD requirements** to ensure more timely progress to degree. (See strategic targets for change, above.)
• **Revisiting MFA requirements and MFA Committee structure** to ensure greater integration of the MFA program into the general life of the department (e.g. through MFA participation in the graduate student organization SAGE, representation of non-creative writing faculty on the MFA Committee, encouragement of workshops in multiple genres).

• **Creating more “standard” practices on PhD comprehensive exam lists and rationales** through department-wide conversations, workshops, etc.

• **Scheduling Workshops** on grant-writing, abstract-writing, and article preparation.

• **Streamlining the dissertation proposal process** so that students start their dissertation writing earlier.

• **Encouraging the development of interdisciplinary courses** at the graduate as well as undergraduate levels that could be cross-listed with, and/or team-taught by, faculty in Theatre, Environmental Studies, African and African-American Studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, History, etc. Some of these courses are already in the works. For example, in Spring 2011 Iris Smith Fischer is co-teaching a graduate seminar, “Performance Theory,” with Henry Bial in Theatre. Frank Farmer has received a Keeler Intra-University Fellowship to plan a course team-taught with Communication Studies Dave Tell. A course on “The Invention of the Tropics” is in its planning stages (bringing together science and cultural studies on the construction of “The Tropics” as a particular geographical area defined by climate and location), team-taught by Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Greg Cushman in History.

In addition, we hope to increase our undergraduate program competitiveness and quality by:

• **Strengthening** the newly-established *undergraduate track in Language, Rhetoric, and Writing.*

• **Ongoing implementation and evaluation of our methodologies requirement** (ENGL 308) for majors.

• **Enhanced assessment activities** to measure learner outcomes and undergraduate majors’ satisfaction, in order to help us identify department strengths and areas in need of improvement.

• **Promoting digital technologies** at the general education level, in the teaching of writing and in our GTA training.

• **Working with the College to offer recruitment scholarships** for entering students who are interested in becoming English majors.

New Initiatives:

• **Launching Cluster Research Groups** within the department to share work in progress and to enhance and promote innovative ideas across traditional subject/discipline boundaries. As faculty remarked at our departmental planning retreat in August, cluster groups that cross period-specific fields would put our department at the forefront of changing the way English language and literature is taught and conceptualized as a discipline. We hope that cluster groups will bring a new and different kind of cohesiveness to the department; they may well impact how we view our curriculum. They will also provide writing group “accountability” for faculty members who respond well to deadlines, fostering a climate of research productivity.
• **Initiating the Academic Ladder Pilot Program.** We will be covering a $70 registration fee for interested faculty who wish to participate in a four-week faculty productivity coaching program online [http://academicwritingclub.com/](http://academicwritingclub.com/). The program is based on research that indicates that short periods of daily writing increase faculty research productivity. The program was tried with some success by Emory University. We will, in addition, offer $130 in “incentive” towards books/supplies to participating faculty. We will track outcomes of this program to assess whether it has had a positive effect on faculty productivity.

• **Funding and launching a new literary journal**, *Beecher’s*, completely run by creative writing graduate students. [http://www.beechersmag.com/](http://www.beechersmag.com/)

• **Regularizing and Funding a Creative Writer Speaker Series** to bring in high-profile creative writers.

• **Expanding our national reputation in 19th-Century British literature through the Trollope Prize.** Our department recently acquired this prize, a national essay contest previously administered by Harvard University; it is now sponsored by our department and KU’s Hall Center for the Humanities. The Trollope Prize will be awarded annually to the best undergraduate and graduate essay written on the topic of “Trollope and his World,” and we are in the process of planning a conference to celebrate the KU launch of this award.

I) Evaluating our Future Progress

Metrics for Faculty Research Productivity:

• **Number of books, peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and creative works** published in a given year. We publish an annual bibliography listing all work published. Of course, the quality of research output cannot be easily captured by this “metric” alone.

• **Faculty publishing in each category** every year, as a percentage of the total. (e.g. What percent of our tenure-line faculty published monographs? Edited books? Articles or book chapters?)

• **Successful grant applications for both internal and external funding.**

• **Successful promotion cases.** This can be seen as one measure of our productivity, since faculty who are not productive at an adequate level do not achieve promotion. In particular, we might measure whether there is any appreciable change in the average time from promotion to Associate Professor to promotion to Full Professor.

 Metrics for Graduate Program:

• **Time to degree** for MA and PhD programs

• **Percentage of students with full support**

• **Job Placement** of PhD students: how many students secure academic jobs within one year after graduation? Within five years?

• **Publications** by graduate students

 Metrics for Undergraduate Program:

• **Time to degree** for our English majors

• **Areas of job placement**

• **Activities, awards, publications** of our English major alumni
J) Hiring Needs
In recent years, we have lost several faculty to retirements, bringing our total tenured / tenure-track numbers down sharply: from 44 tenure-line faculty in 2005 to 36 starting in January 2011. Our numbers have been particularly hurt in Early Modern Studies, a traditional area of strength, and in creative writing, where we have been trying for several years to build strength. (We began to offer our MFA in creative writing in 2006.) We have received approval this year to conduct a hire in Early Modern Studies, which would bring our total tenure-line faculty in this area to 3 (two full-time, one phased-retirement). We are in desperate need of at least one more hire in Early Modern literature and two hires in creative writing. We also hope for at least two hires in the very near future in the general areas of “science and literature” and “global and cross-cultural studies” (preferably with expertise in 20th-century British literature) to bolster our strengths in these areas, and at least one more in Rhetoric and Composition to bolster our undergraduate track in Language, Rhetoric and Writing and our 5-year PhD in Composition and Rhetoric.

II. First- and Second-Year English Program

A) Mission and Overview

The First- and Second-Year English (FSE) program coordinates the sequence of English courses required of most students in the University. This sequence, central to the general educational goals of the University, is designed to enhance students’ ability to use words, images, and other appropriate means to interact within and affect their worlds. Following the University’s “Goals of General Education,” the course sequence improves “the core skills of reading [and] writing” and “enhance[s] communication by clear, effective use of language.” The course sequence also instructs students in “the skills and knowledge needed to research, organize, evaluate, and apply new information, and develop a spirit of critical inquiry and intellectual integrity.” Secondarily, specific courses in the sequence contribute to other of the University’s general education goals, including integrating knowledge, appreciating diversity, becoming aware of contemporary issues, and practicing social responsibility.

Each of the courses in the FSE program (except the Honors courses) has its own explicit Statement of Goals that has been developed from the Writing Program Administrators’ Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. The Goals are also developed and assessed through collaboration with the teachers of the courses.

B) Program Description

The FSE program includes all 100- and 200-level courses in the English Department. As a course sequence, the program moves students from English 101 Composition, to English 102 Critical Reading and Writing, to a 200-level topic or genre course. The Honors sequence moves students from English 105 Freshman Honors English to English 205 Proseminar.

The total number of student credit hours generated by FSE courses (English101-211) was 27,012 in fiscal year 2009-2010. (See Appendix A.)
C) Students in Profile

Students enrolled in FSE courses come from across the University and reflect an entire range of abilities. English 101 and 102 are required of most students in the University, while the 200-level courses are required for all students seeking BA and BGS degrees (and many seeking BS degrees) in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, for the Schools of Journalism and Mass Communications and Social Welfare, and for students in the School of Education concentrating in secondary education.

English makes an especially strong contribution to the University’s Honors program, offering multiple sections of English 105 and 205—reading-intensive classes largely taught by full-time faculty, who serve as mentors for exceptional students in their first year at KU. These Honors courses, English 105 and 205, include students in the Honors program, those with high ACT/SAT scores or high AP scores, and those who have been placed in the courses through petition. These classes have provided valuable ways to identify strong students not only for our major but for the University as a whole. Each year the Honors program identifies for us those students who have excelled as participants, writers, or thinkers.

D) Program Quality and Outcomes

Teachers in the FSE program, mostly Graduate Teaching Assistants and Lecturers, participate in an extensive—and award-winning—professional development program. Teachers new to teaching in the FSE program participate in a week-long orientation session before the start of classes, a 3-credit-hour course on the Study and Teaching of Writing in their first semester, a 1-credit-hour Practicum in the Teaching of College English in their second semester, and a mentoring program with full-time faculty members each semester after that. All teachers of FSE courses attend professional development workshops each year, where the current program goals are reiterated and (re)assessed. This multi-faceted and multi-year professional development program has been so successful that it was cited particularly when the department won the CTE (Center for Teaching Excellence) Department Excellence in Teaching Award in 2003. The FSE program’s high standards for teaching are also reflected in the many awards earned by its exceptional teachers. Since 2001, ten Graduate Teaching Assistants have won the University-wide GTA Awards.

The FSE program is currently in its third year of an ongoing assessment program to determine how well our curriculum and instruction achieve the goals we have set for student learning. For this program-wide self-assessment, we have examined each individual writing course as well as the three-course sequence through three interrelated studies that focus on student and instructor perceptions of the program course design and pedagogy, and direct assessment of student writing. In the first study, we surveyed students and instructors to gauge their perceptions of the extent to which the students are meeting the outcomes for each course. In the second, we are assessing how explicitly instructors’ assignment sequences are addressing the outcomes. In the third, we will assess student writing produced in these courses to see the extent to which it demonstrates evidence of the stated outcomes for the course. All three of these studies have formative as well as summative components so that the program and the assessment can be improved at each stage.
E) Targets for Change and New Initiatives

The ongoing assessment within FSE has already led to changes in our program, including refining the goals of English 101 and 102 and the 200-level courses. As we complete the next rounds of assessment—examining assignment sequences and student portfolios of work—new ways of improving student learning will emerge to focus our efforts.

A new initiative already underway is updating our curricula, professional development workshops, and pedagogy to incorporate texts that use images and digital media as well as print technologies. The FSE program recognizes national movements toward including new media and multimodal composing in first-year programs, and we have begun moving toward updating our curriculum. A committee is currently at work evaluating how our course goals might incorporate multimedia, surveying teachers to discover how multimedia is currently being incorporated, and evaluating what technology and training will be needed to make such practices widespread.

The biggest obstacle at this point is the lack of media-enhanced classrooms. Most of the FSE classes are not held in classrooms equipped with projectors or computers for Internet display. Many classrooms, in fact, are equipped with only overhead projectors. Currently, we are considering how to incorporate multimedia into our curricula without requiring daily in-class technology use. In the future, we hope that the University’s capital campaign will include in the department’s wish list equipping all classrooms with projectors, computers, and Internet access. Incorporating digital media and multimedia composing in our curricula is essential for our teachers as well, many of whom are graduate students who will need to compete for teaching positions that frequently now request new media teaching experience. We plan to offer seminars and workshops on teaching with multiple media that should help FSE teachers become familiar with technologies and best practices, but only teaching in media-enhanced classrooms can supply the hands-on pedagogical experience that today’s teachers need.

III. Undergraduate Program: Upper Division

A. Mission

The upper-division component of our undergraduate program is central not only to the mission of the department, but also to the general education goals of the University.

Our undergraduate program has many strengths, of which its high level of engagement with individual students is particularly notable. We have a large number of faculty who mentor Honors English majors, Deans Scholars, McNair Scholars, and University Scholars, guiding undergraduate research projects, professionalizing students, and guiding them through graduate school and national fellowship applications. Students often have more personal, one-on-one experiences with English professors than with professors in many other departments.
B. Program Description

We offer three tracks in the English major:
- Traditional
- Creative Writing
- Language, Rhetoric, and Writing

All three tracks require at least 15 core hours in literary study, and up to 15 hours of electives (which may include up to 3 hours of internship credit), for a total of 30 hours.

The Traditional track requires 15 core hours of literature courses and 3 hours in literary criticism and methodology. Elective hours may include literature, language, rhetoric, composition, theory, and one creative writing workshop. The creative writing track, which as of Spring 2010 requires a separate admissions step, is currently pursued by approximately half of our majors. All elective coursework in this track is in creative writing, with at least two genres and at least one 500+-level workshop required for graduation. The new Language, Rhetoric and Writing track, which just became officially available for students in Fall 2010, focuses student elective hours in rhetoric, English language studies, and writing courses, including composition studies and up to one creative writing workshop.

In addition to these tracks, we have a special major at the Edwards campus, the Literature, Language, and Writing (LLW) major, designed for the special needs of non-traditional students who have already received an associate’s degree. This major also requires 30 credit hours. Available courses are dependent upon faculty available to teach at the Edwards Campus; we have committed, however, to offer courses either directly or through bi-campus courses to meet the needs of students in the LLW major. (See Appendix C.)

Honors:
All three tracks, as well as the Edwards LLW major, allow students to pursue Departmental Honors. Departmental Honors requires students to have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 and a major GPA of 3.5. Students take ENGL 498: Honors Proseminar, a capstone course, capped at 12, which is designed to prepare students for independent research. They then pair with a faculty advisor to complete their Honors thesis. The department graduates 20-25 students per year with Departmental Honors.

Other Opportunities:

Internships: Students are also allowed to apply up to three hours of ENGL 496: Internship to their elective hours. Internships provide a wonderful opportunity for majors to gain experience in a field as well as connect with potential employers. We share internship opportunities with majors as we are notified of them, but students are also encouraged to seek out their own internship opportunities. Students have interned in a variety of companies, including Andrews-McMeel, Ogden Publications, the Red Cross, the University Libraries, and local media outlets.

Study Abroad: The English Department sponsors three programs, directed by Mary Klayder:
• The British Summer Institute in the Humanities, one of the longest-running study abroad programs at KU, is a four-week, 7-credit travelling summer program in England and Scotland. Students earn credit in English, the History of Art, and a bridge course in British culture. The course is taught by Klayder in cooperation with a faculty member in the History of Art; they are assisted by a graduate student or instructor in English.

• The London Review is a spring-semester class focused on London arts, literature, and culture. Students travel to London on spring break and return to publish a journal of student writing.

• Pura Vida: Travel Writing and the Costa Rica Experience involves eight preparatory classes in travel writing and a twelve-day trip to Costa Rica in the winter term. Students prepare and present a travel essay in the spring term.

In addition, the English Department has partnered with the Institute for Irish Studies at Queen’s University Belfast to allow KU English credit (ENGL 530) for a month-long, interdisciplinary examination of Ireland, with a special emphasis on Northern Ireland and the history of the Troubles. Students are also strongly encouraged to study abroad on semester-long and year-long programs. Between 80-90 students each year go abroad on English-Department-sponsored study abroad programs. Many more go on semester- and year-long programs not directly sponsored by the department.

Student Publications: Students in English have two journals. Kiosk is a student-run undergraduate journal of creative writing, produced in conjunction with the School of the Arts; it has won several design awards since its inception. Comma, Splice is a more recent publication, also student-run. Both offer students not only the opportunity to see their work in print, but also to gain editorial experience.

Service learning: Several professors and GTAs have incorporated a service learning component into their classes, through which students are encouraged to become involved in larger community efforts and to apply frameworks discussed in their courses to their service experiences.

C. Students in Profile

From 2003 to the present, the department has averaged 608 undergraduate majors and graduated an average of 168 students per year. (See Appendix A.)

Our undergraduate program in English at the junior-senior level serves several groups: English majors, who comprise the largest group; English minors; students seeking elective credit or general education principal courses in Humanities: Literature and the Arts; and students in other programs who require our coursework, especially English Education.

D. Program Quality and Outcomes

Faculty Quality: Our faculty is renowned for excellence in teaching; in the past decade, English Department faculty members received at least one University- or nation-wide undergraduate teaching award per year. (See General Overview.)
**Program Assessment:** Student evaluations of faculty teaching courses in the English major show that this recognition is not misplaced. On a scale of 1-5, the mean scores from Fall 2010 that students gave their instructors in 14 sections of required 300-level courses ranged from 3.87 (in response to the statement “the instructor’s classroom methods helped me learn”) to 4.27 (responding to “the instructor set and met clear goals for the course”). In 30 sections of 300- and 400-level classes that are electives for the major, the mean scores went from 4.3 to 4.59 in responses to the same prompts. In 12 upper-level classes (English 500 - 600) the mean scores, again for these prompts, were 4.56 and 4.58. Responses to statements that “the instructor stimulated interest in the subject matter” and “the material was intellectually challenging” scored 4.2 or higher at all levels. Numbers were quite comparable for the Fall 2009 departmental means. In the University’s senior survey, the English Department consistently rates highly on undergraduate satisfaction measures, especially in the areas of “quality of instruction,” “ease of meeting with instructors,” and “number of courses offered in major.”

The department has been engaged in several assessment initiatives that enable us to measure student learning and to record student satisfaction and perceived success in the major. Firstly, we devised an exit survey for graduating seniors (see Appendix E). The results of this survey, although preliminary (we have only been running it for 2 years with one year (2008/9) in which a complete set of surveys was collected; and some of the initiatives it is measuring are only just underway), show that overall English majors feel that the program has served them well. They rate their improvement in writing, critical thinking, and research skills and in their knowledge about literature, language and culture between 3.6 and 4.2 on a scale of 1-5. Interestingly, the lowest score, a 3.6 for “preparation to conduct independent research in literary or linguistic subject matter,” received higher scores from students who had already taken our now required English 308, an introductory course in critical methodology and research skills. The same group of students also rated their improvement significantly higher than their colleagues did in the areas of “preparation to understand and apply forms of critical inquiry,” suggesting that this new requirement is successfully preparing students for more advanced courses in the major. Other useful information includes evidence that our “equivalent” courses to the surveys provide students with as rich an understanding of literary, linguistic, and cultural history as the surveys themselves do.

As a complement to student-driven assessment, a department committee has worked with the Center for Teaching Excellence to measure student improvement from the instructor side. Based on our goals for the major, we constructed an assessment rubric which a group of faculty/instructor readers apply to a randomly selected, ungraded, and anonymous group of papers drawn from select courses (see Appendix E). We assign “grades” to these papers based on their quality in the areas of written expression, critical vocabulary and methodology, their grasp of cultural history as revealed in language and text, their historical understanding of genre, and their independent research skills. The readers’ grades are then compared and averaged, providing data that will soon enable us to measure differences in student performance between introductory and advanced courses in the major. We are in the preliminary stages of this project, having completed assessment on two 300-level literature courses (ENGL 308 and 312). In 2011, we will complete the analysis of 500-level courses in literature and in language; a further project (depending on the timing of course offerings) will be to broaden our study of courses in composition and rhetoric. When we have sufficient coverage of our offerings, we will circulate a
report, hold a department-wide meeting to discuss its findings, and seek suggestions for new directions. In 2010, the English Department was awarded a CTE Teaching Development Award in recognition of this assessment work.

**Student Awards:** Our undergraduate majors have received awards and scholarships across the University, including the Harvey Nelson Scholarship, Summerfield Scholarship, Watkins-Berger Scholarship, University Scholars Program, Global Scholars Program, CLAS Scholarships, and Paretsky Award for creativity. They have also been well-represented as University nominees for major national fellowships including Marshall, Rhodes, Truman, Pickering, and Udall.

In addition to these awards, we are proud to say that, thanks to gifts from donors, our students have the opportunity to compete for an impressive number of internal awards and scholarships in composition, literary criticism, creative nonfiction, science fiction, drama, poetry, fiction, and nature writing. We celebrate these awards and other achievements, including Honors graduates, at our Awards Ceremony in May.

**Post-Graduate Placement:** Although Alumni Association official data about our graduates are sparse, we do know that a significant percentage of our graduates go on to pursue graduate and professional degrees. In 2010, for instance, we estimated that approximately 30% of the class went on to law school, and approximately 10% went on to medical school (many with a double major in a traditional pre-medicine major such as chemistry). Others have gone on to pursue graduate and professional degrees in such areas as English, Journalism, Social Welfare, Museum Studies, Information and Library Science, and allied health fields. Many of our majors have placed in the country’s top graduate and professional programs. Within the last seven years, for instance, KU English grads have gone on to MA and PhD programs in English at Berkeley, Yale, NYU, Columbia, the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. They have gone to law school at the University of Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, University of Michigan, Washington University in St. Louis, Northwestern, University of Texas at Austin, University of Washington, and UCLA. And they have attended medical school in such notable programs as Stanford, University of Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Vanderbilt.

Our majors have also been in demand by a range of employers in a variety of fields, particularly, though by no means exclusively, those with writing, communications, research, or creative components: editing, publishing, journalism, advertising, marketing, public relations, communications, technical writing, law, web design, education, clergy, management, law enforcement, insurance, allied health, archival research, politics, fundraising, entertainment, and nonprofits. Companies at which our graduates have been employed include Hallmark, Barkley Advertising, Andrews-McMeel Publishing, Starlight Theater, Self magazine online, Time Out New York, and US Bank.

Internship coordinator for Andrews-McMeel Publishing in Kansas City, Shelly Barkes, writes that “there are many KU alumni working here at Andrews McMeel, and our relationship with the KU English Department was instrumental in forming the foundation for what has become a strong internship program….We can always depend on a steady and qualified pool of English majors from KU, and they consistently form the majority of students chosen to be part of our
program. The KU English students I’ve had the pleasure of working with over the last four years have been dedicated, diligent, and talented. They invariably bring a high level of professionalism and maturity to the internship, and continue to raise the bar higher.”

Many of our majors go on to teach in primary and secondary school, and have been placed in school districts in Kansas City, Baltimore, Lawrence KS, San Francisco, Houston, Memphis, Charlotte NC, New York City, Boston, and Minneapolis. A significant number of students are involved with Teach for America, New York City Teacher Corps, the Peace Corps, and Americorps and have taken positions in West Virginia, New Orleans, Seattle, Minneapolis, and New York City. Several graduates have gone on to teach English abroad in Korea, Spain, Austria, Japan, Thailand, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.

**Service and Outreach:** A large number of our majors are active in community service and outreach even before graduation. The undergraduate leadership for KU’s Center for Community Outreach and Alternative Spring Breaks programs, for instance, have typically been heavy with English majors.

**E. Targets for Change / New Initiatives**

**Curriculum and Major Requirements:** Recent curricular changes have been effected with special attention to facilitating timely progress through the major while increasing the quality of students’ educational experience.

The quality of the educational experience is the most important factor in decisions about major requirements, and our majors have agreed; it was in response to the prompting of the undergraduate majors several years ago, for instance, that we increased the required credit hours in the major to 30 (33 for students pursuing Departmental Honors). We recently instituted ENGL 308: Introduction to Literary Theory and Methodology as a core requirement for the Traditional and Language, Rhetoric and Writing tracks, and a core option for the creative writing track, to better ensure student understanding of the discipline of literary criticism and success in upper-level courses. We have, for several years, required majors to complete two 500+-level courses for graduation; last year, we clarified the requirements for such courses and designated them officially as “capstone” courses with a research component. In concert with the English graduate program, we then renumbered and re-titled a number of undergraduate courses to ensure more variety in, and clearer titles for, upper-level, undergraduate-only capstone courses.

The recent course reorganization effort also provides more opportunities for faculty to teach specialized courses that reflect their research strengths. We believe that these courses give students the opportunity to see the range of exciting work that our faculty do—whether it is Mary Jo Reiff’s Multi-media Rhetorics course, Stephanie Fitzgerald’s course on American Indian Literature, Environmentalism, and Ecocriticism, or Misty Schieberle’s course “Getting Medieval: Chaucer and His Contemporaries.” They also offer students the opportunity to study and participate, in the classroom and in their own research, in specialized areas of English studies in more depth. In the next year, we will continue to comb through and update the upper-division University course catalog to better reflect the state of the discipline and the courses we teach.
With this in mind, a major curricular addition has been the new Language, Rhetoric, and Writing track. Although it shares core literature and methodology courses with the other two tracks, the electives in this track are specifically focused in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and English language studies, drawing on the special expertise of our excellent faculty in these areas. The major was just approved for Fall 2010, and early adopters have been students hoping to continue in law school, communications and journalism, and graduate study in rhetoric and composition.

A defining characteristic of the undergraduate program in English is small courses, ranging from 12 in Honors proseminars to 35 in the majority of courses offered at the upper division. In the Fall of 2010, in the process of clarifying our policy on course enrollment caps, the department voted to further lower the caps for upper-division capstone courses (from 35 to 25) and creative writing workshops (from 22 to 20 in introductory courses and from 22 to 18 in advanced courses). This decision was made when it was clear that this could be done without negatively impacting the number of spaces available for undergraduates in those courses simply by ensuring even distribution of students across available offerings.

**Admission to Major:** Prior to 2009, students were admitted into the English major after completing the First- and Second-year English (FSE) sequence and with a KU GPA of 2.0 or higher. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences no longer allows admissions standards to any major to include an overall GPA, so the department changed the admissions standards to a 2.5 average GPA in all FSE courses. Starting Spring 2011, admission to the English major will further require that a student have a 2.5 average GPA in FSE courses and one 300-level English course to better ensure that students are declaring an English major with adequate preparation for success.

The creative writing track requires an additional step: students must receive a 3.0 in each of their first two creative writing courses in order to declare this track. Since only one creative writing workshop is allowed to count toward the other two major tracks, and since demand for creative writing courses is so high, this step helps to ensure that only interested and capable students pursue this path.

**Advising and Mentoring:** A major issue that the University is facing is the problem of slow time to degree for undergraduates. KU ranks near the bottom of peer institutions for retention and time to degree for undergraduates. Although the English Department is in the middle of the pack statistically in time to degree within the University, we share the University’s concern, and have stepped up efforts in mentoring and advising to ensure our students are able to graduate according to their own schedules.

Undergraduate advising in English has traditionally been handled one-on-one, with students visiting the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Associate Director and Honors Coordinator, and the College Advising Specialist for advising and paperwork, and other faculty throughout the department—especially current members of the Undergraduate Committee—for advice and mentoring more generally. We find, however, that after declaring the major, many students fall through the cracks, never meeting with an advisor until they require certification of their major for graduation.
In the Fall of 2010, in an attempt to start all majors with the same information, we piloted orientation sessions for students who completed the requirements for admission to the major and who have expressed an interest in declaring an English major. These students are directed to the sessions through departmental enrollment holds. We use this opportunity to review major requirements and opportunities as well as review KU’s general education requirements. Students are then encouraged to complete a two-year plan to ensure timely progress to degree. Initial feedback from students has been uniformly positive, and we plan to refine the orientation sessions to best serve our potential majors. Of course, one-on-one advising and mentoring remains available to supplement the group orientation sessions.

IV. Graduate Program

A) Mission and Overview

In keeping with the CLAS mission statement, the goal of graduate education in the English Department is “to bring students to the frontiers of current knowledge in a discipline and to enable them to become independent contributors to that knowledge.” Longstanding strengths of the program include increasingly rigorous academic standards; a high quality of faculty mentoring; focused preparation of students for the job search and professional life (overseen by the department’s job placement faculty position); and a strong placement rate of PhDs in tenure-track positions in colleges or universities. A distinguishing feature of our program is its emphasis on excellence in teaching; the department receives numerous teaching awards and emphasizes pedagogical training for graduate students. Continuing challenges for the program include obstacles to recruitment of top students created by our relatively low resources (we compete for admissions with institutions who offer far more financial support and far lower graduate teaching loads); location (geographical prejudices are irrational but engrained); and faculty attrition due to retirement and poaching (creative writing and rhetoric-composition faculty have been particularly hard hit by hirings into institutions with greater funding).

B) Program Description

The English Department graduate program offers four MA tracks and two doctoral tracks. It offers MAs in (1) literature; (2) literature and literary theory; (3) language, literature, and composition; and (4) an MFA in creative writing. (A proposal is being considered to revise and streamline these options further, to two: “literary studies” and “rhetoric & composition or language studies.”) The PhD in English may be earned in any subfield, and we have recently instituted a “fast-track” PhD in composition and rhetoric studies. The MA prepares students for PhD-level work (in our department or elsewhere), for teaching English in secondary schools, or for further work in publishing and other private-sector career tracks. The MFA prepares students as writers and as teachers of creative writing on the secondary and university level (the MFA is the primary terminal degree in creative writing). Our PhD program professionalizes students as teachers and researchers who contribute to the production and dissemination of scholarly knowledge. It prepares teacher-scholars in the various subfields of English studies to be faculty members at the college-university level and to produce original scholarship to the field.
**Degrees awarded:** Over the 2005-09 period, the average number of MAs awarded yearly was 14.8. The average number of PhDs for this period was 7.8 per year. (See Appendix A for annual totals.) The number of PhDs per year has trended upward with recent emphasis on time to degree. Since it began awarding degrees in 2007-2009, the MFA has awarded an average of 4.0 degrees per year (rising in successive years). From 2006 to 2009, the total yearly average number of graduate degrees awarded was 25.

**Time to degree:** Average time to degree for English PhDs during 2004-2009 is 6.9 years. If the average is calculated without two anomalous students (with multiple leaves of absence), it is 6.5 years. Average MA time to degree over this period is 2.5 years. The department takes time to degree seriously and has made it a priority in proposed changes to the MA and PhD programs being discussed in AY 2010-11. At the same time, an obvious obstacle to lowering time to degree is the high teaching load of our GTAs. It is not reasonable to expect our students, teaching a 2-2 load, to complete their degree work as rapidly as students who teach 1-1 at competing institutions and often enjoy fellowships that relieve them from teaching for one or more years of their doctoral work.

**Mentoring Models:** The Director of Graduate Studies serves as an initial advisor for all English graduate students during their first year of enrollment. Mentoring begins with contact during the admissions process and during the department’s orientation sessions each August, when students are introduced to basic aspects of graduate academic work and, in the case of incoming GTAs, pedagogical training. During their first year of enrollment, students typically make contact with faculty in their subfields (different areas of literary studies; rhetoric, composition, and language studies; and creative writing). Beginning with these initial contacts, students develop mentoring relations with faculty who form their exam and thesis or dissertation directors and committees. Individual faculty teaching mentors are additionally assigned to each GTA, and follow a routine of class observation and consultation about teaching. As PhD students approach the end of their dissertation stage, they work with the department’s job placement officer and their faculty advisors on job application materials, interviewing skills, and other aspects of the job market. These advanced mentoring relationships with PhD students often extend into former students’ first faculty positions.

**C) Students in Profile:**

**Demographics:** From 2005 to 2009 the department’s total yearly number of MA and PhD students has declined (see Appendix A), but this decline is largely caused, and offset, by the introduction of the new MFA program, which puts students who formerly pursued a creative writing MA track into a separate MFA degree program. The new MFA, which has admitted students only since Fall 2006, has enrolled a few more students each year. Thus, counting MFAs, graduate student totals have remained steady, with very slight variation over five years.

During this 2005-09 period, traditional MA students have declined by about half, while PhD numbers have declined very slightly. This shift in numbers results primarily from the separation of the MFA from the traditional MA; and secondarily from efforts to raise our admissions
standards. Currently the department is attempting to increase the proportion of MAs to PhDs, with the goal of admitting fewer but higher-quality PhD candidates.

**Test scores:** for Fall 2010 (the only numbers currently available), the averages for GPA were: admitted 3.62; enrolled 3.56. Averages for GRE verbal were: admitted 610.54; enrolled 610.00. Averages for GRE quantitative were: admitted 582.70; enrolled 608.26. And GRE analytical writing averages were: admitted 4.77; enrolled 4.74.

**Financial support:** The department’s graduate support consists almost entirely of GTA positions, funded in department, that require students to teach a 2-2 load. This is a heavy teaching load for graduate students and represents a major obstacle for efforts to improve our students’ time to degree and overall level of scholarly training. In addition to GTA positions, the department has been able to secure a small but increasing number of RA positions for dissertation-stage students (10 positions since 2009). Increased graduate support in the form of fellowships and other awards that might lower graduate teaching load remains a very high priority.

From 2005 to 2009, about 50-60% of the department’s graduate students received support as GTAs; almost all other students did not seek TA support for one reason or another, meaning that almost all students who sought financial support were able to be funded. Most positively, as of Fall 2010, all students in good standing seeking TA positions were able to obtain support.

Last year, the department succeeded in raising an additional $50,000 expendable for use in funding new GRA and/or Fellowship lines for incoming graduate students. We are using these funds to offer more competitive funding to highly qualified doctoral applicants who would probably otherwise accept more lucrative funding at other institutions.

**Distribution and size of classes:** From 2005 to 2009, the MA and PhD class size (i.e. numbers of new students enrolled each Fall) has varied by year but remains steady overall. MA incoming classes have been 15-16 students on average. These classes began with averages of 90.6 applicants, and 31.2 students accepted. Thus we accept about 1/3rd of applicants and enroll half of these admits. PhD incoming class size from 2005 to 2009 has been 9-10 students on average. These classes began with averages of 60.2 applicants and 18.8 admits. Thus, as with the MA, we admit about 1/3rd of applicants and enroll half of these admits. Class size for the MFA program 2006-09 (the program began in 2006) has been slightly over 7 students on average. These classes began with averages of 35.75 applications and 11.25 admits. For the MFA, we admit about 1/3rd of applicants, and enroll 65% of those admits, a somewhat higher percentage than for the MA and PhD. (See Appendix A.)

Two considerations help contextualize and explain these numbers: First, we compete for admissions with institutions that offer more substantial graduate support than we do (substantially larger stipends, and substantially lower teaching loads). Consequently we lose many top admits that are otherwise interested in our programs. Secondly, the relative decline of PhD numbers and the relative rise of MA numbers over the five years 2005-09 is the result of our own efforts to increase the number of MAs relative to PhDs, in order to be more selective in the PhD category.
D) Program Quality and Outcomes

Learner outcomes:

- Familiarity with Anglophone literary history, and detailed knowledge of appropriate subfields (for literary studies); familiarity with appropriate methodological and practical areas of rhetoric and composition studies and its subfields (for rhetoric and composition studies); familiarity with the history and development of the English language (for English language studies); familiarity with and accomplishment in appropriate genres and subfields (for creative writing).
- Familiarity with theoretical and methodological areas relevant to appropriate subfields.
- Ability to produce scholarly research according the standards of the appropriate subfields; or, in creative writing, the ability to produce writing at expected levels of skill and professional accomplishment.
- For PhDs, the ability to teach one’s subfield(s) on the university level.
- Engagement in professional development and committee or service work that is a part of academic professional life.

Student satisfaction measures: According to KU Academic Information Management System (AIMS) figures (see Appendix A), our mean student survey numbers from 2009 suggest that we score close to “very good” (on a five point scale with 4 being “very good” and 5 being “excellent”) in “overall satisfaction,” and we score “very good” on “quality of graduate teaching” and “overall climate of program is positive.” On some other measures, such as “quality of advising & guidance,” “advised on how to search for a job,” and “select KU if starting over,” we score between “good” (3) and “very good” (4). The department aims to raise these numbers to at least at 4 or “very good” level. We hope to improve our orientation process and faculty advising processes to improve the areas that have produced the lowest scores. Our Job Placement Advising program has been active, but not all students use it for help in the job market process.

Placement rates: From 2004 to 2009 the department has graduated 45 PhDs. 25 of these PhDs are tenure-track (or tenured) faculty members at colleges and universities (55.5%). Additionally, 6 teach in renewable (but not tenure-track) assistant professorships, and 1 teaches in a non-renewable assistantship. 1 is currently an instructor and Director of a Learning Center, 4 are currently lecturers, 2 are secondary teachers, and 5 are in non-academic employment, and 1 is unaccounted for. In total, combining tenure and non-tenure track, 32 of 45 PhDs over the 2004-2009 period are teaching as assistant professors (71%). (See Appendix H.)

The department responds to job market concerns with a Faculty Job Placement Officer who helps prepare students for the market, and by current attempts to revise our MA and PhD course requirements in ways that improve training and thereby make students more competitive in the national job market. Awareness of the job market and how it affects students’ planning and self-presentation as scholars is emphasized throughout the graduate training process, from recruitment and orientation to work with Job Placement Officer, practice job interviews, etc.
**Student awards:** Complete records of graduate student awards over time are not available, but English graduates win teaching and research awards regularly. In keeping with the department’s reputation for excellence in teaching, KU teaching assistants regularly win the University’s highest teaching awards for graduate students. Over the last decade, English Department graduate TAs have won KU’s Carlin Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award (awarded yearly to 4-5 TAs university-wide) a total of 6 times. English Department TAs have won the even more exclusive university-wide KU Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (1 only per year) a total of 4 times over the last ten years.

In AY 2009-2010, the only year for which we have records of Graduate Student scholarly awards, English graduate students won 2nd place as well as 3rd place in the University-wide Graduate Student Research Competition.

**Student Research Productivity:** The department’s graduate students are competitive and productive in terms of research publication. A self-reporting survey of all publication by currently enrolled students in AY 2010-2011 (i.e., not just publication for this AY, but all their publication since they enrolled) yields the following numbers: 81 poems and 3 poetry chapbooks; 25 reference and short articles; 21 full-length peer-reviewed articles; 13 reviews; 12 short stories; 5 scholarly translations; and 2 edited books. As in certain other categories, incomplete self-reporting means that the complete numbers are probably slightly higher.

The yearly research output of department graduate students, as unevenly self-reported in the department’s informal “Annual Bibliography” for 2005, 2006, and 2007 (the only years available), appears as follows:

- 2005: 8 poems; 2 poetry chapbooks; 7 reviews; 6 stories; 1 edited book; 1 short article.
- 2006: 27 poems; 7 reviews; 4 stories; 4 peer-reviewed articles; 2 short or reference articles; 1 edited poetry collection.
- 2007: 2 poems; 1 poetry chapbook; 6 peer-reviewed article.

Obviously these self-reported numbers vary greatly from year to year; nevertheless, even this amount of information indicates that English Department graduate students are actively producing and publishing their creative writing and scholarly research.

**E) Targets for Change and New Initiatives**

- **To streamline time to degree** for our graduate MA and PhD students through revisions to our requirements, timelines, and exam processes. Our median time to the MA degree is currently 2.7 years; our mean is 3.7. Our median time to the PhD (according to AIMS) is 7.2 years, while our mean time is 7.8 years. According to NRC data from 2006, we rank 8th out of our 10 peer institutions for median time to PhD.
Median Time to Degree (Ph.D)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Median Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT Austin</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Nebraska-Lincoln</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Missouri-Columbia</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Oregon</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Arizona</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Colorado-Boulder</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Buffalo</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Kansas</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Chapel Hill</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Wisconsin Madison</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are actively addressing this issue through revisions to our MA and PhD program requirements, including language and course requirements (MA) and time limits (PhD). We should note that we face particular obstacles in time to degree issues because of the very heavy teaching load that our graduate students face (in order to be fully supported) in contrast to graduate students in English at our peer institutions. Here are some comparative teaching loads at KU compared to other institutions:

- **KU** 2 / 2 every year
- **U Wisconsin (Madison)** 1 / 1 (or, three discussion sections for a lecture)
- **U North Carolina (Chapel Hill)** 1 / 2 or 2 / 1
- **U Nebraska (Lincoln)** 2 / 2 but with no teaching in first year (RAship)
- **U Missouri** 2 / 2 in second year, .25 appt in first year
- **SUNY Buffalo** 1 / 1

These numbers would suggest that a significant issue in time to degree is that our students must teach two grading-heavy composition courses every semester beginning the first year in order to get full support. (RAships are available during one semester of the PhD, while writing the dissertation, but are not available for the MA.)

- **To more firmly enforce time limits** for good progress to degree, creating a culture where students know they need to move through in a timely manner.
- **To better serve our graduate students** by offering enough courses in a range of topics, including those with less overall “draw.” Currently, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences minimum enrollment standards (graduate courses must enroll at least 6 students) make it difficult for classes to “make” in areas of study where we do not have a lot of graduate students already enrolled. In turn this has the effect of making it even harder to recruit graduate students and build those areas into stronger programs. We hope to approach this problem creatively, by attempting some negotiated “trades” with CLAS whereby instructors teaching under-enrolled graduate courses in under-represented areas of study might take on an overload in an undergraduate course during the same semester.
- **To revise our Graduate “Research Methodologies” requirement** to create more flexible options, so that we address the needs of students in widely divergent research areas.