October 27, 2010

MIU 3 Proposal: Wisconsin English 2.0

Faculty in the Department of English have unanimously endorsed this proposal.

Overview

The English department seeks MIU 3 funding to transform its undergraduate teaching in the major and increase the number of English faculty teaching in the First Year Interest Group (FIG) program. To achieve these objectives, English needs to hire 6 new faculty members in order to revive our teaching power in the undergraduate major after years of critical losses. Our goals are three:

- Transform undergraduate degree curriculum
- Restore historical core of faculty
- Create integrative approaches within the undergraduate curriculum

These crucial hires will allow us to make immediate and tangible progress toward these three goals, first by offering a 15 person senior seminar to all majors and, second, by doubling our FIG offerings.

English at UW: Solid Achievements, Real Challenges

English at UW-Madison includes not one but five interlocking disciplines—Literary Studies, Creative Writing, Composition and Rhetoric, English Language and Linguistics, and English as a Second Language (ESL). We offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs in all but ESL, a non-degree program that serves a large number of students across the university and manages the TESOL certificate program. No other English department in the country includes faculty from so many related but distinct disciplines. Yet we have suffered major losses in our core undergraduate teaching faculty in Literary Studies — a net loss of 12 faculty over the past decade. This MIU 3 proposal will begin to make up for these critical losses where students feel them most. With this support, the university could help one of its top departments become a national powerhouse as English becomes able to teach smaller, innovative courses to 6,000 undergraduates each year. We have been creative in imagining how we can have the greatest effect on undergraduate English education with the smallest expenditure, and this proposal reflects that effort.

At present, our faculty have few opportunities to teach students in small groups, a problem that spans our entire curriculum, from our introductory courses to electives for our major to seminars on advanced topics. In this proposal we have plotted a path towards a revived major with more research opportunities for undergraduates and innovative uses of archives and classroom technologies. As a down payment on this plan, we have decided that our students are best served by an immediate intensification of our faculty presence at the very beginning and end of the curriculum: in FIG seminars and in senior capstone seminars, a feature of other programs on campus that our students want for the major.
We need to take focused action now to roll back an alarming but pronounced trend toward larger, adjunct-led courses over the last decade. While the department remains a vibrant place to work and think for undergraduates — indeed, our classes reach a truly astonishing number of students in the college — we have had to make unacceptable compromises in quality in order to keep the major afloat. That trend will be reversed with the resources we receive from the MIU.

As of this Fall 2010, we are 52 faculty bodies, distributed across the five units described above. This number is deceptively large, however, since the teaching in the undergraduate major is at present undertaken only by Literary Studies and English Linguistics faculty. In reality, we have only 35.5 FTE to teach our 604 undergraduate majors (resulting in a faculty to student ratio of 17:1). Compare these numbers to other major departments on campus: History has 49 FTE who teach 658 undergraduates (a ratio of 13:1) and Psychology has 33 FTE who teach 353 undergraduate majors (a ratio of 10:1). To sustain the total number of student enrollments, literary studies faculty carry the greatest undergraduate teaching load in the department and offer our English majors large lectures with TA taught sections and relatively few “small” classes (35-40).

The strain on our undergraduate teaching becomes even clearer when we take into account the fact that the English department teaches not just our own majors but also teaches more credit hours to non-major students (who take our classes to fulfill L&S requirements) than any other department in the college. We teach almost 16,000 credits worth of classes a year — more than our colleagues in History, Psychology and Political Science. These are classes that the College expects and needs us to teach, even if it has come at the expense of our own majors.

*How We Got Here: First the Faculty Lecture, Then the Adjunct Led Seminar*

The quality of the undergraduate experience in English has increasingly fallen short of what it should be as we have tried to meet university-wide demand for first and second year courses, including faculty-led FIGs, while keeping the major afloat as the number of literary studies faculty has declined. The effect of these faculty losses is nowhere more visible than to those students who struggle to complete a major in English, a degree that employers and graduate programs still recognize as offering vital training in writing, reading and argument.

A semester-long study of our enrollment patterns confirms what undergraduates tell us in advising and surveys: most students have no opportunity to work with a faculty member in a class smaller than 35 until they are seniors. This trend is not surprising: of necessity, we have had to discontinue many of the faculty led, writing-and research-intensive classes students used to take in the first, second, and third years. In the fall of 2002, faculty generated two-thirds of the undergraduate credits taken in the department. By 2009, that number had dropped to only one third, with the remainder taken up by short-term instructors (graduate students and lecturers) and academic staff. Our graduate students are well trained and responsible, but they do not have the expertise of faculty members. Whereas ten years ago a UW—Madison student had a one in five chance of studying with members of the literary studies faculty in a class of fewer than 21 people during a given year, now that student’s chances are no more than one in twenty (see Figure 1 below).
Decreasing Access to Faculty in Advanced Classes

![Graph showing decreasing access to faculty in advanced classes over time.](image)

**Figure 1:** The Disappearance of Faculty-Led Upper Division Classes

Every semester students encounter difficulty and frustration when they try to register for courses required for the major. As a faculty, we find it hard to avoid bottlenecks in the sequences of required courses. Just as alarming is the fact that we do not offer seminars to sophomores or juniors in the major, nor have we been able to provide a capstone seminar for seniors. In core classes, access to tenure-line faculty is thinning as course sizes expand, adjuncts take over core classes, and smaller sections or honors seminars are eliminated. These losses affect some of the most fundamental courses required for the major in English: English 215 (British Literature to 1750), English 219 or English 220 (Early and Late Shakespeare) and currently limited versions of our pre-1800 courses (for example, English 367: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). These courses are a prime avenue leading students into the major; they also attract non-majors from across the College.

Unlike other popular majors (see Figure 2 below), the English service commitment effectively funnels resources away from the major once faculty numbers have dipped below the critical level. Without hiring more faculty in Literary Studies to teach upper division students, the major will eventually collapse.

![Graph comparing credits taken at different course levels.](image)

**Figure 2:** Course Level Comparisons: English and Peer Departments
What English majors too often experience is an uneven array of literature courses—some large, some smaller yet still too big for innovative teaching and learning—and too many of these courses are longer be taught by tenure track faculty. We are now unable to offer the intensive, faculty-led classroom experience that once defined the Wisconsin English major as one in which students worked closely with faculty to deepen subject knowledge and hone writing and research skills. We need to approach something like parity with other UW departments—such as History and Psychology, which provide more faculty-led instruction to their majors in smaller courses because their greater number of FTE permits them to do so.

**A New Curriculum: English Literature, Writing and Rhetoric**

The crisis in English has prompted us to re-examine our teaching mission: to bring majors and non-majors into intensive discussion with faculty members in classes that emphasize reading literature and training in writing and reasoning. We can and should still provide these experiences to many students; we simply must provide them to our majors. The English Department seeks MIU 3 funding to hire new faculty so that all faculty will have more opportunities to teach majors in small, writing intensive classes at key points in the English curriculum, including a capstone seminar for seniors. We will add a greater number of FIG courses and, down the road, a mid-career seminar that explore different approaches to literature, argument and cultural analysis. The addition of such offerings will be transformative, changing our curriculum from what is now a smorgasbord of courses to a progressive, cumulative experience that builds on knowledge and skills acquired throughout the individual major's career at UW—Madison.

A close study of our resources and student enrollment patterns convinces us that the addition of six new faculty will yield immediate results in the classroom and will complement, moreover, the revitalization of the department begun with the Digital Studies MIU initiative and the Mellon initiative in global literatures. To restore the English major to its core strength in reading, argument and writing across the history of literature in English—from its beginnings in the Middle Ages to its global diaspora in the present—we need to hire two types of faculty: 1) those in the early periods where our losses have been greatest and 2) integrative faculty who knit together the broad range of current approaches in our discipline, from digital media to global literature in translation. Included in this latter category are members of the Composition and Rhetoric faculty who will now play a major role in the teaching of writing, rhetoric and argument to undergraduate majors. These crucial additions will allow us to develop a more coherent, challenging and exciting major that builds cumulatively on historical studies; on research methods and work in archives; on written expression, argument and digital production; and on studies of literary theory and form. Classes with these emphases will teach our students to negotiate the distance between themselves and the texts they read, texts which are often historically, linguistically, or culturally removed from their immediate experiences.

The English classroom is at its best dynamic: human insights must be generated through dialogue and reflection, with students bringing their own experiences to bear on problems that emerge in discussion. While lectures can simulate this give and take of ideas and arguments in dazzling ways, seminars are the places where students learn to live the literature they read: to analyze it, to argue about it, to experience the intellectual friction that produces insights. Smaller, faculty-taught courses increase the opportunities for students to receive individual feedback on their development
as writers and researchers. The techniques of analysis acquired in learning to read challenging works of literature, moreover, transfer immediately to other domains within and beyond the university.

**Transforming the English Curriculum**

1. **The Historical Core**

Unlike most sciences and social sciences, English requires an engagement with the past to arrive and judgments that are themselves revealing precisely because they vary with time. Works become engaging to a reader because of their place within, and departure from, a longer conversation about what can and ought to be expressed in argument and works of the imagination. Moreover, writers in English have always composed within a dialogue that each generation creates with authors in the past. By its nature, then, the study of literature and rhetoric is a deeply historical enterprise as well as a continually emergent one. To make these processes accessible to our students, we wish to hire a diverse and wide-ranging faculty in our core historical areas. Along with these new faculty hires, all faculty in these areas will be able to offer instruction at all levels of the undergraduate curriculum, beginning with small, writing intensive seminars taken in the first two years of a student’s experience in the major: medieval literature 450-1500; early modern studies 1500-1700; literatures of modernity: 1700-1900; and literatures of modernity: 1900-present.

Out of the 6 faculty we seek to hire through the MIU, we seek 4 hires to add to our ability to teach the historical core:

- Two faculty who teach in the medieval and early modern periods (450-1700)
- Two faculty who teach in the literatures of modernity (1700-present)

2. **The Integrative Core**

These hires will also be aimed at improving the classroom experience of undergraduates in their third and fourth years—e.g. a new seminar on theory and criticism; seminars in rhetorical theory and advanced writing; seminars that deal with epochal shifts in media (oral, manuscript, print, digital) and economies (transnational, pre- and post-capitalist); seminars in argument and in legal rhetoric; and capstone senior-seminars that culminate in an archival research project or the creation of a digital artifact. New faculty hires made possible faculty by the Mellon global studies and MIU Digital Studies initiatives will enrich this new emphasis. As with the hires made in the historical core above, we will hire faculty who represent the diversity of cultures, background, and approaches which have helped us lead the humanities on campus over the last decade.

Out of the 6 faculty we seek to hire through the MIU, we seek 2 hires to add to our ability to teach the integrative core:

- One faculty member who will teach the history of literary media and archives
- One faculty member who will teach rhetoric in the 21st century

**Curricular Changes: Preserving Service, Focusing on the Major**
Much of what we now do in English to teach first and second year undergraduates is essential to the mission of UW—Madison as a public university: graduate student-run writing classes; TA sections that pair with large faculty led lecture courses; the Writing Center and Writing Fellows Program; and ESL instruction. The changes we are making to the curriculum will ensure that faculty are well represented at this level of instruction, in FIGS and other smaller classes for beginning college students. With every new faculty hire, we plan to create and staff another FIG or other 100 and 200 level courses for potential majors in English. All faculty, not only those newly hired, will be partners in the new curriculum.

The most dramatic changes, however, will occur in classes aimed at students in the major. We will conduct smaller seminars for sophomore, junior and senior English majors that cumulatively build the skills in argument, rhetoric and literary inquiry that support the capacity to innovate and think creatively. At present we do this for a small Honors program in English which includes a senior thesis. We seek to establish a comparable set of choices and curricular focus for all our majors that will include, to begin, capstone seminars for seniors majoring in English. The capstone senior seminar will focus on problems and questions that join English as a discipline to the world and pay close attention to student demand for theoretical approaches joined with the practical activities of reading, writing, and publishing in partnership with others in the university and the community: Silver Buckle Press, The Wisconsin Historical Society, Special Collections, Student Technology Services, the Chazen Museum, Memorial and College Libraries, the Madison Public Library, local bookstores and digital innovations now underway across the university and the nation. Students will present the results of their inquiry in exhibits, podcasts, web pages, audio and video documentaries, or other forms students and teachers’ imaginations may create.

At a later stage, we hope to offer sophomore-junior seminars (capped at 15) that consolidate writing skills and explore broader methodologies in English studies. As a faculty we will build toward the capstone seminar by coordinating the types and levels of inquiry our students undertake from their first year through graduation.

**Sample Courses for the New Curriculum**

The courses identified below include some that our current faculty have taught and others they are planning to offer. They are presented here as examples of the curricular development that the MIU hires will ensure.

1. **Courses in the Historical Core**

A. **Medieval and Early Modern**

*Making and Unmaking in the Middle Ages* (Cooper) engages with medieval textual imaginings of the wide variety of ways of creating a world, a kingdom, a city, a building, a book, or a self, as well as destroying them.

*Medieval Material Culture* (Niles) studies artifacts of the Anglo-Saxon past alongside crucial texts of the period.
Visualizing the Literary Renaissance (Witmore) makes use of software developed at UW-Madison and elsewhere to see how the literary world looks from the various perspectives that new methods in digital humanities enable.

Literature and Religious Conflict (Loewenstein) brings home to our hearts and minds earlier an earlier period of religious conflict, the English Reformation, which raises questions we now face about radicalism and political change.

B. Literatures of Modernity

American Literature and the Environment (Keller) examines texts in which American writers conceptualize nature or the wilderness and humans' relation to the natural world.

Contemporary African American Literature (Hussen) addresses the work of African Americans who have long grappled with how literature and politics can speak to one another.

Complicity, Conspiracy and Collective (Zimmerman) examines literature that struggles to comprehend the idea of moral complicity, responsibility for crimes committed by others one aids.

Eighteenth-Century Genres (Valenza) uses digital methods borrowed from bioinformatics as well as traditional methods of reading to identify patterns that define texts in from 1660 to 1800.

Rethinking Life in Literature (Guyer) races the convergence of literature, life, and politics from the eighteenth century through the present through rigorous consideration of biopolitics.

Courses in the Integrative Core

A. History and Archives of Literary Media

American Comics (Valenza) considers how new media and new genres are often created out of a maelstrom whose ultimate form may travel far from its original shape and source.

The Little Magazine (Yu) was the medium for bringing much modern poetry to the public. This course reads through Special Collections’ rich collection of these documents.

From Manuscript to Hypertext (Robertson) meets in Special Collections to consider changes in reading and writing from the invention of moveable type through the digital revolution.

Romantic Visuality Goes Digital (Kelley) investigates romantic visuality in the museum, on the street, and on the stage and page. Students will build a gallery of a chosen topic or event.

B. Rhetoric in the 21st Century
**Rhetoric and Civic Culture** (Bernard-Donals) examines the connection between rhetoric and the law in place since the invention of rhetoric in 5th century BCE; this relationship is pursued from past to present in a global context.

**Language and Diversity in the US** (Brandt) is a service-learning course that introduces students to biliteracies, especially those common in much of the upper Midwest.

**Arguments for America** (Olson) surveys non-literary narratives of the nation from independence to the present.

**Composing the University** (Young) is a research-focused, writing intensive course on civic engagement, the history of race and the University, and the goals of a 21st century college education.

**Funding Scenario and Budget**

Senior Seminar for all majors (each capped at 15);
Double FIGS; Make required introductory sequence into small lectures (capped at 35);
Make elective courses in the major (200 level and up) faculty taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIU Hiring Area</th>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>Yearly Unit Cost</th>
<th>Total Est. Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Core</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Approaches</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$450,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wisconsin English 2.0—Proposal Summary**

With increased faculty numbers, we can offer more faculty taught FIG courses that will—alongside the introductory lecture classes we now offer to first year students—invite students across the university to see how reading, writing, and thinking about language and literature are part of their intellectual and civic life. For English majors we will create a new path through the major, culminating in a senior capstone seminar that will allow students to build on their earlier coursework as they pursue an inquiry in ways that demonstrate their capacity for research, interpretation and conceptual innovation.

This MIU 3 proposal envisions a reinvigorated undergraduate experience for the English major and greater faculty involvement in the first and second years of English coursework for all students in the university. Replenishing the core and weaving together our curriculum with strategic hires in the areas listed above will allow us to give our students what they most want and deserve: engaged experiences at all levels of the curriculum with a faculty committed to diversity, teaching and research. Moreover, these vital changes will insure that English graduates of UW-Madison will be prepared to meet the future of the humanities in society.
MEMORANDUM

To: Provost Paul DeLuca
From: Gary Sandefur, Dean
Re: MIU Round 3 proposals

December 1, 2010

We are pleased to submit proposals from the College of Letters and Science for MIU Round 3. We solicited two page pre-proposals and received over 40. We reviewed these pre-proposals in the Academic Planning Council and in Senior Staff. Based on these reviews, we invited 15 submissions of full proposals. These proposals were reviewed by Senior Staff and we decided to forward these 15 to you for consideration. All are worthy of funding and would help meet critical needs in the University.

The proposals are grouped into three tiers in order of their importance in meeting the goals of the MIU, with tier 1 being the most important. Importance is based somewhat on the quality of the proposals but primarily on undergraduate educational needs. We also took into account losses in faculty numbers prior to the MIU and the success or lack thereof of departments in previous rounds of the competition.

**Tier 1:** Communication Arts, English, French and Italian, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Philosophy, Political Science

**Tier 2:** Anthropology, Chemistry, Math, Sociology, Statistics

**Tier 3:** Communicative Disorders, Religious Studies, Service Learning, Undergraduate Research Scholars

We did not carefully assess the budgets of the proposals since we assumed that this would be done by the office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance.

xc: Associate Vice Chancellor Aaron Brower
Associate Dean Nancy Westphal-Johnson
Academic Associate Deans
Associate Dean Anne Gunther
Sheila Voss, Office of the Provost