

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by the English Department on December 8, 2021

The Department of English at The College of New Jersey is dedicated to preparing students (both undergraduate and graduate) for a lifetime of critically engaged learning and citizenship. More than half of our students are education majors, some with their primary major in English (Secondary Education, 5-year Secondary Special Education, 5-year Urban Education) and others as dual majors (still fulfilling the same requirements as all other English majors). The English major serves as a springboard to successful careers in education, publishing, government, non-profits, and writing, as well as graduate studies in everything from medicine to law and literary studies. Serving students across the College's seven schools through Liberal Learning courses, FYS/FYW courses, and the Honors Program, the English department has also served as an integral partner in building (if not functioning as the birthplace for) several departments, programs, and interdisciplinary projects, such as Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, Journalism & Professional Writing, African American Studies, Comparative Literature, Classical Studies, Linguistics, Holocaust & Genocide Studies, Religious Studies, and Environmental Studies. The Department has also served as a leader in creating and participating in the College's Signature Experiences, especially study abroad, faculty-student collaborative research, community-engaged learning, and field experiences.

As a department, however, we face challenging times. Our self-study in 2018 observed that the humanities have seen precipitous declines in enrollments across the United States, but the English Department at TCNJ has continued to enjoy robust enrollments. At the same time, the Department has had repeated requests for tenure lines in strategic areas declined and has seen the number of tenured and tenure-line faculty shrink. As our 2019 external reviewer noted, "The department is serving substantially the same number of majors [as in 2001] with about 20% fewer faculty," and we have had an additional four retirements (with only one new hire) since 2019. In order to ensure the continued robustness of the department, we need to face the uncertainties of the future by building on our strengths (including, as noted by our external reviewer in 2019, our "high-quality faculty," good reputation on campus, "innovative classes that anticipate student needs," and "good and varied study-abroad options"). We offer the strategic goals below in the spirit of building on these strengths and proactively facing the future.

Strategic Goals

We will strive to be **a department that has a clear vision of its purpose and makes that purpose more visible and valued on campus (and beyond)**. We will accomplish this goal by, for example,

- revising our mission and vision statements to reflect more concretely what we do as English scholars and what we can offer our students, the College, and the world through our studies and teaching,
- sponsoring campus events (such as the recent book fair) to make the value of what we add to the College and the world more visible (including possibly the revival of the "Close

Readings” series or sponsorship of book club-style discussions of the VWS authors and the English Department’s annual summer reading recommendations),

- communicating to the College administration the value of the contributions of the English Department to the institution and beyond (including contributions to the Liberal Learning program, the Honors program, our Liberal Arts majors, Education majors, College governance, the larger community of teachers and others who seek a graduate English degree or professional development),
- communicating the success stories of our students and faculty to the College administration and the campus (including through greater participation in the Celebration of Student Achievement and other showcases of student work), and
- partnering with Admissions to recruit more English Liberal Arts majors (e.g., through the development of new marketing/recruitment materials).

We will strive to be **a department that continues to engage in innovation in terms of curriculum and pedagogy**. We will accomplish this goal by, for example,

- creating space for reflecting as a department on our best practices in curriculum and pedagogy,
- partnering with other Schools and departments on double majors, minors, and certificates (including possibly the creation of “stacking” opportunities and mini-minors),
- encouraging our students (particularly English Liberal Arts majors) to do internships and have other career-focused experiences (as recommended by our external reviewer in 2019), and
- developing additional 200-level courses for the Liberal Learning program (as recommended by our external reviewer in 2019).

We will strive to be **a department that recommits itself to the centrality of writing in the study and teaching of English**. We will accomplish this goal by, for example,

- creating space for reflecting as a department on our best practices in order to refocus our pedagogy to teach forms of writing other than literary analysis for an academic audience (pivoting to modes of concise, focused writing for different media and general audiences),
- developing new courses that specifically focus on teaching forms of writing other than literary analysis (such as courses in digital humanities, public humanities, and/or in “real-world” writing with a community-engaged learning component), and
- expanding faculty (including adjunct faculty) who specialize in the teaching of writing at different levels (from high school writing pedagogy to professional writing).

We will strive to be **a department that is anti-racist and that recruits, welcomes, and retains faculty, staff, and students from underrepresented and underserved groups**. We will accomplish this goal by, for example,

- educating ourselves about – and implementing – best practices for recruiting, mentoring, and retaining Black students in the English major,

- assisting in the implementation of TCNJ's new Early College High School Program in Trenton and similar TCNJ programs in other school districts,
- developing articulation agreements with local community colleges to encourage transfers,
- connecting with the African American Studies Department to explore the development of common programming and new courses/curricula,
- connecting with the EOF program at TCNJ to see if English can better assist it in its work, and
- revising and developing English courses to be more anti-racist (in terms of content, classroom pedagogy, and assessments).

We will strive to be **a department that capitalizes on the strengths of its graduate program, its creative writing program, and its secondary education program.** We will accomplish this goal by, for example,

- successfully hiring a tenure-track fiction writer for the creative writing program,
- continuing to be a model and leader at TCNJ with our 4+1 program,
- attracting more students to the graduate program from beyond TCNJ,
- developing a teaching practicum course (based on the model of the Bucks County Community College practicum) through which our graduate students can teach in TCNJ's First Year Writing (FYW) or First Year Seminar (FYS) program with faculty mentorship,
- exploring the development of a Creative Writing track or certificate in the M.A. program,
- integrating the Visiting Writers Series (VWS) more closely into the English curriculum and community (e.g., capitalizing on recent connections between the VWS and Sigma Tau Delta),
- integrating the creative writing program more closely into Liberal Learning and the Honors Program,
- highlighting the successes and strengths of our secondary education majors (e.g., through the Celebration of Student Achievement and Sigma Tau Delta programming), and
- focusing on pathways for secondary education majors to do certificates, "stacking," and minors.