The Instructional
Program Review Narrative Report

1. **College:** *Laney College*
    Department: **ENGLISH**
Date: November 9, 2012
   Members of the Instructional Program Review Team: David Mullen and Marie Wilson, Department co-chairs, with Dean Marco Menendez

2. **Narrative Description of the Department**:

The English Department's mission is to develop, expand, and refine students' abilities to think critically about themselves and the world and to understand and manipulate the English language.
The English Department is the educational foundation for every student at Laney: the English Department teaches Laney College students to read, write, and think critically. Through literature students gain an understanding of humanity; through expository texts situated in historical and cultural contexts, students gain an understanding of being a part of a larger universe. Among the department's objectives are to develop students' abilities to use language to their benefit; to improve students' skills in reading critically, writing thoughtfully and cogently, and applying these skills to research. The department prepares students to transfer to four-year institutions, and/or the workplace.

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3.Curriculum:

a. Is the curriculum current and effective? Have course outlines been updated within the last three years?

b. Please indicate how many active courses are in the department inventory.

    Currently, the English Department offers approximately 15 different courses per semester. In addition to three levels of composition courses, we rotate second year literature courses, offering 2 to 3 different courses each semester, for example Shakespeare, Poetry, and African-American literature.

c. How many of those have been updated in the last 6 years?

    Last fall we began a systematic review of about a dozen inactive classes, primarily literature courses offered in the second year of the transfer track. We deactivated these courses since they are no longer offered. At the same timewe updated two transfer level courses, English 1B and English 5, and included them in the transfer agreement

(the Transfer Model Curriculum for Communications majors) to expedite transfer from Laney to the CSU system.

In addition, we are currently revising and updating two core composition courses, English 201, Preparation for English 1A, and English 1A, Composition and Reading, a requirement for graduation and transfer.

d. If courses have not been updated within the last 6 years, what plans are in place to remedy this?

As mentioned above, we plan to focus on 2-3 courses each semester and update them. We are also working with the Curriculum Committee, as part of the B Group who will focus on updates during the 2013-14 year, to bring all our active courses up to date.

e. Has your department conducted a curriculum review of course outlines? If not, what are the plans to remedy this?Yes. See (d) above.

f. What are the department's plans for curriculum improvement (i.e., courses to be developed, updated, enhanced, or deactivated)? Have prerequisites, co-requisites, and advisories been validated? Is the date of validation on the course outline?

All English courses with prerequisites have been validated in the past, and those dates included in the course outlines.
New courses, designed to meet the needs of particular populations, specifically for students in CTE and technical programs,have been developed since the last program review. One, English 110, Academic Reading and Writing, grew out of the changes in graduation requirements. Students who wanted practice with college-level texts and assignments, but who did not plan to transfer, were encouraged to enroll. This course was also cross-listed in the ESL department. This class has not been enthusiastically received and it is uncertain how soon it may be offered again. English 248, English for Technicians, has a similar origin. Students enrolled in CTE programs desired a pre-transfer level course which focused on preparing students for work in the trades, with more practical reading and writing assignments. This course will most likely become part of our active class offerings as Laney continues to respond tothe challenge of developing the literacy skills of theworkforce of the 21st century.

Other areas in our curriculum are currently being updated and fine-tuned. Key members in our department have been working with the Foundation Skills Committee to pilot a 13-unit basic skills curriculum (an evolution of the old Bridge model) which will place students in English 269, Foundations in Reading and Writing, as well as English 208, Writing Workshop. These courses, combined with math, computer literacy, and college success classes, willprovide intensive remediation for those students who score at the lowest end of our placement scale.This program will be piloted in the spring of 2013, and if successful, will be replicated in future semesters. English 208, Writing Workshop, was specifically designed to respond to the needs of our many basic skills students who need support as they face demanding reading and writing assignments across the curriculum.

g. What steps has the department taken to incorporate student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the curriculum? Are outcomes set for each course? If not, which courses do not have outcomes?

We have established student learning outcomes for **all** of our active courses, a real achievement in the face of the diminishing number of full-time faculty available to work in this area. We were not fully successful in assessing each outcome in the last assessment cycle. This fall we've begun a new cycle and have set up an assessment plan that will collect data on a minimum of 2 courses per semester; that is, we will assess all outcomes tied to each course. Our plan is to prioritize our core courses, composition classes, and then move to an assessment of our second-year literature courses during the 2013-2014 academic year.

According to data received from the Curriculum Committee, the English Department has four courses (English 12, 208, 243 and 48GE) with SLO's that have not yet been entered in Curricunet.   We will accomplish this as we move through our revisions of course outlines from 2012-2014. Again our reduced number of FT faculty has contributed to our delay in completing this task.

h. How are the SLOs mapped to the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes?

The English Department is concerned primarily with Goal #1: *developing interventions to that which impedes student success, strategies to improve student success, and measurements of student outcomes.* Our attention has been focused on curriculum changes and additions that aid the great numbers of our students who come to Laney without the necessary skills to enroll in college-level courses. Getting the new foundation pilot program implemented, as well as adding sections of support classes like English 208, has been our focus. Also, included in this program is the requirement that the institution provides these students with access to trained tutors and up-to-date computer technology.

English Department course-level SLOs are also a part of the college's GE program SLOs.

i. Recommendations and priorities.

The department will continue its efforts to develop and implement assessment tools for all courses in our curriculum. The department will also continue to revise older course outlines and to develop new courses that are more in line with the needs of our current students. We expect also to get a fuller picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our curriculum as we begin to get data from the new cycle of assessment begun this fall.

To aid us in our work to make our curriculum more effective, the English Department would like to see the district gather research on our transfer students to see how successful they have been in completing upper-division courses once they leave our campus. The information from a project such as this would help us determine the

appropriateness of our course outlines, and would help us in the revising and updating of our curriculum. This type of project might also be extended to students who complete A.A./A.S. degrees and enter vocational careers.

To standardize our course content and provide consistency in our approaches and evaluation at each course level, it is imperative that we hire more fulltime instructors. Part-time teachers, many of whom work at several campuses, cannot participate in important departmental activities and discussions where rubrics and standards are developed. To be successful and effective, the English Department **must have**the availability and stability that only fulltime contract faculty can provide.

The department would also like to see more elective courses—such as literature, creative writing, and film—in addition to the required composition and reading courses. These electives need the support of the district, in terms of publicity and recruitment, and time for the course to develop and attract students; when courses are canceled early, students and members of the community do not have the opportunity to become aware of these new offerings.

4.Instruction:

a. Describe effective and innovative strategies used by faculty to involve students in the learning process. How has new technology been used by the department to improve student learning?

Our department recognizes that student engagement is just as important as student learning. Faculty in the basic skills English classes implement several innovative strategies and techniques to foster both student engagement and student learning. In the last year our department has been working, along with the Foundation Skills Committee, to re-launch a new version of Project Bridge. The new program updates the curriculum to provide more support classes: computer literacy, writing and math workshops, and a college success class. Our department has also worked closely with various community groups and the college CTE departments to develop vocational curriculum and to support special programs within the existing departmental structure (e.g., Career Advancement Academy, Gateway to College, Puente, UBAKA, APASS, and Athletes learning community).

English instructors make use of new technology in several ways. Some faculty members are using blogs to help students develop fluency, to engage students with literacy activities, and to create the active "audience" so important for good writing to occur.

Department members are also developing computer literacy and information literacy by involving students with online discussion groups, and using the Internet and databases both to locate and analyze various kinds of information. Key faculty members are alsoturning to online materials and articles to provide accessibility and reduce the costs of materials, a move welcomed by many of our cash-strapped students.

Many of the basic skills classes schedule writing sessions in the James Oliver Writing Center, where students develop general technology skills in addition to their writing and reading skills. In addition, we've added Writing Workshop sections to provide support for our students as they read and write across the curriculum. These workshops offer students access to trained tutors, as well as computers where they can complete compositions or review grammar skills online.

The Writing Center also utilizes software programs that allow students to practice their keyboarding skills, or have their writing read by synthesized human voices. Theprocess appears to heighten students' sensitivity to the nuances of their own prose.

b. How does the department maintain the integrity and consistency of academic standards within the discipline?

Regular department meetings, subcommittees that focus on a particular course, as well as inter-district discipline meetings are our primary means for maintaining consistency of academic standards. For over 20 years the department required a proficiency exam at the close of English 1A. During the exam readings, faculty members participated in an extensive "norming session" that established clear criteria for college-level writing competence; this practice was at the heart of the department's efforts to maintain the integrity and consistency of its program. We suspended this activity at the end of Fall, 2011 when the number of our FT faculty fell to such a low that we were unable to coordinate and execute the exam.
Other efforts to maintain academic standards and further ensure the integrity of the program include ongoing revision of course outlines and department participation in staff development seminars and conferences.

c. Discuss the enrollment trends of your department. What is the student demand for specific courses? How do you know? Identify factors that are affecting enrollments.

As indicated in reports generated by the Peralta Institutional Research Office, enrollment shows a downward trend over the past three years. In Fall 2009, our department served 2,405 students, in Fall 2010, 2,091 students, in Fall 2011, 2,126. Likewise, section offerings went from 74 in '09 to 63 in '10 and 62 in Fall '11.
The most egregiousforceaffecting enrollment is the state's budget crisis, where the rippling effect of state cuts has compelledPeralta toreduce its spending, resulting in cuts in course offerings. High unemployment rates and reductions in courses and programs in the CSU and UC systems propel students toward the community colleges;

however, similarreductions in our course offerings and student-support services have a mirroringeffect on enrollment here, and students are again turned away.

It should be noted that the 17.5 productivity figure that the administration holds up as a goal is nearly impossible to attain in the English Department as contract-mandated enrollment caps put the number outside the range of possibility for many of the department's offerings. Our productivity rate has grown slightly over the last three years: from 15.51 in Fall '09, to 16.07 in Fall '10, to 16.34 in Fall '11.

One other point is that our work on the basic skills curriculum responds to student demand as 66 to 70% of our students assess at a pre-collegiate level. In the past two years, we've increased our offerings of foundation courses, added support classes, and begun the work of designing curriculum to meet the needs of the great majority of students.

d. Are courses scheduled in a manner that meets student needs and demand? Please describe the criteria and considerations used in the scheduling process.

Classes appear to be scheduled in a manner that meets student needs and demand, but lacking a comprehensive student survey, it's impossible to know for sure.

Over the last five years, we've begun offering more afternoon classes; at the same time we've discontinued weekend offerings. In the summer of 2012 we cut our summer program in half, dropping from 20 classes, as was scheduled in summer 2011, to ten. We believe that 16-week courses are much more pedagogically sound, than the 6-week courses typically offered during summer school; our students need more practice time, rather than less, as they develop their literacy skills.

e. Recommendations and priorities.

The English Department continues to suffer because it lacks a sufficient number of fulltime faculty. In the last year and a half, three full-time instructorshave retired and we were not even offered the opportunity to request new hires under the current faculty prioritization process.

Until the department has enough fulltime contract faculty—and another six hires would still leave the department eleven short of its one-time high—it will not be able to perform effectively. The ability of the department to function with energy and integrity as a pedagogically innovative and community-responsive entity will be compromised as long as it is forced to make do with too few fulltime teachers and to rely so heavily on part-time labor.

5. Student Success:

a. Describe student retention and program completion (degrees, certificates, persistencerates) trends in the department. What initiatives can the department take to improveretention and completion rates?

   Retention rates among students enrolled in English classes have remained flat over the last few years: Fall 2009 67%; Fall 2010 70%; Fall 2011 67%. These percentages are lower than those for Laney as a whole, which was 76.2% in Fall 2011.
   Some of our efforts (adding support classes, revising our basic skills curriculum) are already in process. It will take a few semesters, however, to see any evidence (or lack of it) of the effects of these changes.
   There is no question that student success would be enhanced by maintaining the Writing Center, and keeping it fully staffed by well-trained tutors and technicians.
   Hiring full-time faculty who will be available to students and present at professional development and department meetings would also likely increase our ability to serve our students.

b. Identify common challenges to learning among your students? What services are needed for these students to improve their learning? Describe the department's efforts to access these services. What are your department's instructional support needs?

   Over the years we have found that many of our basic skills students don't know how to be successful students. We have also found that students often don't have a safe, quiet place to study and do homework assignments outside of school. The new English 208A-D course (writing workshop) will provide students with the appropriate environment and give them access to teachers and tutors, thus increasing their likelihood of learning and succeeding. In addition, the new basic skills pilot program attempts to identify early and provide support or resolutions for some of the obstacles currently facing many of our students -- issues of housing, childcare, transportation, and financial aid, for example. Once this program proves its merit, we hope to broaden the program and make its curriculum available to a much greater number of students.
   The opening of the James Oliver Community Writing Center (JOCWC) has been a boon to many of our students. More accurate assessment and placement would improve student learning and success, as would better maintained and equipped classrooms.

c. Describe the department's effort to assess student learning at the course level. Describe the efforts to assess student learning at the program level. In which ways has the department used student learning assessment results for improvement?

   The English Department has created Student Learning Outcomes for all of its courses, and it has initiated a comprehensive assessment program. For more details, see section 3g and 3h.

Building the Writing Center, instituting tutor training, incorporating writing workshops into our department curriculum, and overhauling the basic skills curriculum are all concreteefforts we have made in response to information gleaned from assessment findings and to years of self-reflection and evaluation of the ways we can improve service to our students.

    d.   Recommendations and priorities.

We recommend that English instructors satisfy part of their teaching obligation in the writing workshops, where their expertise would support student writing on a more individual basis and further student success.

Students need to be assessed properly upon entering the English program. For example, the current assessment criterion of 0 to 30 for basic skills is too broad and prerequisites need to be enforced. Students regularly place themselves into classes they are unprepared for, greatly decreasing their likelihood of success.

The long add period has an adverse effect on student success. When students add a course three weeks into the semester, they are much more likely to drop because they are unable catch up with assignments and missed instruction. We recommend the add period be shortened.

The Passport system needs to be updated to deal efficiently with transfers. Currently teachers ofbasic skills classes, where students may receive credit from an "A" or "B" section, must recommend transfers on paper. Not only is this cumbersome and required weeks before the end of the semester, but students often exceed expectations or sometimes disappoint in their final assignments, and teachers are then unable to make accurate recommendations for future courses. We need a system that allows teachers to enter the level of work completed, as well as the grade. This could be available both at verification day and when grades are due.

6.Human and Physical Resources(including equipment and facilities)

    a.   Describe your current level of staff, including full-time and part-time faculty, classifiedstaff, and other categories of employment.

The English Department program review of 1990 noted that the department consisted of 17 contract instructors. Today we have 8 full time faculty members with 4 currently on leave. **We recommend the hiring of more full time instructors.**

Relying on the use of part-time faculty (between 20 and 35 individuals) rather than fulltime each semester has created instability and inconsistency. Every semester new part-time faculty are hired, sometimes on an emergency basis, as classes are about to

begin. It is not possible for part-timers to fully acquaint themselves with Laney's English curriculum or to devote their undivided attention to their Laney English classes because they are piecing a career together by working at several colleges. This reality does not permit them to be readily available to their students or their colleagues. It is a disservice to both instructor and student.

b. Describe your current use of facilities and equipment.

The JOCWC is currently operating at capacity, and trends suggest that demand for its services will only increase. Having a designated budget to provide more resources for training and employing peer tutors and lab staff is essential, as is securing more monies for computer workstations, paper, flash drives, etc.

The large contingent of part-time faculty also puts a strain on facilities. With the proliferation of part-time staff, providing office space and access to telephones and computers has become extremely difficult. Further, mandated evaluations of part-time staff put additional strain on the department, not to mention the mentoring of new faculty who frequently work a semester or two and then leave, requiring that we begin the process again well short of the three-year evaluation cycle.

c. Are the human and physical resources, including equipment and location, adequate for all the courses offered by your department (or program)? What are your key staffing and facilities needs for the next three years? Why?

As stated above there is a *pressing* need for more full time instructors; without them, it is not possible for us to provide students with the knowledgeable dedicated faculty they deserve. We need to hire a minimum of 6 full time instructors over the next 3 years.

d. If your department experienced a reduction in resources, describe the impact of that reduction on the overall educational quality of your unit and the College.

Our department is already pushed beyond its limits and its capacity to provide adequate service to students. A further reduction in resources would be devastating and we are not sure the department could function at all. *At this moment only 4 full-time instructors are employed, and we are the third largest department in the district -- serving well over 2,000 students!* Yet at this moment, we are not even under consideration for receiving new hires.

e. How does the department plan to sustain the quality of instruction and/or services offered through your department in the current environment of reduced resources?

We are currently recruiting teachers with expertise, training and experience in basic skills instruction given that 60 to 70% of the students at Laney are at the basic skills level. But, the problem is keeping qualified adjunct faculty when we do find them because they are often drawn away to take full time jobs elsewhere.

f. What does the department recommend that the college do to maintain quality educational programs and services?

Increase full time faculty by hiring 10 new English instructors in the next 5 years.

g. Please provide any other recommendations and priorities. (Attachment D.)

The English Department needs to add 10 new contract instructors within the next 5 years, and automatically replace any fulltime English instructor who permanently leaves the department for any reason. In addition, to help English instructors fulfill their mission we need more computer literacy and college orientation courses so students can enhance their computer skills and learn how to be successful in their college classes. Emergency funds to help students with food, transportation and school supplies when needed would also provide critical support for many of our neediest students.

7.Community Outreach and Articulation

*For transfer programs***:**

a. Describe the department's efforts in meeting with and collaborating with local 4-year institutions. How is the program preparing students for upper division course work?

The department's contact with local four-year colleges and universities primarily has involved either individuals attending classes, sabbaticals, conferences and/or seminars at or with instructors from those schools, or individuals from those institutions presenting workshops, lectures, or mini-presentations at professional development events and departmental staff meetings. In the past, college teaching exchanges were arranged between Laney College instructors and UC Berkeley professors through special grants—the

department looks forward to the return of this arrangement. As part of professional day activities and regular department meetings, English faculty participate in discussion, collaboration and evaluation; these interactions typically take the form of focus groups, often on a particular course, as with the English 269 subcommittee which has met several times this semester to review syllabi, assignments and successful approaches.

In preparing students for upper division course work, department instructors are generally integrating more computer technology into their classrooms and assignments, and sharing these innovations with other department colleagues. The addition of English 208, Writing Workshop also contributes to the preparation of students for advanced coursework as they get individualized instruction geared toward fulfilling the demands of their academic courses. These workshops provide students with the opportunity to focus on their particular weaknesses and get immediate feedback on their work. Further, we in the English Department teach programs targeted to special populations (e.g., APASS, Athletes, Career Advancement Academy, Gateway to College, Puente, UBAKA, and the new Foundation Skills pilot program).

b. Has there been a Transfer Model Curriculum identified for your program? Has it been implemented? If not, what are the plans to do so?

The English Department does not have a Transfer Model Curriculum. Two of ourtransfer classes have been added to the model for Communications majors --English 5,Critical Thinking, and English 1B, Composition and Reading. There are no plans to institute a transfer curriculum in English, as we do not offer the second-year courses required for transfer.

For all instructional programs:

c. Describe the department's efforts to ensure that the curriculum responds to the needs of the constituencies that it serves.

Our department serves a large number of basic skills students. Approximately two-thirds of Laney students consistently assess at the pre-collegiate level and need one or two years of work to rebuild their skills in reading and writing. Instituting the writing workshop classes is one way we have addressed the needs of this population. Another important response has been the reshaping of the Bridge program. During the last year Bridge faculty members, along with other interested faculty and staff, have met in the Foundation Skills Committee to create a new basic skills curriculum. The new set of Bridge courses (under the Foundation Skills pilot program) now includes writing and math workshops to provide students with additional time and access to English and math faculty and tutors. The program also requires computer literacy and a college success course; students will also be asked to attend an orientation where particular needs and obstacles can be identified and addressed early.

The new basic skills pilot program will begin in spring 2013. If the program is successful in retaining and promoting students, we hope to replicate it several times over. We believe the needs of this large set of Laney students will now be more adequately served.

d. Please indicate how many of the full and part time faculty have been evaluated in the last three years. For faculty that have not been evaluated in the last three years, what are your plans to become current.

In the last three years all tenured faculty have been evaluated; that was eleven members in 2010; three have now retired.

This fall the department chairs have designed and distributed an evaluation plan. The new plan sets up three groups of instructors who will rotate in observing and evaluating each other. The plan is presented below:

English Dept.
Evaluation Plan   **Fall, 2012**

A	B	C
To be evaluated	To be evaluators	dormant
1. Leslie Bacon	1. Mary Lundberg	1. Celia Correa
2. Serena Chu	2. Marie Wilson	2. Elizabeth Cowan
3. Willi Fuller	3. Laurel Benjamin	3. Eleni Economides
4. Mary Grover	4. Brenda Harker	4. Matt Davis
5. Janell Hampton	5. David Mullen	5. John Fielding
6. Tobey Kaplan	6. Judith Rathbone	6. Janice Grossman
7. Brian Lewis	7. Meryl Siegal	7. Ian Latta
8. Raquel Wanzo	9. Tony Watkins	8. Roger Porter
9. Shari Weiss	9. Raffi DelBourgo	9. Mick Sherer
10. Andrena Zawinski	10. Chris Weidenbach	10. Katrina Staten

e. Recommendations and priorities.

The department would like to see the district's outreach include more information for high-school students and the community at large about our program's offerings in literature and creative writing, as both transferable and personal-enrichment courses, as well as our more traditional offerings. These suggestions can be metthrough the use of visiting speakers, informational assemblies, and public service announcements.