



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 15, 2015

**TO:** Deborah Kristan, Chair of Academic Senate

**FROM:** Salah Moukhlis, Chair of LTWR Department  
(on behalf of LTWR Department faculty)

**SUBJECT:** Concentration Discontinuance Request for LTWR

In Academic Year 2014-2015, the LTWR Department submitted a P-2 form to CAPC detailing our plans to revise the LTWR major. The proposed revisions to the major were developed through more than five years of research on the part of the LTWR Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (in consultation with the Department), and the LTWR Department faculty voted unanimously by secret ballot to approve the new LTWR major at the April 11, 2014 Department Meeting.

We are contacting the Academic Senate because the particular revisions we have made have triggered the Academic Program Discontinuance Policy. We want to stress that we are not discontinuing the LTWR major: we have simply revised the major so that we no longer have 2 separate Concentrations. Instead, all LTWR majors will take a set of core Coverage requirements and then meet a set of Distribution requirements; these revised requirements better reflect the current state of the LTWR discipline and offer students more flexibility to tailor the major to suit the changing needs of the contemporary marketplace.

We have explained our rationale and need for revisions to the LTWR major in great detail in the P-2 form, which we have attached here for your review (see especially page 4, which details the shift away from Concentrations). We have also attached the recommendation of CAPC, which approved the LTWR P-2 form on 10/27/14. UCC was in the middle of reviewing the P-2 form during Spring 2015 when they notified us that our desire to remove the two concentrations from the major had triggered the Academic Program Discontinuance Policy. UCC indicated that they found our case compelling and were inclined to approve (email attached), but could not do so until we completed the Academic Discontinuance process.

We are therefore requesting that the current 2 LTWR Concentrations (1. Literature & 2. Writing) be discontinued and replaced with the new LTWR curriculum, which does not have Concentrations at all. We believe the changes will help the LTWR major continue to grow and serve students into the future.

Concentration Discontinuation Request: LTWR Faculty Signatures

\_\_\_\_\_  
Oliver Berghof                      Date

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Heidi Breuer                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susie Cassel                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Catherine Cucinella              Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra Doller                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecca Lush                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth Mendoza                  Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Salah Moukhlis                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Wallace                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Yuan Yuan                      Date

Enclosures (3)

cc: Adam Shapiro, CHABSS Dean

## **Section 2: Decision Variables**

We would like to stress that LTWR is not asking for any of our programs (i.e., LTWR Major, LTWR Minor, LTWR M.A., and GEW) to be discontinued. We are only requesting the discontinuance of the 2 Concentrations within the LTWR Major. A full explanation of the entire set of proposed revisions can be found in the P-2 form, attached to this discontinuance request, but as the Discontinuance request involves only the 2 Concentrations, we will discuss only that aspect of the revision in this document.

### *A) Importance to the institution*

- 1 *To what extent the program promotes the mission of the University.*
- 2 *To what extent the program is central to the curriculum of a department, a college or the University.*
- 3 *To what extent the program contributes to a balanced curriculum.*

As currently configured, our major asks all students to complete a shared set of requirements (the Core), and then students choose a Concentration—either Literature or Writing—to complete their courses. We are asking to discontinue the Concentration portion and replace it with an option that covers material from both previous concentrations.

We are reorganizing the requirements within the LTWR major so that all students still complete a shared set of requirements (we are calling those Coverage requirements), but instead of choosing from a Literature or a Writing Concentration, they will all complete a set of Distribution requirements (that include courses focused on both literature and writing). This is what has triggered the need for a formal request for discontinuance of the Concentrations.

Because the LTWR major has not been revised substantially since the 1990s, it no longer accurately reflects the values of the major, the department, and the university. The university values “rigorous undergraduate and graduate programs distinguished by exemplary teaching, innovative curricula, and the application of new technologies.” The proposed revisions to the structure of the major allow us to continue being innovative in our approach to the discipline, instead of attached to outdated approaches. In particular, the LTWR faculty members value the intersection and interconnectedness of the analytical study of literature and the original production of texts—whether creative, analytical, or mixed genre writing.

The name of the department, Literature and Writing Studies, reflects well our continuing commitment to challenging the binary opposition between the fields of literary studies and writing studies. However, the two concentrations, one in Literature and one in Writing, work to reinforce that binary opposition and teach our students that literature and writing are not intimately connected. The proposed Distribution requirements emphasize the interconnections between literature and writing in our major by asking students to complete courses in both categories, rather than focusing on one or the other. Because we have ensured adequate coverage of foundational concepts in theory, writing, and literary traditions in the Coverage requirements, we have no need to create additional requirements for students elsewhere. As long as students are taking *both* literature courses and writing courses, then they are working within the field of literature and writing studies. This structure allows us flexibility to offer and create a wider range of courses—especially more writing-focused

courses—because the limitations of the current, outdated Concentrations will be gone. The proposed updated curriculum better prepares students for further advanced academic training in Literature and Writing Studies, and also better prepares them for a range of professional careers. The balanced attention to literary and writing skills better positions our majors to be competitive on the job market.

Eliminating the Concentrations will therefore allow LTWR to better serve the University's mission of innovate, inclusive curriculum while maintaining the rigor and high standards of the LTWR Major.

#### *B) Quality of the program*

*To what extent the quality of the program justifies continuance in its present form. The variables for evaluating program quality include but are not limited to:*

- 1 demonstrated ability of the faculty to offer and maintain a current and rigorous curriculum;*
- 2 access to resources adequate to maintain the sufficient breadth, depth and coherence of the program;*
- 3 demonstrated ability to attract and retain enough well-qualified faculty;*
- 4 the quality of the program's faculty as demonstrated by participation in appropriate scholarly, creative and/or professional activity; and*
- 5 to what extent the program's excellence and standing in its discipline enhances the reputation of the University.*

Changing the current Concentrations to a set of Distribution requirements for all students will positively affect the overall quality of the LTWR major in multiple ways. Perhaps the most important is that it will ensure *all* LTWR majors have focused training in writing (unlike the current structure, in which students in the Literature Concentration must take only one writing-focused course). Writing is the cornerstone of success in so many careers that it's impossible to name them all.

Currently, the two Concentrations are extremely rigid and require the same set of courses to be offered repeatedly, which prevents other, equally valuable courses from being offered. Replacing the rigidly-structured Concentrations with Distribution requirements will allow the department to offer a wider range of courses and respond far more quickly to the changing needs of students and the quickly-evolving demands of the workplace.

The package of revisions we have proposed—which include more than the replacement of the 2 Concentrations with Distribution requirements addressed in this document—will allow the major to serve a wider variety of students and better prepare them for the rapidly-changing, media-focused workplaces and culture of the contemporary U.S. Keeping the major strong and viable in the face of evolving workforce needs will allow the LTWR faculty to continue offering a “current and rigorous curriculum” and ensure that the “program's excellence and standing in its discipline” will continue to “[enhance] the reputation of the University.” By making our major more flexible and progressive, we will increase our attractiveness to “well-qualified faculty,” as they will have the opportunity to teach innovative courses in their fields of specialty with more frequency than if we do not revise the major (which is currently structured so rigidly as to inhibit development and offering of innovative and new courses—see P-2 form for details).

Changing the Concentrations to Distribution requirements will hopefully improve the department's access to resources (by potentially increasing the number of majors). Increasing the flexibility of the major requirements by deleting the Concentrations will also allow faculty to teach courses in their areas of expertise more often, which in turn will create better ties between teaching and research; deleting the Concentrations thus has the potential to positively increase faculty's ability to complete research and creative activity.

*C) Efficiency (cost effectiveness) of the program*

*To what extent the program is cost-effective relative to disciplinary norms and compared to similar programs at comparable institutions. The measurements presented for the specific program shall include:*

- 1 student-faculty ratio;*
- 2 total cost per FTEF;*
- 3 the total cost per FTES;*
- 4 potential for external funding and support; and*
- 5 other discipline specific variables.*

As we are not discontinuing the major, but simply restructuring the requirements, there will likely be no significant change to the student-faculty ratio, the cost per FTEF, or the total cost per FTES. Since deleting the complicated categories in the current concentrations will allow faculty to offer a wider range of courses—and thus make more effective use of their own research and creative activity—it could have a positive effect on the potential for faculty to obtain external funding and support.

*D) Demand for the program*

*To what extent the present and projected demand for the program is sufficient. Demand for the program may be measured by one or more of the following:*

- 1 the number of completed applications for admission;*
- 2 the FTES generated in lower division, upper division, and/or graduate level courses;*
- 3 the number of students who completed the program;*
- 4 the anticipated need for graduates of the program.*

As mentioned above, the LTWR Major is not disappearing—we have just reorganized the requirements. Our changes won't affect lower-division offerings in LTWR at all, as they are not part of the major requirements. The proposed revision will also not substantially change the number of courses we typically offer per semester, so FTES will not be affected by the revisions in that sense.

Currently, the LTWR majors are split relatively evenly across the two Concentrations (with 95 in the Literature Concentration, 139 in the Writing Concentration, and 41 majors who have not selected a Concentration yet), with the Writing Concentration historically attracting more students than the Literature Concentration. Replacing the Concentrations with Distribution requirements that ask all LTWR majors to complete 3 writing courses allows students who want to focus on writing to continue to do so, while emphasizing to all LTWR majors the importance of honing their writing skills.

The revised curriculum does therefore require us to offer more upper-division writing courses than we have typically offered in the recent past (an increase from 3-4 per semester to 5-6 per semester). As

we do every semester, we must balance the number of writing courses capped at 25 with the number of literature and CC courses capped at 40 or 45 to ensure that we continue to meet our FTES. In fact, we have already begun offering more writing courses for the past two semesters to meet student need and demand, and we have been able to manage our FTES to the Dean's satisfaction.

Throughout the nation, humanities-based programs have seen fewer numbers of students in recent years, due to a wide variety of factors including wide-spread de-valuing of the skills and values taught in the humanities (such as qualitative analysis rather than quantitative, for example). At the same time, the recent end of year LAMP report for AY 2014-2015 highlighted the need for CSUSM alumni to improve "interpersonal communication, writing, and problem-solving" skills—the exact skills that are emphasized by the revised major.

To remain viable, programs like ours must stay forward-looking instead of stuck in the past; the revisions to our major place the CSUSM LTWR Major back in the vanguard of the discipline by emphasizing the interconnectedness of literature and writing. The other revisions we proposed (discussed in the P-2 form) emphasize global literature, which is in line with the CHABSS strategic plan for increasing diversity, and digital/non-print texts, which supports the CSUSM Mission to provide "innovative curricula" that feature the "application of new technologies." Together, the proposed revisions will allow LTWR to stay flexible and attentive to student needs, which should help us maintain a viable major that is attractive and useful to students for many years to come.