Department of English Council Meeting Friday, May 11th, 2018

Attendance: Meg Lota Brown, Fenton Johnson, Aimee Mapes, Lee Medovoi, Manuel Muñoz, Jeff Schlueter, Emily Jo Schwaller, Scott Selisker, Aurelie Sheehan, Susan White

Meeting began at 2:00pm in ML 361

I. Update on Head Search from Aurelie

   A. Aurelie informed Council that she’s still in negotiations with the Dean’s Office.

II. Discussion of nominations for Program Director in RCTE

   A. Lee informed Council that based on polling, Cristina Ramirez is the most acceptable candidate to lead RCTE as PD.

       a. Council unanimously approved the nomination of Cristina Ramirez as PD.

III. Discussion of nominations for Program Director in Literature

   A. Lee is still waiting on recommendations for nominations but will communicate them to Council when they are ready.

   B. It was stated that traditionally, the Lit PD is the coordinator of Graduate Studies as well, and Lee was asked if this was going to continue.

       a. Lee noted that historically, it has been this way but he does not think it has to be this way. It is a topic of discussion for the nominee, but it is possible for other PDs to take on this role as well.

       b. It was noted that GTAs would like to be involved in this process as well.

       c. Council was asked what the main tasks of the Grad Coordinator are:

           i. Liaison with the Grad College, but also a leadership position among PDs. The Grad Coordinator consults with PDs to represent department-wide graduate decisions with consensus, and presents information to the Head. This individual also works closely with the Head, while managing grievances with the Grad
College, across programs, scholarships, fellowships and hardship funds.

ii. It was suggested that we need a job description for the Grad Coordinator.

IV. Discussion of Recruitment Plan

A. Lee mentioned that originally, budget cuts made it seem like we would not have a recruitment plan at all but recently, the upper administration is reducing the tax on colleges to soften the blow on overall budget lights so there will be some hiring next year. The call for the recruitment plan was sent out on May 1st. The call asked for a 3-year recruitment plan: units should list no more than 1 hiring request per year. Lee made the case that we had 4 retirements and 1 resignation, and noted that we’ve averaged close to 3 retirements a year in Lee’s tenure here. For planning purposes, we can list 2 hires but there are no guarantees.

B. Lee went into detail explaining our different options for hiring in the next few years:

   a. SPFI: Strategic Priorities Faculty Initiative—when you make a SPFI request, you are identifying candidates who you bring to campus as potential SPFI candidates, meeting them, letting them meet you, and determining whether they’d be good candidates, and then creating a proposal to hire that specific individual to the Provost’s office. SPFI is a targeted search for specific candidates. The SPFI program covers 75% of salary the first year, then 50% salary during year 2, and 25% salary in year 3, and then all of the salary is covered by the unit on the 4th year.

   b. GIDP: Graduate Interdisciplinary Partner Hire—this type of hire is funded by the Grad College. For example, SLAT has no faculty and if they want to hire one, they have to persuade a unit to do that. This provides 50% for year 1, 50% for year 2, and then the unit is on its own for year 3. In short, it is just bridge money. Bridge money is important when colleges are trying to figure out how to move their permanent dollars around, to turn the retirements into new hires. The main appealing aspect about the GIDP partner hire is that it is a national search so you’re not identifying an individual candidate...you’re doing a national search in English but the hire will serve the GIDP as well. Dwight Atkinson is an example of a GIDP partner hire in English, supporting SLAT.

C. Lee notes that the college is stressing the theme that our hires will build a future for the department, majors and enrollments, and bring in new students while
also helping us with the next round of hires since we’re on an RCM model. The caveat is that the college needs to know that the hires are helping with the temp budgets. The college is saying we should be proposing hires that take care of our temp budget, and how stretched thin that is. Another theme is the very strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, engaging with the changing demographics of students at the university. These hiring plans are understood to change (especially as we imagine years down the road) but it’s more about registering something about where the department hopes to go in the future, with the understanding that there will be a lot of revision.

D. Per Lee, as for the 18th Century Literature position, the thing that’s been tricky about that hire is that we were anticipating that one being a SPFI. Our first effort was to identify candidates and reach out to them, and assert their potential interest in coming to campus. So far, we’ve identified Lyndon Dominique at Lehigh.

E. Open to discussion: it was noted that there was lots of consternation from Literature faculty, as they were worried that this request for a hiring plan came out at the 11th hour. Meg Lota took the role of representing the Literature view, and expressed concerns about conflict of interest, governance, and how the plan sidesteps perceived critical needs from Literature faculty. An additional concern is that since the SCCT is a minor, what was identified as a Lit program minor is now being directed into a different kind of position (mission / service) and might not get funded because it’s a minor and not a GIDP major. The overwhelming consensus is that the 18th Century position should be kept as a Literature position. Lots of folks are suggesting we should list periods by period specialization. The point is this is a Lit program hire, not a cultural studies, or a GIDP hire. There’s a sense that the Romanticism and 18th Century are now no longer Lit program hires.

F. Lee mentions that it sounds like a strong desire to take out the partner hire designation for Romanticism. The strategy, according to Lee, is to just get funding but if folks want to take out the designation, that’s what we’ll go with.

G. Lee further notes that he wants make sure he’s acting in the best interests of the Lit program to shape this hiring plan in a way that secures a hire, but if Lit would be comfortable with another approach, he’s fine with that as well.

H. There was discussion about asking for more time to hand this proposal in, even though it is due on this day.

I. There was discussion about not naming individual candidates in the proposal, and more in-depth analysis of the construction of the proposal.
J. There was consensus to use Lit’s suggested original language for the 18th Century hire (noted as a long description of a long 18th Century). American Indian Studies was acceptable, as was the Romanticism description in its existing form.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.