Department of English
Academic Unit Plan Summary
July 2022

The Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) initiated the Academic Unit Planning Process in Fall 2019. After the Department of English unanimously endorsed the Decolonizing HSS document (initiated and written by Dr. Andrew Loman) in early December, 2020, the work of compiling a Self-Study formally began. An ad hoc committee of Drs. Danine Farquharson, Jennifer Lokash, and Andrew Loman was formed that month and began weekly meetings in early January, 2021. This committee, with full support of the Department, focused the Self-Study on decolonization, anti-racism, and Indigenization. The committee's process was to:

• call upon program directors to draft "snapshots" of the Department's various programs;
• invite faculty to supply current CVs, brief research descriptions, and sample course syllabi;
• work with undergraduate and graduate student societies to organize meetings and feedback processes;
• co-host two student town halls for undergraduates;
• receive and integrate feedback from graduate students;
• draft a Self-Study document and presented it to Department for feedback; and,
• submit the **Self-Study Report** to the External Review Committee (May, 2021).

COVID-19 restriction mandated that all interviews and the Review Committee visit (October 29 – November 15, 2021) be conducted virtually.

The **Self-Study Report** provides background information to our five programs, highlights current challenges, and poses questions that aim to help the Department reach its stated anti-racism and deconlonization goals. The Department's most pressing goals are to ensure 1) that Eurocentric and settler perspectives are no longer the default point of view from which we study literature, and 2) that our programs engage with a wider variety of literatures in English than at present. The Self-Study Report highlights how steps in this direction have been taken since 2012, but also emphasizes the need to engage more fully in systematically revising the Department's programs and course offerings. The Self-Study Report is careful to recognize budget restrictions that may pose particular challenges to reaching the two main goals.

The Self-Study Report also highlights challenges for program development faced by specific programs in the Department of English. These include:

• Communication Studies (CMST): curriculum gaps in course offerings, lack of technical infrastructure, lack of faculty positions;
• Diploma in Stage and Screen Technique (DSST): outdated production equipment and lack of class and performance space;
• Diploma in Creative Writing: lack of faculty positions, which leads to restricted course offerings and development; difficulty registering mature students in the program; and blocked to international students needing student visas;
• Certificate in Film Studies: Euro- and American-centricity, lack of coherence, and lack of faculty positions; and

- Graduate Program: barriers to timely completion and inequitable procedures.

The **External Review Report** was drafted by the Review Panel. As per guidelines, the Panel had two members from Memorial University (Dr. Sonja Boon from Gender Studies and Dr. Anne Thareau from MLLC) and two external members: Dr. Ashok Mathur, Dean of Graduate Studies, Ontario College of Art and Design University, and Prof. Marrie Mumford, Department of Indigenous Studies, Trent University. They noted how the Self-Study is an "excellent roadmap toward change in the Department of English at MUN," and structured their report around ten overarching questions posed in the Self-Study Report. Emphatic that the Department of English must continue to "address colonial legacies and decolonization," the panel recommended a "wholesale reshaping of the Department."

The panel remarked on the Department's large range of programs and extracurricular learning opportunities for students. It also noted the Department's continued support for extensive service teaching, its contribution to interdisciplinary programs, and its expansion of the Creative Writing Program. The Report lists key recommendations to address the decolonization of the Department. These include:

- Renaming the Department;
- Appointing a new position in Creative Writing (Indigenous Candidate);
- Offering postdoctoral positions to indigenous and Black candidates;
- Adopting a broad hiring strategy (faculty, contract, PCI, visiting scholars, writers) with a focus on BIPOC scholars;
- Developing a new first-year course in Indigenous Studies or Indigenous Storytelling required by all incoming undergraduate students;
- Decolonizing the graduate program;
- Inviting BIPOC writers and filmmakers through internal funding opportunities; and
- Advocating for performance and class space for CMST and DSST.

Upon receiving the **External Review Report** (dated January 28, 2022), the Department drafted an Action Plan listing the Review Committee's recommendations, detailing a timeline for the plan of action, and identifying those with whom responsibility for each action lies. In May 2022, the Department held a special meeting to begin implementing the Action Plan.

That **Action Plan** summarizes the Panel Report's recommendations and focuses on areas that are within the Department's control. Since the Panel Report, the Department has enthusiastically welcomed an Indigenous creative writer in a tenure-track position who will be teaching an oral storytelling creative writing course and an Indigenous Research Methods graduate seminar in 2023. The Department has arranged office space on our main hallway that will be allocated to PCI and contract members in Sept. 2022. We have upgraded the computers in these spaces. The Department has also begun to consider alternative names.

All other recommendations in the Panel Report will guide the Department in the next years, except for the funding of postdoctoral positions, as that is out of the Department's jurisdiction.

The Department would like to extend our thanks to the ad hoc committee, the review panelists, CIAP, and the Dean of HSS for their dedication, support, and feedback.