

Department of English
Statement on expectations for tenure and for a fruitful professional career
August 27, 2015

General expectations for earning tenure and high merit in this department:

Readers of this document will note that we in the English Department make no distinction between the efforts and dispositions required for each of us to earn tenure and required for each of us to work fruitfully in this department. We believe, in other words, that all of us share a sense of mission and of professional responsibility. We also recognize, on the other hand, that each of us contributes to the mission and expresses our professional commitments in individual ways. We tend to celebrate these differences among us in matters of style, personality, pedagogical and ideological commitment, classroom practices, and so on. What we expect to be uniformly accepted among us is a deep affection for students, a good faith wish to promote the mission of the college, a commitment to excellence in the classroom and in advising, and dedication to productive activity in both scholarship and service to the college and community.

The ethos of our department:

The English Department has a history and tradition of hiring highly capable scholar/teachers with expertise in one or more important literary period, genre, or writing craft. But we also hire people who can comfortably teach in other literary periods, and who bring their energies to interdisciplinary teaching in honors programs, the general education curriculum, and women's and gender studies. In short, we hire talented generalists with at least one area of special interest, focus, and scholarly effort, and we welcome those whose interests serve the college community at large, not just the department. We look to our colleagues to model the best practices of the profession of English and the tradition of the liberal arts academy. We have always expected our junior faculty to invest themselves in teaching and advising their students, serving the college and wider community, and providing evidence of ongoing scholarly growth.

The typical faculty member in English teaches seven courses per year, a mixture of lower and upper division literature courses and writing courses. Literature courses usually enroll between 18-25 students; writing courses close at 15 to 18. All of us teach at least one section of *Liberal Studies First-Year 101: Rhetoric and the Liberal Arts*. Many of us teach in Women's and Gender Studies, Foundations or Logos, General Education courses other than LSFY 101, terms abroad and most of the area studies programs. Since we have recently approved the spirit of a Senior Inquiry model, if not all of its specific practices, we will almost certainly begin teaching more senior seminars and tutoring the reflective component required for Augustana's SI initiative. We also advise our majors and first-year students, lead extracurricular programs (*SAGA* and *Unabridged*), teach independent studies, and contribute to other departmental labors including River Readings, East Hall Press, Symposium Days, academic sessions at high school Visit Days, judging the Naeseth writing scholarships, evaluating student writing for our assessment program, and many other tasks.

We have tended to judge scholarly activity in ecumenical fashion. (Ours is a broad church, and many forms of scholarship are welcome.) In recent years members of the English department have

produced books; peer-juried articles; scholarly presentations at international, national and regional conferences; many guest lectures and readings of creative work; newspaper columns; magazine stories and essays; encyclopedia entries; dramatic productions; workshops for young and old; talks for church and library learning hours; administration of and teaching at spiritual retreats; and many more kinds of scholarly display. Some of us, perhaps partly inspired by the new administration's interest in more peer-reviewed publication, have responded recently with renewed research and writing. Others have won grants to inquire into teaching and learning strategies. Others look to ways to continue their writing, acting and presenting within the region and community. Still others have ventured into interdisciplinary scholarship. While the English and interdisciplinary curriculum in which we engage is writing-intensive and student-centered—so that we are intensely busy as teachers as well as advisors and citizens of the college and community—we will try to bring more and even better scholarship to those publications and places where Augustana College's academic reputation is forged. We will ask the new colleagues whom we have not yet hired to embrace this effort.

Earning tenure and establishing good practices for the entire career:

The best candidates for tenure, and not just in our department, have started earning tenure the day they arrived at the college. These successful probationary professors teach with assurance (or gain that assurance very quickly), show signs of diplomatic leadership, engage in shaping and revising curriculum, teach and advise students who seek them out, contribute to the work of many areas of the college (admissions, general education, governance, co-curricular activities, study abroad, etc.), and generally make themselves indispensable. They accomplish all this while keeping in mind the mission of the college.

To be absolutely as clear as we can be about the department's standards, we offer the following lists of traits that we have discussed in candidates for tenure in the English Department.

Positive indicators:

- Establishing a strong and steady record of teaching that satisfies both students and colleagues who visit or co-teach classes
- Establishing early and maintaining a healthy balance of teaching and advising, scholarship and service—that is, a balance that falls within the percentages of our professional time that the handbook encourages us to give to each of these areas
- Spending long hours on campus with the office door open (not always literally), listing and keeping many office hours, making and keeping many student appointments
- Building a strong record of academic advising—that is, advising that's more than just checking off requirements and planning schedules, but that supports students' self-discovery, understanding of the liberal arts, and personal and professional growth [N.B.: Candidates should discuss their approach to advising and/or include an advising syllabus and assessment materials in the Teaching and Advising portion of their tenure, promotion, and review portfolio]
- Building a strong and steady record of scholarly activity, whether peer-reviewed publication, presentations at conferences, participation in teaching-and-learning seminars on-campus and off-, or other activities that involve engagement with the scholarly community

- Building a record of engagement in the business of the department, whether choosing common texts, completing assessment tasks, meeting with prospective students and hosting them in classes, leading initiatives in revising and creating new courses, representing the department on committees, assisting Admissions in its visit days and scholarship programs, leading extracurricular programs (*SAGA*, Unabridged, East Hall Press, etc.) and more
- Bringing needed innovation and refinement to the department's curriculum; initiating and leading projects that receive general support and approval from departmental colleagues and college leaders in the approval process
- Serving on Faculty Council, EPC, Gen Ed, the Honors Committee, or other important committees and governing bodies of the college
- Contributing teaching and leadership to the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum program
- Participating in study abroad programs, Honors, Learning Communities, Women's and Gender Studies, etc.
- Winning grants and awards

Troubling indicators:

- IDEA results in the lower half of Augustana faculty
- Low enrollments in courses
- Few contributions to the work of the department and college
- Minimal involvement in the field(s) of one's inquiry, such as presentations only at limited, local, or regional events
- A burst of activity in the months leading up to tenure review
- Modest or little time spent with students
- Little evident concern for the mission of the college
- Few collegial contacts and working relationships across the campus
- Signs of working poorly or little with some members of the department, or members of the faculty over all

Scholarly activity both before and after tenure:

We acknowledge that one peer-reviewed article is a modest enough output in three to five years, but believe that the college's wish for active scholars could potentially be satisfied by a probationary colleague with an exemplary record of participation in teaching-and-learning seminars, or public readings of stories or poems, or presentations at national and regional conferences. We might even be persuaded by a modest record of presentations weighed against an absolutely exemplary record of campus leadership in general education or honors programs or ecology and sustainability efforts. In other words, we value people who can make a variety of contributions to this campus, but we join the administration in believing that everyone can and should engage in scholarship both on and beyond our campus. The safest and best move by a probationary colleague, of course, would be to publish at least one article before standing for tenure while also making oneself indispensable to the campus community in other ways as well.

We do not believe that any rubric or set of stipulations for publication and other scholarly activity could adequately measure the scholarly work we do, or are likely to do. Instead, we make a series of commitments or promises, both for ourselves and for the faculty we will hire in the future. We make the following commitments:

- That each of us will engage in, and provide evidence of, significant new inquiry throughout our careers, without significant or unnecessary break.
- That while we continue to choose the forms in which this scholarship is made available to others, we will seek to contribute to the administration's wish for more peer-reviewed publication.
- That we will hire no candidate who shows little engagement in scholarship, nor will we tenure a person who neglects scholarship.
- That we will continue to value scholarship in teaching and learning as we value scholarship in literary matters and works of creative expression.
- That we will value writing and presenting in non-scholarly venues as evidence of ongoing inquiry, and will honor that inquiry as a kind of scholarship.
- That our hiring and tenure decisions from now on will reward, and foster in a special way, scholarly publication and presentation. [N.B.: Because publishing in English is extremely challenging, we will honor mailed and rejected articles and paper proposals as well as accepted ones. For untenured colleagues especially, those articles may and should be shown to the rest of the department, along with any available critique from peers, so that their scholarly work can be judged and properly honored.]
- That we will never hire or tenure a candidate whose scholarship is impressive but whose teaching is below average or whose service ethic is modest.

Making our commitments known to each other through the “scholarship plan”:

In an effort to make these commitments a reality, and to build in the Augustana College English Department the culture of inquiry they imply, we propose that all members of our department (tenured, tenure-track, and continuing voting members of the faculty) *write a scholarship plan*. The scholarship plan for new hires should be written, endorsed by the department chair, and sent to the dean by Christmas break of the first year of employment. The scholarship plan for current members of the department may be written at any time, but should be presented as part of each five-year merit presentation. The plan may be as simple as a one-page letter, but should address the following:

- A general statement on scholarly interests and goals for the five years before a tenure hearing or the next merit hearing. This statement should state the reasons this project is so intriguing, how it fits into an overall career trajectory, and how it might inform classroom teaching and the mentoring of student research.
- Evidence of past inquiry on which these new proposals build.
- Reading and other inquiry to be carried out in the upcoming years. The first year's commitment should be detailed; subsequent plans need not be so detailed.
- A schedule for presentations, articles, performances, creative works that the faculty member hopes to complete, propose, and have accepted.
- A discussion of which projects are the most important to the department member, which will be the most difficult to complete, and what resources will be required to make good progress (e.g., travel funds, pre-tenure or other sabbatical, grant writing help, etc.).

This document should be updated whenever a particular goal is met, or whenever good reasons lead the faculty member to revise goals and interests. It should be clear that this “scholarship plan” is in fact a very brief statement in which each of us states how scholarship fits into our overall commitment to excellence in teaching and usefulness in service. The scholarship plan should be available in the personnel file maintained by the department chair for each faculty member.

In conclusion—our hopes for the future of this department:

These promises should perhaps be accompanied by some hopes:

- We hope that our junior faculty in particular will help to transform the culture of our department and college by increased publishing and presenting **without** eroding the time and attention we pay to our teaching, advising and counseling of our students.
- We hope that middle-rank colleagues in particular will increase their scholarly production as the latter half of their careers unfolds, so that they begin to establish and understand the challenges of producing scholarship at a college known for its teaching. This will help us to understand what we are asking of junior colleagues and help produce a culture in which expectations for scholarly engagement are higher.
- We hope that all colleagues who have established their special gifts and talents in the department, scholarly or not, will continue to be honored and admired for their important work on behalf of the college.
- We hope that our scholarship may always be turned to the students’ and the community’s benefit, not just our own benefit or the College’s reputation.