Bylaws for the Department of English
University of South Alabama

1.0 The Department of English

The department is defined as all tenured, tenure-track, and continuing full-time faculty in the department of English. It is the responsibility of the department to decide educational policy, personnel policy, and departmental affairs, within the guidelines established by the college and the university. The consultation and deliberation that precedes and informs such decisions should take place almost entirely within the structure of the department's several advisory committees (as enumerated below) and in general faculty meetings of the department.

1.1 Department Meetings

Meetings of the department should take place at least twice per semester (excluding summer), at which time faculty members will hear reports from the various committee chairpersons, and discuss and decide matters of departmental concern. A department meeting should also be called whenever one-third of the faculty request such a meeting in writing to the chair. Minutes for department meetings shall be taken and made available to the faculty in a regular and timely manner.

1.2 Voting Members

Except where specified otherwise in these bylaws, voting members of the department are as follows: (1) tenured faculty, (2) tenure-track faculty, and (3) continuing full-time faculty. The category of continuing full-time faculty includes continuing Instructors and non-tenure track professorial level faculty.

Only graduate faculty members may vote on matters pertaining to the graduate program.

1.3 Voting and Recommendation Procedures

In the case of a vote in a faculty meeting, a quorum is defined as two-thirds of the voting members of the department. No department vote shall be taken unless a quorum is present. A simple majority vote is required to conduct business. The default method of taking a vote is by show of hands, unless a simple majority of voting members present call for a secret ballot. In the case of written recommendations, the chair will solicit such recommendations normally after the faculty have met to discuss the matter, and always before a final decision is reached.

1.4 Absentee and Proxy Voting

Absentee voting is allowed only at the discretion of the chair, who determines the logistics of such voting. Proxy voting is strictly disallowed.

2.0 Department Chair

2.1 Role of the Chair

According to the Faculty Handbook, "the chair is responsible for guiding, supervising, and directing the department. The chair is both an administrator and a faculty member. . . . The department chair has two primary responsibilities: administrator of the department and academic leader of that faculty in the development of the department's programs." [sec 2.8.1 and 2.8.2]

The Faculty Handbook further states that the chair "should take care to involve most, if not all, of the faculty in departmental decision-making activities" [sec 2.8.2] At the same time, however, "final decisions at the departmental level on these matters are those of the chair and must be considered as final departmental decisions" [sec 2.8.2]. In order to achieve balance between the value of faculty consultation and the principle of the chair's prerogative, on questions brought by the chair or by faculty members before the faculty for a decision, such decisions will be rendered either by means of a vote, by written recommendations, or by a combination of both, as the faculty shall decide. It is the chair's responsibility to make sure that votes are conducted and recorded properly, and that all recommendations are given due consideration.

A more complete description of the role and responsibilities of the department chair can be found in Section 2.8 of the *Faculty Handbook.*

2.2 Faculty Consultation

The chair should ensure that faculty have adequate opportunity to discuss matters regarding the department's development and direction. When recommendations to administration involve matters for which faculty are primarily responsible (e.g., curricular changes, new courses, standards of teaching, degree requirements), the chair must certify that these recommendations have been made with input from the department and/or the appropriate department committee.

In addition, faculty should be consulted before the chair reaches a decision on key matters for which the chair is primarily responsible (e.g., recommendations for faculty appointments and reappointments, promotions, budgetary allocations). In regard to discussing such matters with faculty or obtaining recommendations from faculty, it might not be possible or necessary for all faculty to provide input. However, the chair should always strive to involve varied members of the department so that a range of interests and perspectives is well represented.

2.3 Chair Feedback

To foster systematic and dialogic feedback to the chair, an ad hoc committee will offer a written report to the chair and department by the end of the fifth year of the chair's appointment and every five years thereafter. The committee will be comprised of all tenured members of the department, but members are encouraged to elect a sub-committee of five if the size of the overall committee seems too large for practical purposes.

Each time the committee is constituted, it will devise its own methods but must seek substantive suggestions and responses from all members of the department and must focus on administrative duties of the chair, not on his/her teaching, scholarship, or creative writing. The purpose of this process and the culminating report is to offer thoughtful and useful feedback to guide the chair as s/he enables the department to meet its various goals and needs. The report is thus best viewed as a resource for the chair and department, rather than as an evaluative instrument.

In the spirit of defining this process as one important part of an ongoing and collegial dialogue, the report will be made available to the chair and all members of the department. The chair is encouraged to respond to some or all of the report, such as in a department meeting allowing collaborative suggestions and an exchange of ideas on the department's mission and direction.

If an official university- or college-level review of the chair is conducted, this department review would not be conducted unless the faculty votes to produce its own report.

3.0 Department Committees

3.1 Standing Committees

Policy and Planning Committee: Consists of (1) the department chair, who shall also serve as committee chair, (2) the graduate coordinator, (3) the undergraduate coordinator, (4) the director of freshman composition, (5) the creative writing coordinator, (6) one tenure-track faculty member, and (7) one continuing instructor. These last two members shall be elected at the start of the academic year by the tenured, tenure-track, and continuing full-time faculty.

The committee's duties are the following:

(1) To establish milestones for strategic planning and to determine departmental policy on academic standards, retention, and recruitment of majors and minors.
(2) To review and recommend general policies and procedures relating to curriculum, advising, programs, student services, and activities.
(3) To develop academic programs and to suggest to the department appropriate revisions when necessary.
(4) To identify needs for faculty hiring.
(5) To develop the agendas for department meetings.
(6) To review the department's annual budget.
(7) To oversee the assessment efforts of the department's several units.

*Freshman Composition Committee**: Enhances EH 101, 102, and 105 and promotes the goals of these courses (e.g., assessment, textbook selection, outreach programs, and teacher workshops).

*Undergraduate Committee**: Organizes faculty advising assignments; reviews check sheets for graduating seniors; assesses literature survey courses and graduating major portfolios; reviews new course proposals for undergraduate classes; addresses any other matters concerning the undergraduate program.

*Graduate Committee**: Handles admissions, approves exam lists, conducts exit interviews, and implements assessment for the graduate program; makes recommendations to the English graduate faculty on curriculum development, comprehensive requirements, assessment, and other matters concerning the graduate program.

*Creative Writing Committee**: Advises and consults with the department chair on matters relating to the creative writing program**,** including assessment of the undergraduate Creative Writing concentration.

Technology Committee: Assists the chair in identifying, prioritizing, and addressing the department's technology needs; maintains the departmental website and deals with public relations issues, such as creating the departmental newsletter.

Student Relations & Awards Committee: Creates materials to inform students about and solicit their submissions for available scholarships; selects successful applicants; raises funds for the Jean McIver Scholarship; oversees the activities of student organizations, such as the English Graduate Organization and Sigma Tau Delta.

Tenure Committee: Reviews the research, teaching, service, and collegiality of tenure-track faculty, making recommendations about tenure decisions; participates in pre-tenure reviews and yearly teaching observations of all tenure-track faculty.

Promotion Committee: Reviews the research, teaching, and service of tenure-track faculty, making recommendations about promotion; participates in pre-tenure reviews and yearly teaching observations of all tenure-track faculty; reviews faculty activity reports of all tenured and tenure-track faculty. (Faculty seeking promotion who are not tenure-track assistant professors might require a special committee, made up of faculty at the appropriate rank and established by the department chair in accordance with the requirements set forth in college and university policies.)

Community Engagement Committee: Advises and consults with the department chair on matters concerning community and civic engagement and belonging; assists in developing and supporting classes and programming in this area, as well as facilitating research, teaching, and service. In addition to English Department faculty members, this committee will include one undergraduate and one graduate student appointed by the Chair of the Committee in consultation with the Departmental Chair.

Career Pathways Committee: Plans and organizes career-development workshops, materials, and opportunities to help students successfully enter the workforce and their chosen vocation.

* The committee chair is the program coordinator/director. All other committee chairs are elected by the respective committees.

3.2 Ad Hoc Committees
The department chair might decide to form ad hoc committees. If so, they also adhere to these department bylaws.

3.3 Committee Membership
With the exception of the tenure, promotion, and academic standards committees (which are constituted as noted in college and university guidelines), committee assignments are made by the department chair based on (1) faculty preferences and (2) an attempt to distribute committee assignments in an equitable fashion.

At the start of the fall semester, the department chair will ask faculty which department and college committees they prefer to serve on for the forthcoming year, but these preferences are not binding. The chair will seek to balance (1) an equitable, logical distribution of committee assignments with (2) faculty experience, rank, and needs in terms of tenure, promotion, and merit.

With the exceptions noted in Section 3.1, committee chairs are elected by the committee. Unless stipulated otherwise by college or university policy, each committee is comprised of no fewer than three voting members including the committee chair, who also votes.

3.3 Minority Reports
Any member of a committee can submit a minority report on any formal decision that has been approved by the committee. This report is sent with the appropriate documentation that conveys the committee decision on the matter in question.

4.0 Search Procedures

4.1 Position Specialization
When the department is allocated a tenure-track or tenured position that is not replacing a vacated position, the chair will call a department meeting to consider the specialization of the position once the Policy & Planning Committee has made its recommendations. The department chair will solicit recommendations for the specialization of the position from all voting members of the department. Recommendations may be signed or not, at the discretion of each faculty member.

When a vacancy occurs with a tenure-track or tenured faculty member, any replacement position normally requires the same specialization. If a simple majority of voting members recommend otherwise, the chair will call a department meeting by following the aforementioned procedures for an allocated position.

4.2 Search Committee

For all searches for continuing positions, the chair will select a search committee, comprised of a minimum of three faculty members of whom at least one is a specialist related to the position. The search committee chair should be a tenured faculty member. The committee will assist the department chair in crafting a job description and ad, which will be given to the department for feedback.

Once the deadline for applications has been reached, the committee will make files available to faculty to provide feedback to the committee. The committee will narrow the list of applicants to an interview list, which will be made available to the department for feedback.

4.3 Campus Visit & Deliberation

Once interviews have been conducted, the committee will notify the department of the candidates whom the committee recommends to the chair and dean for a campus visit. Typically, the department will invite at least two candidates per position for a campus visit. Once campus visits are complete, the department will meet to discuss the candidates' relative strengths and weaknesses. At the end of this discussion the chair will conduct a vote to determine the faculty's preferences among the candidates.

Subsequent to the faculty vote, the chair will solicit written recommendations from all voting members of the department. Recommendations should rank the candidates and, at the discretion of each faculty member, may provide more detailed feedback. Recommendations may be signed or not, at the discretion of each faculty member. The search committee will then deliberate and make its recommendation to the chair, who will then forward his/her own recommendation, as well as the committee's, to the Dean.

4.4 Non-Continuing Positions

Due to their need for greater speed, searches for non-continuing (i.e., one-year) positions will follow this procedure: Upon administrative approval of a position requested by the chair, the chair will appoint a search committee of at least three faculty members, including one Instructor, and will name the chair of said committee. In consultation with the department chair, the search committee chair will be responsible for composing and placing the position ad. The committee will review applications and recommend to the department chair which candidate(s) to bring to campus for an interview and teaching demonstration. While the department and search committee chair will provide regular updates to faculty on the progress of these searches and will invite feedback, a faculty meeting and vote are not required, and the position will be filled upon the search committee's recommendation to the chair, pending approval of the Dean.

5.0 Administration of Bylaws

5.1 Waiving Bylaws

Any provision of these bylaws, except those pertaining directly to the evaluation and/or promotion of tenured and tenure-track faculty, may be waived at any meeting of the department by the consent of two-thirds of the voting members present. Waiving bylaws that directly pertain to tenured or tenure-track faculty evaluation and/or promotion requires a two-thirds vote of tenured and tenure-track faculty who are present at the department meeting.

5.2 Amending Bylaws

Providing that all bylaw amendments are announced on the agenda for a department meeting at least one week in advance, these bylaws may be amended at any scheduled meeting of the department by a two-thirds vote of voting members present, except for those bylaws pertaining directly to the evaluation and/or promotion of tenured and tenure-track faculty, which require a two-thirds vote of tenured and tenure-track faculty who are present at the department meeting.

5.3 Jurisdiction of Bylaws

No provisions of these bylaws shall have any effect if they contravene published College or University policies and procedures.