Preface
This report is based on my reading of the Department of English’s Self-Study, the campus interviews conducted with various constituencies within the department on April 5 and 6, 2012, as well as several follow-up emails from members of the department to the entire committee. My primary focus will be on the programs in Rhetoric and Technical Communication (TCR); however, it is inevitable that some of my comments will reflect my observations of the department as a whole or some of the programs in English.

Overview and Vision
The separation of the department into two units, English and Rhetoric and Technical Communication, appears to have been most successful for TCR. English still appears to have some issues that need to be worked through, especially concerning the literature and creative writing differences. Linguistics almost seems like an afterthought.

The TCR program, on the other hand, appears to be whole and its faculty have a single vision. I expect the administrative move that allowed the TCR faculty to create their own curriculum, hire new faculty whom they choose, and create their own tenure and promotion criteria is a driving force in creating this unity. I further expect the unity of vision is the driving force in attracting high quality graduate students who have been exceptionally successful in a competitive job market.

Assessment—Very Good

Curriculum and Programs of Study
There are clearly multiple programs of study: the MA and PhD in English with concentrations in literature, creative writing, or linguistics; the MA in Technical Communications; and the PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric.

Both the MATC and the PhD in TCR have the same five areas of emphasis:
- Rhetoric, Composition, and Technology
- Technical Communication
- Rhetoric of Science and Healthcare
- Technology, Culture, and Rhetoric
Visual Rhetoric, New Media, and User-Centered Design

These areas of emphasis appear to be well-thought out, mirror the expertise of the faculty, and meet the needs of the marketplace for both MATC students who will move into a variety of applied writing careers as well as the MATC students who will move to PhD programs. Again, the areas of emphasis serve the PhD students who will move into academic careers. The exceptionally high number of PhD graduates who regularly move into tenure track jobs helps to make this point.

Internships are an important part of any applied program such as TCR. Clearly, internships are a possibility for both MAT and PhD students. However, there seems to be no continuing relationship between the program and potential internship hosts in industry, government, and non-profits. Developing those relationships would help as students search for appropriate internships.

Assessment—Very Good

Productivity
In both the self-study and the faculty interviews, the faculty uniformly advocated that their teaching load should be adjusted to 2-2. (They were quick to explain that teaching load must be configured using the Texas state guidelines. Clearly some departments at TTU have figured out how to do so.) A 2-2 teaching load is typical for faculty in research institutions with good-sized PhD programs. The TCR faculty clearly fit that description.

Given the constraints of the teaching load and the large number of graduate committees they serve on, the TCR faculty is still productive. There are a limited number of academic journals in technical communication; however, the TCR faculty does publish regularly in those. They also create venues for publication by editing collections of essays that are being published by the established book publishers in technical communication.

While the TCR faculty is productive in terms of publications, most of them do not make nearly as many professional presentations as would be expected. Fewer than half averaged one presentation a year. I expect the limited travel money is a factor in this situation. Since the faculty has a proven track record in publishing, they should also be getting on conference programs. Presenting at conferences would also give a high profile program even more visibility in recruiting high quality graduate students.

The number of dissertation committees the TCR faculty chair and serve on as members is extraordinary. I heard positive comments from students that the faculty is accessible and take their role as mentors seriously. Given the number of committees each TCR faculty member serves on, I have to expect that the faculty is stretched to its limits. Losing any faculty or admitting more students would likely
have a negative impact on student mentoring or faculty research. Indeed, given the current number of doctoral students, raising the current tenure track faculty in TCR to 20 seems prudent. Without doing so it remains to be seen how long the faculty can continue to produce at the current pace.

**Assessment—Very Good**

**Quality of Quantity of Graduate Students**

Over the past six years the number of graduate students in both English and TCR have grown from approximately 80 to approximately 100 each. In TCR it appears that the increase has been primarily in the PhD program while the MATC program has lost students. In 2005-2006 approximately 30% of the students in TCR were MATC students. In 2010-2011 that number had dropped to 20%. There is a slightly different trend in English. In 2005-2006, almost 46% of the students were MA students. In 2010-2011, the percentage had dropped slightly to 43%, but the actual number of MA students had increased slightly, though not as much as the number of PhD students.

I have to wonder about the reduction in the number of MATC students. Most master’s programs in technical communication are thriving. It would be understandable to reduce the number of MATC students in order to increase the number of PhD students in a strong program with a track record of placing graduates in good jobs. However, I think this is ultimately short-sighted. A healthy MATC program whose alumni, with jobs in industry, feel connections to the program will, in the long-term only strengthen the entire program. However, I strongly caution against growing the MATC without more tenure track faculty.

Job placement is another good indicator for quality of students. The job placement information for those receiving both MAs and PhDs in English is aggregated. Ideally, we could tell more if we knew where the MA students and the PhD students were going after their degrees. Indeed, it would be telling if we knew placement for PhDs with a literature concentration and those with a creative writing concentration. Still, the self-study lists 33 English students out of 141 degrees granted (99 MA and 42 PhD). Of those only 5 were identified as going to tenure track positions (12% of the 42 PhDs). At least one of those reported tenure track positions was one that the student held before attaining the PhD. That compares with 9 who were identified as taking adjunct academic positions.

Things are very different on the TCR side. Over the past six years, the department granted 45 MATC degrees. Of those, they report full-time jobs or progression to PhD programs for 28. Of the MA students who are employed, several appear to be working in technical industries in Texas. I’d suggest that continued contact with these graduates might be a good way for beginning some program/industry partnerships.
Of the 44 PhDs granted in the six-year period, all show full-time employment. Some of the PhDs, especially those in the online program, already had full-time jobs and either continued in those jobs or used the degree to advance. However, 24 of the PhDs were placed in what appear to be tenure track assistant professor positions at four-year institutions.

While the graduate students mentioned that they had limited support for conferences (which meant they limited the number of presentation proposals they submitted), they otherwise felt as though there was more than adequate financial support for them. One reservation they had was with their teaching load. Clearly, the issue of teaching load is one that runs throughout the program’s culture both with faculty and graduate students.

One other question raised by the graduate students was with the composition program that employs many of them. While understanding that the distributed grading model used by the composition program requires a common syllabus and textbook, the graduate students who had been teaching in the program for a while felt they wanted more input in syllabus revision and textbook selection. Since they may be involved with the creation of a common syllabus and textbooks for service courses once they get full time faculty positions, the graduate students felt this would be a good experience to have in grad school.

Assessment—Excellent

Facilities and Resources
The facilities are impressive. However, it’s unclear whether day-to-day resource needs are being met. There appears to be a real disconnect between the facilities where the program is housed and the resources it has to maintain the technology the faculty need to do their work. It does appear that central technologies are currently being met; however, it’s unclear whether those servers and labs can be maintained at current levels.

The faculty definitely feel that their technology needs are not being met because of the perception that “English doesn’t really need technology.” Instead of having a budget line for upgrading faculty computers every 3-4 years (upgrading either 1/3 or ¼ of the faculty every year would do that), the faculty use old computers that are “recycled” from other academic units.

It sounds as though there is almost no money for faculty travel to attend conferences where they are presenting. We were told that each faculty member, regardless of whether they’re presenting or not, were given $500 a year for travel to conferences. One assistant professor commented that she had not submitted for a particular conference because she had already spent her travel money for the year. Not supporting faculty travel to professional conferences where they will present and network with colleagues is an institutional disincentive for faculty productivity.
We had very little financial information to review. We know the total unit operations budget is $217,001 that comes to $3807 per full time faculty and staff member. That last number doesn’t seem to tell us much since we assume the operations budget must support part-time instructors and graduate student needs as well. We understand the department has already done away with almost all telephones. While this clearly saves money, it also may isolate and limit communication possibilities for the department both within in and outside of the university.

While the department is using technology to run more efficiently, there are still unit needs for copying, paper, and other supplies for the faculty and the programs the department supports. In addition, faculty who are expected to be nationally competitive should expect better support for attending professional conferences.

Assessment (Facilities)—Excellent
Assessment (Resources)—Poor

Recommendations
1) If the current number of graduate students in TCR is to be maintained (100), increase the TCR tenure track faculty to 20. If the number of graduate students, especially PhD students is to be increased, more tenure lines will be needed.
2) The department should engage in a needs assessment exercise to determine what level of operations funding is reasonable for the unit to sustain and grow its productivity. This should not only include the day-to-day needs for teaching and supporting programs (labs, journals, and the like), but also the continuing needs of faculty and graduate students (especially updating technology and conference travel). There should be some way to provide telephone service for all faculty—not just administrative offices. Cell phones may make more sense than land lines.
3) TCR should make a concerted effort to develop external partners. Technical communications programs often find a way to partner with places where their graduates find employment. Doing so creates many benefits for the programs including but not limited to internships, job opportunities for graduates, consulting opportunities for faculty, and development opportunities for the program. Healthcare, which is an emphasis in the program, seems to be a large employer in the Lubbock area. It looks like a natural for potential partnerships. While it is more difficult to partner with industries that are not local, the successful distance program in TCR might lead to distant partnerships as well.