

The English Graduate Student Association Resolution Regarding the “True Commitment Plan”

The English Graduate Student Association (EGSA) is the primary advocacy and representative organization of English graduate students at the University of Tulsa. After taking time to read, analyze, and discuss the “True Commitment Plan” as announced on April 11, 2019, EGSA would like to register the following:

EGSA affirms solidarity with Arts & Sciences faculty, Law School faculty, the Graduate Student Association, and the Student Association with the University of Tulsa who have registered their disapproval and concern with the “True Commitment Plan.”

EGSA agrees that the role of a university is to foster “high standards of scholarship, critical thinking, ethical behavior, and lifelong learning” (“TU Mission Statement” circa March 2019). We believe that the programs posed for elimination are integral for creating citizens with such abilities and aspirations. We affirm that the value of a program or major does not rest in its financial viability or its arbitrarily constructed signals of transferability to the job market.

EGSA is concerned with the Provost’s Program Review Committee (PPRC)’s process, especially regarding the PPRC’s lack of transparency, the absence of a democratic process, the public misrepresentation of faculty involvement, the rushed nature of the decision, and the methodology of data collection, evaluation, and dissemination.

EGSA condemns the environment of distrust, division, and patronization fostered by the way in which the “True Commitment Plan” was announced. Prior to the April 11th announcement, a period of shared knowledge about impending changes without precise knowledge of their nature led to an environment of rumor, distress, and distrust. Following the announcement, student forums and dismissal of students’ concerns have only exacerbated growing anxiety and dissatisfaction. We believe the timing of the announcement at the end of the semester, before finals, and after incoming students have made admissions decisions was ill-advised.

EGSA commends the PPRC’s lifting of its original suggested change regarding “no direct admissions” to the English MA program (“The Academic Strategy for the University of Tulsa” 32). The terminal English MA program at the University of Tulsa provides a needed opportunity for continuing education, particularly for local teachers. In addition, the English MA program enriches the PhD program since all graduate students are in the same courses. We recognize the intellectual value that MAs add to the program.

EGSA questions the viability of our program in the face of the freezing of funds for incoming English Graduate Assistants. It is common knowledge within the field of literary studies that students should not attend PhD programs that do not provide tuition waivers, health insurance, living stipends, and professionalization through teaching or editorial experience. If

GA funding is not reinstated, we doubt the University of Tulsa's commitment to continuing English graduate programs.

EGSA, working under the assumption that funds will not be reinstated for English GAs, has concerns regarding the future staffing of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, and the *Modernist Journals Project*. These internationally-acclaimed publications and academic resources provide invaluable public attention to both the university and to the Tulsa community, as well as offering professionalization experience for English Graduate students.

EGSA, working under the assumption that funds will not be reinstated for English GAs, recognizes that Graduate Assistants provide vital support to the operation of the Writing Program, including but not limited to instructing required courses ENGL 1004, ENGL 1033, and ENGL 3003, leading writing workshops, and staffing the Helen N. Wallace Writing Center. We are skeptical that even with the recommendations for faculty to increase their teaching load that the University of Tulsa would be able to meet the needs of its students within the standing Tulsa Core Curriculum.

In light of the administration's conflicting statements regarding the motivating factors behind this massive structural change, in addition to the above, EGSA affirms a statement of no faith in the "True Commitment" plan announced on April 11th, 2019. We call for a public and democratic evaluation of this plan that involves students, faculty, and staff from all departments before any of the proposed changes go into effect.

Signed,

Marie Sartain, PhD student, EGSA President
Annie Paige, PhD candidate, EGSA Vice President
Steven Maulden, PhD student, EGSA Event Coordinator
Destiny Hrcir, MA student, EGSA Event Coordinator
Jennarae Niece, PhD student, EGSA Treasurer
Justin Stanley, MA student, EGSA Webmaster
Wendy Voss, MA student
Laurel Taylor, PhD student
Harrison Brockwell, MA student
Caleb Freeman, MA Student
Dayne Riley, PhD candidate
Patrick Cantrell, PhD candidate
Chris Leonard, PhD candidate
Beth Csomay, PhD student
Layne Farmen, PhD student
Sangho Park, PhD student

Works Cited

- “The Academic Strategy for the University of Tulsa: Based upon the Provost’s Program Review Committee Recommendations.” *The University of Tulsa*, 11 April 2019, https://35ht6t2ynx0p1ztf961h81r1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/University-of-Tulsa-PPRC-Binder-4_11.pdf.
- University of Tulsa. “Our Mission.” *The University of Tulsa*, March 2019, <https://utulsa.edu/about/mission/>.