Education Student Advisory Group Provides Counsel | English

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Annually, five students from the English Education program are invited to serve on an committee to offer advice to the faculty. They meet twice during the academic year and offered their final advice May 1, 2017. This is the third iteration of the group. The 2016-2017 students included Amy Robinson, Tyrel Wilde, Carleen Hunsaker Ramirez, Amanda Siler, and Jimmy Dotson.

Professor Sonia Manuel-Dupont, who co-chairs the English Education Curriculum Committee said, “Each year, these students have provided advice that enabled us to make real changes in the program.”

New clinical experiences for preservice teachers went into effect 2016-2017, which previously had been taught by another department. Students had the opportunity to work in the schools in conjunction with English 4520, Teaching Literacy in Diverse Classrooms. The students noted that the teachers in the schools appreciated the approach by the department, offering a menu of teaching experiences that truly involved the students in meaningful activities. Ramirez said, “Getting to teach really increased my confidence.” The faculty who teach the clinical experience are preparing a handbook to provide even more structure. The students also applauded the addition of an early clinical experience in English 3500, which will be offered for the first time in fall 2017.

The students were also complimentary of the new course Teaching Creative Writing (English 4540), which pairs doing creative writing with teaching creative writing. “We were nervous about writing plays, but Dr. Gunsberg helped us along the way, and then we produced the scripts, which was terrific,” according to Wilde.

Siler noted that she appreciated the classes of new faculty member, Dr. Jessica Rivera-Mueller, who emphasized praxis and Praxis. “We have to pass the Praxis exam, but Professor Rivera-Mueller explained how praxis is fundamental to our work as teachers, providing us with experiential learning as well as grounding us in theory about how to teach. For instance, fishbowl is a teaching technique, and we actually did it in class.” The Praxis exam is part of the STEP section of teacher training. Dr. Manuel-Dupont and her undergraduate teaching fellow Carolyn Lyle have developed Quizlets that focus on teaching terms.

The students also talked about interviews they’ve had for employment and will share sets of questions that can be useful to their peers who have not yet entered the job market. Robinson joins the faculty of West Jordan High School in the fall.

Members of the group are charged with querying their peers about the program for suggestions. One informant said, “English classes have been the best as the professors throughout the department teach in a student-centered way.”

Dr. Kinkead, who co-chairs the Curriculum Committee said, “The faculty so appreciate this insider perspective on what works and what needs work.”