Assessment Trends Report
Student Learning Outcomes in English Literature Major

September 2009

The goal of this report is to evaluate the assessment of student learning outcomes in English Literature Major. The report address four key questions to evaluate the quality of our assessment processes.

(1) How have we sustained the assessment effort over a multi-year period of time?

How many years have you completed an annual assessment report?

__X___ 2006   __X___2007   __X___2008   __X___2009

The assessment reports for the English Department Literature Major have been prepared by Michael W. George for the last four years. The reports include data from each set of artifacts, analyses of the data, and recommendations for changes in pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment methods from the assessment committee. Each report is presented in brief to the full Department in the Fall semester. The assessment team consists of the lead report writer and at least one other member of the Literature Program Committee.

(2) How do we systematically and comprehensively collect and analyze data about student learning?

To measure student learning, the English Department Literature Major Committee assesses students throughout their four years at Millikin by using as the assessment method a portfolio, the artifacts from which can come from any course that the student has taken. Emphasis is placed on the project produced in the capstone course--EN 420--where students are expected to produce a project of near-professional quality. The yearly Assessment Team consists of the chair of the Literature Program Committee--who is also the lead report writer--and at least one other member of the Literature Program Committee.

The English Department has used this method for the last four years and has found it to be moderately reliable. Initially, the Major also used an exit survey in addition to the portfolio, but the survey was neither statistically valid nor reliable, and few graduating seniors completed it. As a result, the Major opted for only the portfolio method.

The Literature Assessment Committees reported the following trends in student learning outcomes:

Learning Goal 1: Advanced Understanding of Literary Genres

	Green—3 points	Yellow—2 points	Red—1 point
AY 2005-06		1.67	
AY 2006-07		2	
AY 2007-08			1.33
AY 2008-09	2.25		

Learning Goal 2: Advanced Understanding of Literature's Historical, Intellectual, and Cultural Contexts

	Green—3 points	Yellow—2 points	Red—1 point
AY 2005-06		2	
AY 2006-07	3		
AY 2007-08		1.67	
AY 2008-09		1.75	

Learning Goal 3: Application of Literary Criticism & Theory to the Interpretation of Texts

	Green—3 points	Yellow—2 points	Red—1 point
2005-06		2	
AY 2006-07	3		
AY 2007-08		2	
AY 2008-09		2	

Learning Goal 4: Near-Professional Project

	Green—3 points	Yellow—2 points	Red—1 point
2005-06		1.67	
AY 2006-07		2	
AY 2007-08		2	
AY 2008-09		2	

(3) How do we use the analysis to improve curriculum and pedagogy and to inform decisions about budgets and strategic priorities?

Over the four years that the program has collected assessment data, the program has scored in either yellow or green with the exception of one learning goal in one year. However, the paucity of data means that we cannot yet generalize these results. In 4 years the program only collected 9 portfolios. To base significant programmatic changes on so few artifacts, particularly when the range of assessment scores is so wide in each year, would be unwise. With only 9 portfolios upon which to base our program assessment, we must acknowledge that differences in high-school preparation, demographics, work ethic, and interests among individual students could be a major factor in assessment scores.

(4) How do we evaluate, modify, and continue to improve the student learning assessment process in this program?

The Department developed a rubric to assess the goals, and has moved from the inadequate color scheme used by the University as a whole to a numerical system that roughly corresponds to the color scheme. Green = 3 points, Yellow=2 points, Red = 1 point. The Program moved to this in order to provide a more accurate assessment of the quality of student learning and to reflect individual differences in evaluating the portfolios. Rather than use such arbitrary ratings like "high red" or "low yellow," or using a color wheel and inserting Orange, the 2009 Assessment Team chose to use numerical ratings. Currently, each assessment committee member submits his or her numerical ranking, and those are averaged.

Evaluation from Focused Visit Leadership Team (Made of Academic Deans, Program Leaders, and Focus Visit Report Writers)

FVLT Rating: Yellow

Academic program	Goal 1 (multi-year)	Goal 2 (data collection)	Goal 3 (Use assessment to improve)	Goal 4 (improve assessment)	Total
English Literature	3	2	2	2	9

Based on the four questions/criteria, the Focus Visit Leadership Team rates the English Literature Major as yellow and concludes that the major has a strong multi-year reporting process. The program should continue efforts to implement a sustainable system of systematic and comprehensive data collection and analysis. The team agrees that making and implementing changes based on assessment is difficult with lack of sustainable and comprehensive data. The English Department can be more deliberate in sharing the assessment process and results.