Assessment Trends Report
Student Learning Outcomes in English Writing Major Program

September, 2009

The goal of this report is to evaluate the assessment of student learning outcome goals in the English Writing Major Program. The report addresses 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?

_____ 2006   ___x__2007   ____x_2008   ____x_2009

In 2006, the English faculty teaching writing major courses developed the learning outcome goals for English Writing Major and used the Senior Writing Portfolio course (offered each fall) to collect each graduating writing major's best writing samples from their writing major courses. The English Writing Major Committee developed rubrics for common learning outcome goals and goals for three concentrations within the writing major program—creative writing, journalism and professional writing. Each May the Writing major Committee meets to review and analyze writing portfolios collected from the course in the previous fall semester and to make recommendations, which are included in the annual report written by the Writing Major Director and shared with English faculty at departmental meetings. Assessment analysis and recommendations are used to improve both the course and the English Writing Major program.

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

The English Writing Major Committee uses direct assessment of student performances by collecting student artifacts from the Senior Writing Portfolio course. Collections are comprehensive because we use an end of the program assessment method in collecting senior portfolios. The faculty member teaching the course systematically collects students' portfolios each fall and submits all the portfolios to the English Writing Major Committee for assessment.

The Senior Writing Portfolio course collects multiple artifacts from writing major students to measure performance:

> Portfolio Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics
> Portfolio Artifact 2: sample of writing theory research
> Portfolio Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples and/or publication designs
> Portfolio Artifact 4: multiple writing samples and/or publication designs in area of concentration

These portfolios are the product of a semester-long course in which faculty guide students in the construction of their work. Writing portfolios collected from this course are students' best writing samples from all of their writing major courses. The quantity (at least six artifacts from each student), variety (at least three to four genres), and quality (revised with guidance and annotations) of students' writing samples attest to the validity of data. Our assessment approach allows us to assess the breadth and depth of the major as we evaluate the core goals and the goals of the concentration. The assessment process is simply an extension of a well-developed and implemented major.

The following chart shows how each core learning outcome goal is assessed by the student's artifacts: 2.5-3=green; 1.50-2.49=yellow; 1-1.49=red.

Artifact	Core Student learning outcome goals	2007	2008	2009
Student Artifact 1	Goals 1, 2, and 5	2.28 •	2.8 •	2.8 •
Student Artifact 2	Goals 1 and 3	2.1 •	2.7 •	2.6 •
Student Artifact 3	Goals 2 and 4	2.62 •	2.7 •	2.6 •
Student Artifacts 4	Goal 2 and 5	2.6 •	2.8 •	2.9 •

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

Every summer the Director of the English Writing Major reports the assessment analysis and recommendations to Dean of Teaching and Learning and English Department Chair. The reports are shared and discussed with English faculty at first English Departmental meetings each fall. The annual assessment reports are also made available to all faculty on the assessment website.

Assessment analysis and recommendations have been used for pedagogical initiatives and budget priorities:

1. Improving the delivery of the Senior Writing Portfolio course. The yellow performance indicators in the 2007 report pointed to the need for faculty to re-examine and specifically address student learning outcomes, particularly for the Senior Writing Portfolio Capstone course. Yellow indicators for two of our core Writing Major goals and one concentration (journalism) directed us to examine the ways in which the program goals lined up with specific course offerings, and yielded several suggestions for improving on the delivery of the Writing Major capstone course.
2. The development of a new course, Introduction to English Studies, in 2007. During the assessment process and the delivery of the Senior Writing Portfolio class, faculty noticed that students do not keep their writing samples from their courses. The new proposed course, Introduction to English Studies, helps enhance the quantity and quality of
3. We strengthened the professional writing track through our new hire, Devon Fitzgerald are strengthening the journalism track through the proposed new hire for a journalism and professional writing faculty member.

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

The assessment process—the learning outcome goals, the assessment method, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination/implementation of recommendations—of the English Writing Major program have proven, over the past three years, to work for assessing student learning. The English Department can create more deliberate, open forums for discussions of recommendations and make more rigorous efforts in closing the assessment loop.

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

Rating: Green

Academic program	Goal 1 (multi-year)	Goal 2 (data collection)	Goal 3 (Use assessment to improve)	Goal 4 (improve assessment)	Total
English Writing	3	3	3	3	12

Based on the four questions/criteria, the Focus Visit Leadership Team rates the English Writing Major Program as green and concludes that English Writing Major has a strong tradition and sustainable system of systematic and comprehensive data collection and analysis. The team agrees that English Department needs to make more rigorous efforts in implementing the recommendations from the assessment reports.