

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: ENGLISH (AY 2015-2016)**

### **OVERVIEW**

The English program encompasses two main components: Composition, consisting of lower-division courses 092, 093, 110, 111, 211, and 212, and the upper division course 311; and the Bachelor of Arts in English, consisting of a core of required courses on the 200 level, and advanced courses on the 300 and 400 levels in Literature, Literature and the Environment, and Creative Writing. Assessments of student learning outcomes in each these components serve different goals and embrace separate criteria. The GER-oriented service component of Composition is not an element of the BA in English, though it is delivered by English faculty and adjuncts.

Below are the results of our assessment activities for AY 2015-16.

### **B.A. IN ENGLISH ASSESSMENT**

#### **Overview**

The English faculty has not formally assessed the B.A. program as a whole. With the new guidelines for assessment and assessment reporting, the English faculty has met and come up with a plan for a broader program assessment. In the past we've assessed each course and groupings of courses; we will continue this work but now additionally look at the cohort of each year's graduates as a means of assessing the program in a more holistic way.

#### **New Program Outcomes**

As part of the process for preparing for and writing the Program Review for the B.A. in English (due in January of this year), the faculty revised the outcomes for the B.A. in English. These are the new outcomes:

- Students will be introduced to a variety of theoretical approaches through which literature and literary craft may be analyzed.
- Students will learn the terminology specific to English literary studies, as well as critical reading skills and methodologies employed in the study of writing.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an ability to analyze literature and writing from critical, historical, gender, and multi-cultural perspectives.
- Students will acquire advanced skills in critical reading, research, writing, speaking, and problem solving.
- Students will acquire professional skills through a capstone experience, internship, or senior thesis.

### **New Plan**

Once we had established broader outcomes for the degree, which encompasses all the work students do from entrance-level composition courses up through their senior projects, we came up with a model to assess how students are achieving those outcomes.

Our program assessment plan:

- In April of every year we will gather graduation data on the previous year's graduates including names, areas of emphasis, number of graduates, and their GPAs.
- All English B.A. graduates are required to take either the Humanities Capstone course or complete a thesis or internship. In each of these options student produce material that shows their progress as a student and the skills gained in the last four years of study. These writing projects should demonstrate mastery (or not) of the above outcomes. Faculty teaching the capstone course for the previous year as well as those mentoring thesis and internship students will be asked to collect a sampling of student work to be shared with the entire faculty.
- The English faculty will meet to review the outcomes, the data, and the sampling of materials. This meeting is meant to be a conversation about our observations, or evaluation of student work, and an assessment of whether or not students are meeting our outcomes. We anticipate also comparing our data to the previous years' data to see how the program is growing, progressing, or changing. A brief report will be produced by the English B.A. Coordinator summarizing findings in this meeting. We will use this conversation to make any adjustments to our courses, the summative projects, and/or the program itself.

## **ENGLISH COURSE ASSESSMENT**

### **Overview**

At convocation in fall of '15 the regional English faculty met to discuss a change in our current assessment process. We met as a whole group and then broke out into course-specific working groups to review the course descriptions, student learning outcomes, and the current assessment methods. Then we reconvened with recommendations and ideas. A month after that we met again with a draft of a new assessment plan and worked to refine it further.

### **Old Plan**

In 2012-2013 the English faculty met as a group to redesign our course assessment program, with the goal of assessing how the students were meeting the learning outcomes for the B.A. in English. The program was started with composition courses, and can be described as follows:

- All students entering a composition course (ENGL 092, 110, 111, 211, and 212) are given a diagnostic test on the first day of class. This typically includes a writing sample so we can assess grammar, organizational skills, and other writing markers.
- At the end of the term, we ask the students to fill out a summative evaluation survey assessing their own learning outcomes in the class. The department worked together to create a list of survey questions that would help us assess the students.
- The professors in each class then read the surveys, summarize them into a report, and submit them to a lead faculty member who distributes those reports to the entire faculty. In this way, everyone had a chance to see those results and make changes as they designed their courses for the next term.

This system was used until the fall of 2015. At that point the faculty decided to revise the assessment program. While some data was being collected and used, a number of the faculty (primarily adjuncts) were not responsive to this system and we felt the data wasn't as useful as it could be. We also noted that no good system was yet in place to evaluate the non-composition courses, which should be included as a means for assessing the B.A. in a more comprehensive way.

### **New Plan**

At fall convocation in 2015 the faculty met and agreed to revise our assessment program. The Directors of Writing led a brainstorming session during convocation. Faculty members were then divided into working groups and worked for the next month to draft a new plan. Toward the end of September the whole group met again and created a working assessment plan. The goal is to begin implementation in the fall of 2017.

- Each composition course has a new evaluation rubric, based on the new Student Learning Outcomes.
- The literature courses (300 and 400 level) courses have a shared rubric, again based on the new Student Learning Outcomes
- The creative writing courses (200 – 400 level) have a shared rubric, again based on the new Student Learning Outcomes

- The faculty have been divided into “working groups” to assess the courses assigned to each group. There is one group for each composition class, one group for the literature courses, and one group for the creative writing courses. These are regional groups with all three campuses participating.
- Each year at convocation the working groups will meet. This will happen on a two-year rotation: one year composition courses will be assessed, and the next year the literature and creative writing courses.
- When the faculty meet, they will bring and share a collection of student papers (with names removed). A range of papers will be shared—successful ones to problematic ones. Using the rubric the student work will be evaluated to see how it meets the student learning outcomes for each course. Faculty will also share syllabi and discuss methods for meeting those outcomes.
- During that meeting, notes will be taken and changes, ideas, problems, solutions, etc. will be discussed and noted. The working groups will be responsible for turning in a written report to the Directors of Writing. The Directors will collate the reports and distribute them to the entire English faculty, ensuring that all faculty, including adjuncts, have access to the data and decisions of the working groups.
- Working Groups:
  - Directors of Writing: Professors Landis and Wall
  - ENGL 092/110: Professors Landis (chair) and Hayes
  - ENGL 111: Professors Maier (chair), Trafton, Elliott, and Patton
  - ENGL 211: Professors Neely (chair), Wall, and Whalen
  - ENGL 212: Professors Enge (chair) and Wall
  - Literature Courses: Professors Maier (chair), Hayes, Landis, and Simpson
  - Creative Writing Courses: Professors Wall (chair), Trafton, and Hayes

### **Composition Course Assessment**

#### **ENGL 092 (Improving Writing Skills)**

This is a developmental composition course designed to prepare students for the pre-college level ENGL 110. As indicated the AY 12-13 assessment report, the English department proposed the idea of developing a cohort of students on the Juneau campus who would complete ENGL 092 and ENGL 110 with one instructor was modified over the course of discussions, resulting in the proposal for an accelerated ENGL 092/110 to be offered over the course of one semester to a cohort of self-selected students who feel they would benefit from this kind of structure. We ran this pilot program for three years and met each year to discuss the results. Professor Ernestine Hayes is particularly eager to continue this program and has refined it over the course of four years now to its current model. We will offer this course beyond its original 3-year pilot for the fall of 2016 and the department is currently debating its viability. We have seen good student success but the program also has high costs in terms of faculty workload, additional adjunct need, and impact on the upper division courses needed for the B.A. students.

**ENGL 110 (Introduction to College Writing)**

As a higher-level developmental course utilizing portfolio assessment, ENGL 110 has been singled out by previous Accreditation committees for its region-based portfolio evaluation system as well as its success rate. This course continues to be assessed via regional portfolio evaluation at midterm and final points in each semester.

Two years ago faculty instituted a new pilot program for students who test into ENGL 110 but are close to testing into ENGL 111. In this model “borderline” students are invited to move up to ENGL 111 and take a 1-credit “studio” course. This is a small class aimed at bringing students up to the 111 level. Professors Trafton and Mitchell have successfully used this model for the last year and the department is holding ongoing conversations about continuing this program beyond its pilot status.

**ENGL 111 (Methods of Written Communication)****ENGL 211 (Writing About Literature)****ENGL 212 (Technical Writing)**

In our last assessment report we noted that we wanted to update the way these courses are assessed. All three will now be assessed using our assessment model. All three courses have new student learning outcomes and those will form the basis of that assessment. Faculty will bring together a selection of student papers and using the SLOs for each course as a rubric evaluate whether or not students are meeting the intended outcomes. A brief report will be written by each course working group with suggestions for any changes to be made in the next year.

**Upper Division Writing and Literature Course Assessment****ENGL 311 (The Art of the Essay/Advanced Composition)****ENGL 363 (Nature Writing)****ENGL 362 (Memoir Writing)**

Professors Wall (chair), Trafton, and Hayes will meet. A selection of writing from each of these courses will be read and evaluating using the new SLOs for each course. The working group will produce a short report offering observations and any recommendations to be shared with all those teaching this course.

**ENGL 261 (Introduction to Creative Writing)****ENGL 461 (Advanced Creative Writing)**

Professors Wall (chair), Trafton, and Hayes will meet. A selection of writing from each of these courses will be read and evaluating using the new SLOs for each course. The working group will produce a short report offering observations and any recommendations to be shared with all those teaching this course.

**Literature Courses (see catalog)**

Professors Maier(chair), Landis, Hayes, and Simpson will meet. A selection of writing from these courses will be read and evaluating using the new SLOs. The working group will produce a short report offering observations and any recommendations to be shared with all those teaching this course.

### **Additional Assessment Work**

- The ENGL 110 course continues to be the course most rigorously assessed. The ENGL 110 portfolio program has been in place for many years (since before the time of any of the current English faculty) and continues to work well. A core group of faculty meets twice a semester to read and evaluate student portfolios. Part of that task is to give students feedback, but it also has served as an excellent assessment tool for the course. At the beginning of each reading session the faculty “norm” the papers (read a sample of borderline papers from several instructors). That norming session generates a broader discussion about the course, changes the faculty want to implement, assignments that work/don’t work, a changing student body, test scores, and other topics. At the end of the reading session the faculty hold a “wrap-up” meeting that covers and analyzes any issues that arose from the reading (i.e. how to teach grammar, organizational strategies for the analysis paper, etc.). It is in part due to the success (and the value the faculty find in this process) that led the faculty to shape the current overall assessment plan after this model.

The English Coordinator routinely assigns this course to new adjuncts, as it provides a natural mentoring process. Tenure-track faculty and the Directors of Writing are able to look at assignments and student work produced in the adjuncts’ classrooms and work to ensure adjuncts are meeting the expected standards. Typically we stop several times during the reading sessions to answer questions, talk about expectations for various writing principles, and to share ideas about how to teach these principles.

- In AY 2014-2015 the English faculty created Student Learning Outcomes for every course we teach. In the first year a complete draft was created, and the lower division course SLOs were passed through the curriculum committee. In the fall of 2015 the faculty met and revised the upper division SLOs. Those are currently being reviewed by the curriculum committee. The process of creating the SLOs engendered numerous conversations among the faculty about expectations for English students and the B.A. as a program. The SLOs were also used as a base for the new assessment plan.
- In preparation for the 2015 English B.A. Program Review we also conducted a survey of our graduates from the last 5 years. The results from this survey were shared with the faculty and this constituted our assessment work for the 2015-16 year. We may send out surveys in the future, but we anticipate moving to our new assessment plan this year and are gathering data this spring in anticipation of next year’s work. Here are the results of the survey we sent out. This is a sampling of the jobs our graduates currently hold:
  - Richard Radford, 2013, Communications Specialist, Alaska State Legislature and coordinator of the weekly Tlingit Language Learners Group at the Downtown library
  - Jacqueline Boucher, 2011, MFA Program for poetry
  - Andria Budbill, 2013, MAT Program at UAS, teacher in Dillingham
  - Emily King, 2014, Teach American Program, teaching in Texas
  - Seth Griffin, 2011, Teaching English in China
  - Jennifer Smith, 2012, Ph.D. Student in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley
  - Raymond Bernhardt, 2014, Job Coach for REACH
  - Heather Dalberg, 2013, Actor, Perseverance Theatre

- Clara Miller, 2015, Reporter for the *Juneau Empire*
- Alexandria Rosen, 2010, Juneau Public Library
- Zachary Tate, 2015, M.A. program in literature at UAA
- Courtney Wendell, 2011, DOT technical writer

We also asked our former students were asked to speak to their experience as English majors and here is a sampling of their comments:

- *"I feel UAS prepared me for life after college because I was allowed to be the author of my own education through their internship program. I took advantage of this by enrolling myself as a student intern at public media outlet KTOO for credits, where I would later land a job. It was during this internship that I truly developed my voice as a writer and honed techniques in order to improve my writing."* Daniel Petersen, 2012
- *"I currently work as a communications specialist II with the State of Alaska Legislature -- a job which I would not have qualified for without my degree -- and my day-to-day duties consist of writing, editing, layout, and design work for both internal and external documents and reports. In my off-time, I am a freelance journalist, writing articles mostly centered on arts and culture. I run the weekly Tlingit Language Learners Group at the Juneau Public Library, and am also a member of the Friends of the Juneau Public Libraries board."* Richard Radford, 2013
- *"I feel that my education at UAS helped to prepare me very well relative to my fellow graduate students. I was able to get a lot of personalized guidance and direction from several faculty members that led to outstanding, personalized letters of recommendation; great feedback on papers that I was able to use as writing samples; and even an introduction to my current academic mentor and adviser. Sol Neely, Richard Simpson, and Nina Chordas, in particular, went above and beyond to challenge and support my personal and academic growth. I am forever grateful for the relationship I was able to have with each of them and to UAS for facilitating these relationships."* Zachary Tate, 2015
- *"The critical thinking and communication skills that I honed as an undergraduate in the English program at UAS have been invaluable in every facet of my working life since leaving college. I think more clearly, communicate more effectively, and live more authentically as a result of my studies, and I am grateful everyday for the opportunities I am afforded because of my exemplary education."* Tyler Preston, 2012
- *"The literature and environment emphasis of the UAS's English degree provided the flexibility to study two passions of mine, and now I use that degree to enhance Alaska's salmon fisheries. I could say so many good things about every aspect of UAS's English program it was difficult to come up with just one sentence."* Jessica Eller, 2011
- *The workforce is finding an increased emphasis on the ability to communicate effectively, including explaining complex subjects and regulations both in writing and verbally. These skills acquired as an English major have, I believe, lead to my successful career path thus far. In our current culture of texting, status updates, and tweets, many people have simply lost the ability to write and speak well. What was once implied, is now a sought after skill."* Courtney Wendell, 2011