ANNUAL REPORT

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

ENGLISH (AY 2019-2020)

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW & STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The English program encompasses two main components: Composition, consisting of lower-division courses 090, 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 of 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, one term hire, and adjuncts.

English B.A. Program Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Apply various theoretical approaches and methodologies to the analysis of literature or the craft of writing**

- **Critically analyze or explicate literature and writing from diverse, marginalized perspectives**

- **Demonstrate advanced reading and writing skills specific to their literary or creative disciplines**

- **Reflect on their own writing, demonstrating an awareness of technique, audience, and purpose.**

- **Demonstrate professional skills through a capstone experience, internship, or senior thesis.**

The English faculty assesses our work in three primary categories:

- **Program Assessment:** B.A. in English degree with three emphasis areas (literature, creative writing, and literature and the environment)

- **Course Assessment:** composition, literature, creative writing courses

- **Additional Assessment:** 110 portfolios

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: PROCESS & ANALYSIS

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 students typically present their final work through community presentations, thesis defenses, etc. Starting in Fall 18, <u>at least two English faculty members</u> have attended each of these events or presentations, and using the above outcomes as a rubric, they create a "scorecard" to evaluate each student in those areas. We use these "scorecards" to assess the program outcomes.

Thesis Student

In AY 19/20 we had one student, Kirsten McDonald, who successfully defended her thesis. Her committee was Dr. Kevin Maier, Dr. William Elliott, and Professor Emily Wall.

- **Faculty Scorecards:**

    Dr. Kevin Maier (thesis advisor)

Creative Writing Courses Assessment Rubric -- The work of successful creative writing students will generally demonstrate the following traits:	
1. Whether written in prose or in verse, writing exhibits a proficient grammar and mechanics. Creative deviations from Standard English are welcomed when intentional and done for effect.	Student spent a lot of time revising at the sentence level. Good work.
2. The language—on the level of the word, sentence, and paragraph—reveals attention to detail with both precision and effective word economy.	I may be biased, as I saw this in several small portions before reading the whole, but I think the sentence-level writing is solid.
3. The writing is rich with vivid detail in depicted objects, actions, and/or thoughts. Images or events are written in such a way that appeal to the reader and encourage identification with the experience.	Yes. Embracing nature writing conventions, student does a good job of translating some cool experiences to narrative.
4. The piece somehow reflects on a meaningful theme.	Perhaps a bit diffuse, but there are extended meditations on the whale guiding industry, especially as it relates to the author's intellectual and personal development.
5. The writing generally avoids cliché, formulas, and hackneyed patterns.	Yes.
6. Specific to Fiction/Non-Fiction Work: a. The writing maintains appropriate use of a variety of modes (such as action, dialogue, description, thought, and exposition). The writing can also transition smoothly between modes.	Author explicitly experimenting with various modes here; could have been more self-aware during the thesis defense and in the accompanying meditation, but in general, author moves freely between a variety of registers.

b. The narrative is cohesive with an adequate balance between the beginning, middle, and end.	May have error on the side of experimental, but student definitely spent a lot of time thinking about narrative arc and development.
c. Characters are developed as unique individuals that can interact with the imagined environment in a provocative and meaningful way.	For sure. Impressive development of non-human animals and tourists as characters.

Dr. Will Elliot

Creative Writing Courses Assessment Rubric -- The work of successful creative writing students will generally demonstrate the following traits:	
1. Whether written in prose or in verse, writing exhibits a proficient grammar and mechanics. Creative deviations from Standard English are welcomed when intentional and done for effect.	Yes.
2. The language—on the level of the word, sentence, and paragraph—reveals attention to detail with both precision and effective word economy.	Maybe.
3. The writing is rich with vivid detail in depicted objects, actions, and/or thoughts. Images or events are written in such a way that appeal to the reader and encourage identification with the experience.	Yes; the project narrativizes a great deal of natural science knowledge in an often compelling way.
4. The piece somehow reflects on a meaningful theme.	Yes; themes ranged from 'ways of knowing' to 'art vs science' to 'homecoming / return.'
5. The writing generally avoids clichés, formulas, and hackneyed patterns.	Maybe; its elision of Alaska Native history in favor of a 'wilderness discovery' narrative, in the section about Southeast Alaska history, fell short of learning outcomes of literature courses, such as "demonstrate knowledge of historical, gender, and multi-cultural perspectives."
6. Specific to Fiction/Non-Fiction Work: a. The writing maintains appropriate use of a variety of modes (such as action, dialogue, description, thought, and exposition). The writing can also transition smoothly between modes.	Yes; however, some transitions were abrupt. Additionally, the writer had difficulty situating the project in terms of influence and genre.
b. The narrative is cohesive with an adequate balance between the beginning, middle, and end.	Maybe; a cohesive structure asserts itself more toward the end than the beginning.

c. Characters are developed as unique individuals that can interact with the imagined environment in a provocative and meaningful way.	Yes, including nonhuman characters like the whale.

Professor Emily Wall

Creative Writing Courses Assessment Rubric -- The work of successful creative writing students will generally demonstrate the following traits:	
1. Whether written in prose or in verse, writing exhibits a proficient grammar and mechanics. Creative deviations from Standard English are welcomed when intentional and done for effect.	Kirsten showed a good understanding of grammatical rules especially of syntactical phrasing that created some rhythm in her prose.
2. The language—on the level of the word, sentence, and paragraph—reveals attention to detail with both precision and effective word economy.	Yes.
3. The writing is rich with vivid detail in depicted objects, actions, and/or thoughts. Images or events are written in such a way that appeal to the reader and encourage identification with the experience.	Yes; she used images to good effect, and experimented with metaphor. I did wish for more balance between scenes and pure descriptive writing. I also wished for more indigenous knowledge and content.
4. The piece somehow reflects on a meaningful theme.	Yes, a good exploration of the intersection between personal exploration and science.
5. The writing generally avoids clichés, formulas, and hackneyed patterns.	The personification did a good job of avoiding the typical "whale" clichés.
6. Specific to Fiction/Non-Fiction Work: a. The writing maintains appropriate use of a variety of modes (such as action, dialogue, description, thought, and exposition). The writing can also transition smoothly between modes.	This is an area we'd like to work more on with our students; the writing was heavily descriptive and needed more exposition and more balancing of scenes and tension.
b. The narrative is cohesive with an adequate balance between the beginning, middle, and end.	This too is an area that could use some work; the student struggled with overall structural methods. The sub-genre wasn't clearly defined.
c. Characters are developed as unique individuals that can interact with the imagined environment in a provocative and meaningful way.	Yes; one of her real strengths was minor character development.

- **Student Self-Reflection:**

First of all, I'm very excited that the English degree program offers a thesis option with creative writing. Just the word, "Thesis," Is enough to intimidate a lot of students. Being able to complete a thesis project gave me a deeper understanding of what to expect if I continued on to graduate school, or tackled a similar project on my own. It also gave me a tremendously valuable opportunity to learn from mistakes and difficulties.

The most helpful parts of the project were the weekly meetings for both progress reporting and receiving feedback, as well as the final presentation to the committee with others in attendance. The only thing I would change for next time would be to arrange for some kind of social gathering/tension defusing after the defense. Traditional post defense activities may be against current regulations, but the need to blow off steam in a less serious way could be attended to with something simple like a round of mandatory karaoke, or a water ballon fight, or a pie eating contest.

I'm leaning towards the pie eating contest, that would have been awesome!

Thanks for the experience!

Internships Students

In AY 19/20 we had three students complete internships, all with *Tidal Echoes:* India Busby, Callie Ziegler, and Annie Kessler. They all worked with Professor Emily Wall, faculty advisor for the journal.

- **Faculty Scorecard:**

   Professor Emily Wall

      o *India Busby:* India Busby was this year's senior editor and she demonstrated the skill set we want to see in students ending our program. She was responsible for all the major tasks in publishing the journal including choosing the work, arranging it into a book, working with the writers and artists, working with the graphic designer, setting and keeping a schedule, coordinating with various UAS staff and faculty members, and finally organizing and mc-ing the launch attending by 75+ people. The journal itself, as well as the successful launch event speaks to her success in managing all of these. Her writing, speaking, and analytical skills were all used in these tasks.

      o *Callie Ziegler:* Callie Ziegler was the junior editor, mentoring under India, and learning the ropes of the journal. She proved herself to be an excellent student. She used listening, writing, speaking, and analytical skills as she learned from India and me how to publish a journal.

      o *Kelsey Walsh:* Kelsey Walsh was the fall intern. Her primary work was soliciting work and organizing all submissions into a manuscript that could be read and judged by the board. Annie's other major task was writing two interviews to be published. Her writing skills were outstanding; it took very little revision and help on my part to finish those. She also demonstrated excellent public speaking skills as she visited classrooms, public poetry reading, and other events to spread the word about the journal.

- **Student Self-Reflection on SLOs:**

  - **India Busby:**

    The internship of being involved with Tidal Echoes has been an incredible experience. It has taught me how to manage my time management a little bit more, and it also taught me how to communicate well with others. Emily was a wonderful mentor who was very accommodating with my schedule and really took time out of her day to meet with me when I was feeling a little overwhelmed with the internship. Tidal Echoes has offered some extremely valuable lessons such as working with others, making sure that everything is organized, and having an eye for detail while working with community members and students when it comes to their work.

    Tidal Echoes pushed me not only as a writer but also as an editor. I'm not very good when it comes to editing my own writing, but with the amount of emails that I had to send to professionals, I had to learn to take time and look over my emails multiple times. If I could, I would re-do this internship a thousand times because of how much I enjoyed it and how much it helped me grow as a person.

  - **Callie Ziegler:**

    I learned a lot being this year's Junior Editor for Tidal Echoes. I learned the editing process and everything that goes into it; it is a lot. I am a very stubborn person and like to do things on my own because I want it done right. However, there is no way I could have done half the things we did for the journal on my own. The biggest accomplishment for me this semester, was having to rely on people. It was hard at first, but I soon found myself asking for help and being okay with it. I actually wanted it!

    After reading a million pages and rechecking and rechecking work after work, I feel my editing skills have been improved. As editor, you have to be extremely focused and pay attention to every minute detail. I also learned patience, which is a word that's not in my vocabulary. I learned how to write proper emails, work excel, Microsoft word, Dropbox, and Submittable. My computer skills, along with my people skills, have drastically improved because of this internship.

    The process of editing and producing a journal is not easy, but after this internship, I feel like I have a better understanding of how to do it in the future.

  - **Kelsey Walsh:**

    Throughout my internship I had to develop many new skills in order to meet the needs for the journal. This opportunity required that I manage my time in a professional manner while keeping in contact with many people to address the current tasks for the week. Some of the tasks that I completed this semester included: promoting through paper materials or on the radio, communicating with Tidal Echoes' staff, and creating material for the editorial board. This internship strengthened both my professional writing and public speaking, all while forcing me to be in charge of my own deadlines and communicating if I was struggling.

I would say that I met the goals for this internship because I pushed my boundaries by speaking publicly at events and improving my writing by publishing promotional advertisements. One of the pieces I am most proud of was my 49 Writers blog post because it needed to be more creative than a traditional PSA and so I was tasked with becoming a more well-rounded writer. There were certain challenges throughout the process such as: transcribing interviews, ensuring the manuscript was accurate, and formatting all the grading material for the board, however I feel that I was able to meet the challenges and complete the tasks in a timely manner.

I am thankful that I had the chance to intern with Tidal Echoes and look forward to working with the team as we get closer to the launch party for this year's Tidal Echoes release.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: PROCESS & ANALYSIS

On a two-year cycle, we assess every WRTG and ENGL course being taught on all three campuses. In the fall of 2018 we assessed all the WRTG courses, and in the fall of 2019, we assessed all ENGL (Literature and Creative Writing) Courses

During our convocation meeting, when faculty from all three campuses are in the room, we set aside two hours to complete the bulk of our investigations. For each course, we create "assessment groups." For example, this fall we had one group for all of the literature courses and one for all of the creative writing courses. Each group has a faculty chair, one who has taught the course a number of times. Faculty are assigned groups by the Directors of Writing but can elect to change groups if they want.

Prior to convocation, faculty members send the Directors of Writing paper samples with instructor comments and a copy of their syllabi. The Directors of Writing compile these into reading packets and distribute. During the convocation meeting each group reads through the artifacts and compares them to the SLOs for that particular course. Each group then makes a list of observations and/or recommendations. The faculty have found the open conversation during these meetings to be the most valuable aspect of this assessment work. Ideas are shared about assignments, problems are discussed, and new approaches are tried. We find that often we end up wanting to slightly revise course descriptions and/or SLOs. After convocation the chair of each group is responsible for producing a 2-5 page report on the group findings. Emily Wall, as Co-Director of Writing, compiles all the reports and creates a comprehensive assessment report that is then shared with all faculty who teach these courses (including adjunct faculty).

> **Note:** We invite all adjunct faculty to be part of these conversations and find this time to be a good mentoring opportunity.

Literature Course Assessment Report, Convocation, Fall 2019

Group:
Kevin (chair)
Rod
Richard
Will
Stephen
>   Note: Sol Neely was on sabbatical Fall 19

We met for two hours, and began by discussing the 2017 assessment document and our efforts to achieve two goals/: finding ways for students to demonstrate in-depth research skills, and embracing decolonization as an academic goal.

The first goal was complicated to assess, because of the breadth of approaches to literary study demonstrated by this year's sample syllabi and student papers. Two of the sample syllabi focused squarely on secondary sources and independent student research, while the sample papers demonstrated students' ability to sustain their engagement with a set of primary texts. Taken together, however, the syllabi and sample papers represent progress toward the 2017 assessment's goal of improving student research skills. For example, one course tasked students with designing final paper projects around calls for papers in a particular field, and led to a student paper being presented at a conference the following semester. Looking ahead, we need to continue to find ways to to integrate sophisticated research into our UD offerings. Sustaining an ongoing dialogue about what this looks like should remain a core value of assessment.

As for decolonization pedagogies, we feel pretty comfortable with our on-going efforts. Student work reflects this progress: last semester, for example, an ENGL faculty member's student expanded a paper written on the subject into the winning entry in the university-wide writing contest. At the same time, we recognize that some course topics lend themselves better than others to this ongoing effort.

Regarding the assessment process itself, we think improvements can be made for next year:
    1) It will be important to begin by looking at both PLOs and SLOs as we begin the next assessment,
    2) examine a broader array of writing samples (four papers from one class wasn't a representative sample),
    3) and look at all the 300 and 400-level syllabi next time. In particular, we need to have a discussion about the distinctions between 300 and 400-level courses, especially as they pertain to student research and engagement with secondary sources.
    4) Finally, we need to revisit SLOs for ENGL 419, which are currently less concrete than those of other upper division ENGL courses."

Creative Writing Assessment Report Convocation, Fall 2019

Group:
Math (chair)
Emily
Geoff
Allison
Teague

At Convocation on 8/14/2019, the Creative Writing Assessment Workgroup met to assess some artifacts taken from sample student writing.

This year, the Creative Writing assessment workgroup found many successes in our students' writing with regard to their abilities to establish their creative visions, to develop significant details, and to manage the flow of narrative information. We also observed some shortcomings of students' abilities to work within the concrete (rather than the abstract) and to fully articulate a thematic center.

A great deal of our conversation, however, focused on the shortcomings in our assessment process. In the first place, we found it difficult to measure the students' successful achievement of the Student Learning Outcomes by the creative work alone. For example, SLO 1 states that students will be able to "identify all of the literary elements in a poem or story," SLO 3 states that students will be able to "articulate what makes a compelling story or poem and why," and SLO 6 states that students will be able to "explicate a published text as a method of learning technique." These kinds of outcomes are not measurable by polished creative work; they are measured instead through classroom discussions, quizzes, peer-reviews, reflections, and so on. SLO 4, which states that students will be able to "apply techniques of creative writing and elements of craft to original written work and revise work to respond to critiques," is the only outcome that addresses technique and the application of criteria, and we found it to be the only relevant outcome when assessing polished student work—yet even at that, the application is quite vague.

The workgroup addressed this shortcoming in our assessment process and came up with a number of possible solutions. In the first place, in subsequent years, workgroup members could bring a wider range of student artifacts beyond only polished written work. For example, the group could assess peer review samples, reflections, or even discussion posts from online discussion boards. It would also be meaningful to assess the same student creative work across multiple stages from its early workshop draft (along with peer critiques) up through its final polished state—this would allow the workgroup to trace a student's development through a more extensive writing process. For an even fuller context, we could also assess class rubrics, assignment guidelines, and syllabi. This change in procedure does, however, exacerbate a challenge we are already facing in the assessment process: executing a thorough assessment within the time allotted. If we choose to assess a wider range of student artifacts in subsequent years, it is also recommended that we allocate a greater block of time for the assessment.

In addition to expanding the range of source material assessed, our group also recommends revising the creative writing SLOs, particularly for ENGL S261, Introduction to Creative Writing. If the SLOs were to include more direct application criteria, then it would be easier to assess students' creative work, which is truly the course's primary focus in the first place. For example, we considered including an SLO about copyediting skills, one about effective engagement of the audience through structural coherence, one about effective use of details including concrete imagery, and one about using the creative work to articulate a unified concept or theme. Course SLOs could also more closely reflect the English Program Learning Outcomes—or perhaps elements from the Creative Writing Course Assessment Rubric from the AY16 Assessment Plan (attached on page 2 for reference). However, the group also expressed a caution in overloading the course with too many SLOs, so it would therefore be necessary to incorporate new SLOs efficiently while potentially removing less relevant SLOs currently associated with the course. The group recommended submitting the proposal for revised SLOs for ENGL 261 for the current year's Curriculum Committee review.

ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT & PILOT PROGRAMS

WRTG 110: With WRTG 110, we undergo more rigorous assessment. In addition to the above practices, we also assess assignments, SLOs, and student success four times a year, at each portfolio reading. Students in WRTG 110 submit a portfolio of papers at mid-term and at finals time. Students must pass the portfolio to pass the class. Portfolios are read by the Directors of Writing (Emily in Juneau, Rod in Ketchikan) and a panel of faculty, both part-time and tenure-track. Each reading session begins with a "norming" session where everyone participating rates several papers and then compares scores and notes. After the reading, we have an assessment session where we compare assignments, discuss problems, and share ideas. This is a particularly valuable exercise for adjuncts who benefit from the mentoring of more senior faculty. After each of the four reading sessions Professors Landis and Wall collect data on pass rates, and create a mini-report of questions, ideas, problems, analysis of SLOs, etc. and share with all English faculty. We take particular note of any section that has a higher-than-normal no-pass number, and of any students who are taking the class more than once. This conversation often centers around student barriers to success and we brainstorm ways to solve any of the issues we can address. (Note: we did not include last year's reports here but would be happy to share them with anyone interested.)

A New Model for Accelerated Writing

Since 2013, the English Department has offered students who placed in WRTG 090 (pre-college writing) the opportunity to complete two developmental levels of Writing (090 and 110) in a single semester. This resulted in an intensive 8-credit course with rigorous reading and writing assignments accumulating in the formal assessment of the 110 portfolio.

While some aspects of this pilot were successful, other parts of it were not. One thing in particular we struggled with was the pressure to pass students, even if their work was not ready, to avoid them failing 8 credits all at once. It also created workload difficulties. So the faculty agreed we needed to look for innovative ways to continue Accelerated Writing.

Ernestine had noticed that students in her accelerated class typically needed class time to work on reading and writing assignments with her support. It became clear that students do not need eight hours a week of direct instruction, so we adjusted the accelerated course to include a lab component. With the new model, students receive four hours a week of direct instruction and four hours a week of supported lab time in the Writing Center. During the lab time, they complete a set of reading and writing assignments and have both a teacher and a peer tutor there to support them. The Writing Center is a natural fit to host the Accelerated Writing lab because the Center offers exactly what developmental writing students need: access to computers, connection to campus resources, embedded tutor support, and teacher involvement in the reading and writing process.

Our pilot semester of this new model was successful. Students persisted through the course and returned to UAS the following semester.15 out of the 16 students (94%) who enrolled in the course passed WRTG090. 12 (80%) of those students persisted to the end of WRTG110, and all 12 (100%) who submitted portfolios passed. 11 (92%) of those students are currently enrolled in UAS classes for Spring 2020.

Based on the success of the lab model of Accelerated Writing, we are currently piloting the same model in a stand-alone section of WRTG090. We are still early in the semester, but we are seeing some of the same success markers that we did in Fall 2019 Accelerated Writing. Students are maintaining good attendance, are submitting well-polished homework and essay assignments, and are connected to people and organizations on campus, including the Writing Center.

A NOTE TO READERS:

In Fall 2019 Co-Director of Writing and English Program Coordinator Emily Wall met with Dean Tom Thornton. Dean Thornton called the meeting to offer feedback and guidance on the annual program report. In that meeting he requested that the English faculty reduce the length of this report. In response to this request, we've offered here brief highlights and removed the original source reports and other data. We'd be happy to supply those should anyone want to take a look. Thank you.