

## **Educational Program Institutional Effectiveness Report**

**Degree Program:** Bachelor of Arts English, Professional Writing Option

**College/School:** College of Arts and Sciences      **Department:** English

**Submission Date:** January 7, 2010

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to

1. adapt information to the needs of specific audiences.
2. find, evaluate, and appropriately cite information sources.
3. construct and present evidence to support a clear and logical argument.
4. create usable texts in a variety of genres and forms employing multiple media.
5. describe and assess their own development as producers and consumers of texts.

### **Assessment Methods**

All students create an electronic portfolio in ENG 496 Senior Seminar in Writing/Rhetoric. Students select artifacts for the portfolio from work done in that course or in previous courses that demonstrate their understanding of the learning outcomes. Students also write an introduction and a reflection, and display their creativity through the structure of the e-portfolio. For the purposes of program assessment, members of the Professional Writing Committee convene at the close of each academic year to assess one third of the portfolios submitted that year. Each portfolio is scored by all committee members using a rubric. Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4 are assessed in alternate years. Learning Outcome 5 is assessed each year.

### **Summary of Assessment Results**

Program student learning outcomes have been assessed for the last three years using student portfolios and the associated rubric.

SLO 1 was assessed in 2006-2007. In Fall 2006, portfolios were rated as displaying this trait by most raters; however, one rater viewed six of the seven portfolios assessed as not meeting this learning outcome. This anomalous response, however, appeared to be due to a lack of norming among members of the assessment team, which was addressed before the next scoring event. In Spring 2007, raters unanimously agreed that all of these portfolios demonstrate achievement of all aspects of this learning outcome.

SLO 2 was also assessed in 2006-2007. This outcome met with somewhat mixed results. In assessments of portfolios from both semesters, with a few exceptions, raters found evidence of students' work meeting the first two parts of this outcome: the inclusion of primary and/or secondary sources and the use of appropriate and reliable information sources. The third part of this outcome, citation of sources according to professional or scholarly conventions, was more troublesome, with at least one rater of Spring 2007 portfolios deeming seven of the ten portfolios

lacking in this regard. While only three of the portfolios were deemed unsatisfactory for this item by a majority of raters, this lack of correlation indicates either inconsistent standards on the part of the raters or inadequate evidence of this outcome on the part of the students (or, more likely, some combination of both).

SLO 3 is a particularly difficult learning outcome. However, in the first year of scoring, every student showed mastery of at least one sub-section. In the second year of scoring, measures of this learning outcome also were uneven, with all students mastering at least one sub-section, but rarely all, of the sub-sections.

In both years of scoring, evidence on SLO 4 was mixed. While only one student over the period failed to show mastery of any of the subsections of the rubric for this SLO, many demonstrated mastery of only parts. Some portfolios clearly evidenced student struggles with technologies even though many portfolios displayed mastery of every subsection. Faculty felt that additional instruction in this area, especially in the use of electronic media, was needed.

SLO 5 was scored in all three years. Portfolios from 2006-2007 were rated as displaying this trait. (At the time, the rubric was simply yes or no for each dimension. This was changed in the second year to a four-point scale.) However, in discussions, raters said that while some students engaged in significant and serious ways, others treated this segment of the portfolio in a perfunctory manner. After changes were made in 2007-2008, (see below), all but one portfolio was scored as at least satisfactory.

### **Implemented Improvements Based on Assessment Results**

Because of the uneven results in SLO 3, the revised curriculum requires each student to complete either the classical or the more contemporary course in rhetorical theory (ENG 388 or 389), along with two upper-level courses in argument, composition theory, or stylistic analysis (ENG 303, 307, 316, or 318). With these changes, the PW committee hopes that all of our students will evidence at least satisfactory mastery of all parts of this outcome.

Based on evidence of wide disparities in technological proficiency and visual self-awareness (SLO 4), the faculty greatly strengthened the requirements for technology-based writing courses. Effective in Fall 2009 for new majors, all students will now be required to take one of two technology-based courses: ENG 314: Writing and Technology, or ENG 319: Document Design.

Based on the wide range in level of engagement with the reflective process (SLO 5), reflective assignments are now introduced in the gateway course ENG 204, and emphasis is given by every instructor regarding the importance of reflection in the learning process. In addition, the portfolio assignment prompt was altered.

### **Documentation of Implemented Improvements (attached)**

Professional Writing Option Requirements Worksheet  
Sample ENG 204 Instructions Project containing reflection assignment  
Sample ENG 319 Project 2 containing reflection assignment