

Educational Program Institutional Effectiveness Report

Degree Program: Master of Arts Liberal Studies

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences **Department:** Graduate Liberal Studies

Submission Date: September 30, 2009

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate

1. the ability to apply critical theories.
2. the ability to make connections between various theories and ideas.
3. the ability to apply creative solutions to problems.
4. the ability to express oneself articulately in writing.
5. the ability to express oneself articulately orally.
6. the ability to conduct complex research, synthesize it, and argue persuasively in support of a claim based on evidence, OR
the ability to analyze the value and significance of one's own creative work, and to situate it within the context of similar creative works.

Assessment Methods

The culminating experience in the program is GLS 598 Final Project in Graduate Liberal Studies. The final project may take the form of scholarly research or creative work; in either case a written analysis is required as well as an oral presentation. The project is assessed by the director and the reader using a rubric that contains detailed criteria for each SLO. Data is collected by the director and shared annually with program faculty for analysis.

Summary of Assessment Results

Data has been collected on SLOs 1, 3, and 6 for the last three years. SLOs 2, 4, and 5 were added last year, and therefore data for these SLOs has been collected for one year. Results for all SLOs is quite good, with averages on all criteria between 8.0 and 9.3 out of 10. Data for SLOs 3 and 6 has been fairly consistent over the three-year period. However, for SLO 1, the numbers show a steady decrease. However, GLS instructors indicate that the quality of student work on applying critical theories is actually improving. Therefore, it may be that the trend is due to the program faculty tightening the criteria for both final projects and assessment. The most important finding from the first two years of assessments was that, although not yet an official SLO, the greatest need for improvement was in writing skills. When SLO 4 was first assessed in 2008 – 2009, the results were good (ranking third out of the six SLOs). This is probably in response to the change that had already been made to GLS 502 (see below).

Results for 2008 – 2009 were disaggregated between the main campus and Onslow County campus programs. The results were mixed, with main campus averages above Onslow County averages on 3 SLOs, and below on the other 3. The sample size is not sufficient to make any

clear determinations. However, examining the data has highlighted the need to assure that both instruction and assessment is consistent on both campuses.

Implemented Improvements Based on Assessment Results

Based on the first two years of data collection, it was clear that there were additional expectations of graduates that needed to be analyzed. Therefore three new student learning outcomes were added. To improve consistency of scores, the rating scale was turned into a rubric with clear descriptions of each value.

One of these new student learning outcomes was articulate writing. Based on the first two years of data collection, the Advisory Committee agreed that the program needed a greater emphasis on writing. Two ways of addressing this were adopted. GLS 502 Contemporary Issues in Liberal Studies now places an emphasis on writing skills. Course changes include incorporating the following: class discussions about good writing; an increase the number of written assignments; and implementation of the steps in the writing process (draft, review, revise). These changes were implemented in Spring 2007 and Fall 2008. Also to increase student exposure to and practice in writing, additional special topics courses emphasizing writing were added to the curriculum over the last two years:

- GLS 592 The Art of Creative Nonfiction
- GLS 592 Autobiography and Memoir from the Margins: Composing a Self
- GLS 592 Creative Non-Fiction: Memoir and Truth-Telling
- GLS 592 Lying Our Way to the Truth: The Personal Narrative in Poetry
- GLS 592 Writing about Place
- GLS 592 Writing with Style

To assure consistency in both instruction and assessment of main campus and Onslow County campus students, starting in Fall 2010 all online courses, while having two sections, will be taught as an integrated course. The students in both sections will have the same instructor, instruction, readings, and assignments. Online class discussions will include students from both sections.

Documentation of Implemented Improvements (attached)

- GLS 502 Contemporary Issues in Liberal Studies Syllabus
- GLS 592 The Art of Creative Nonfiction Syllabus
- GLS 592 Autobiography and Memoir from the Margins: Composing a Self Syllabus
- GLS 592 Creative Non-Fiction: Memoir and Truth-Telling Syllabus
- GLS 592 Lying Our Way to the Truth: The Personal Narrative in Poetry Syllabus
- GLS 592 Writing about Place Syllabus
- GLS 592 Writing with Style Syllabus
- Memorandum of Understanding for Creating a Fully Online Graduate Liberal Studies Program