Campus Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Unit Name: English Assessment Summary Fall 2009-Spring 2010

What are the student learning outcomes in your unit?
The English Department Writing program has developed a curriculum that focuses on summary, analysis, and synthesis as the essential components of academic writing. Our freshman composition courses (W130/W131) provide extensive instruction and practice in these forms, along with an emphasis on clarity and style, grammatical correctness and syntax, and a knowledge of the conventions of quoting, citing, and documenting sources. We collect samples of summaries and short analyses from all of our full-time and adjunct faculty in order to assess students’ mastery of these foundational skills. At the same time, we assess the effectiveness and clarity of their writing. We request that each instructor submit summaries and analyses that received grades of A, B, and C in their Fall and Spring sections. Doug Swartz and Lou Ann Karabel assemble the materials and review the work based on a set of criteria. For an overview, we look at the accuracy, clarity, and completeness of the summary, along with correctness and readability. With the analyses, we will be looking for well-formulated and strong theses and how well they are supported by pertinent. From this review, we develop ideas of how we can improve instruction in these basic forms.

We will continue to review how well students manage the longer and more complex synthesis assignments from our W131 sections. We are working on an assessment plan for W231.

As they approach graduation, English majors are asked to create a portfolio. This includes one written paper from each literature and writing class taken, with an initial letter or essay in which the student identifies his or her sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Students should also use this essay to reflect back on their own progress through the major. The portfolio is presented to two professors who conduct an exit interview in which these strengths and weaknesses, as well as notable experiences and suggestions, are identified and discussed. Information from these interviews is reported back to the Department and integrated into our ongoing discussion of goals. For example, student feedback has led to a reassessment of scheduling evening classes, to our offering such summer classes as Japanese or Brazilian literature, and to our adding more critical theory to our literature classes. Following the schedule of the school year and the timing for graduation, the exit interviews are usually conducted in the late spring; goals should be set in the fall and evaluated in the spring. Each English major takes a capstone course, usually in the senior year, which can vary its focus from year to, but which uses similar assignments, specifically extensive research and documentation. We are working to evaluate the experience of non-majors in English classes.

Which outcome did you assess this academic year?

| Summarizing in writing classes, and literary analysis of a short work in literature classes. |
|---|---|

How did you assess their skills before, during and / or at the end of the semester / academic
In the Spring, the composition program collects samples from teachers in the Stretch program of short visual analyses of photographs and cartoons and summaries of essays. We are looking for a clear focus and thesis in the analyses, and the effective use of visual details in developing and supporting that thesis. In the summaries, we are looking for accuracy, completeness, and readability. Based on a preliminary reading of these essays that suggested that instructors were doing different things with these assignments, we have decided to collect another set of analyses and summaries with more specific criteria about, for instance, objects of analysis and the length of summaries.

Please summarize the data you have collected this semester / academic year.

We have collected essays on a single poem from each literature class. We met to assess the strengths and weaknesses of these pieces of writing, and used the results to set our goals for improvement for the coming year.

Please describe any programmatic changes you have made or are planning to make based on the data you have collected.

Our results indicate that students benefit significantly from taking the introductory laboratory along with the introductory Earth Science lecture course. Within the Department of Geosciences, we are currently discussing the feasibility of requiring all Earth Science students to enroll in the laboratory.

**Note:** Please use this template to provide the responses to the prompts above.**