

2003/2004 STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
ANNUAL REPORT

Program name: Department of English

Level: B.A.

College: Arts and Letters

Department: English

Date Submitted: January 26, 2006

Person who prepared report: Ron Chen

I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

In each quarter of 2004-2005, we continued to offer English 516, Senior Project, which is our one-unit course that all English majors are required to complete and our principal instrument for assessing our undergraduate program. For this course, students prepare a portfolio of their work as an English major, consisting of five papers or examination responses they have written in other courses in the major and a reflective essay that demonstrates how the course work has enabled the student to meet the stated goals of the major. The portfolios were then read by teams of faculty members; roughly one-third of the full-time faculty read each quarter so that over the year nearly all the full-timers participated. Following each portfolio reading, the group of readers reported to the full department the results of the reading, including their discussion of how well the students were addressing each of our goals. Participants in one or more of the grading sessions included 28 full-time members of the department on the San Bernardino campus and five part-time lecturers at the Palm Desert Campus.

II. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Because of the familiarity of the department members with the portfolios and the scoring process, norming for each session has become unnecessary. It is significant that members of the department now know what to expect in the students' portfolios. This being the sixth time that PDC faculty have participated, the norming process there was unnecessary also. The scoring was holistic, using a 4-point scale. Each portfolio then received two readings and consequently a combined score of 2 through 8. Students whose portfolios received a 4 or better passed the course, those with portfolios receiving a 3 had to revise and resubmit their work. If there had been any with a score of 2, they would have failed the course. As in the past, the portfolios of the vast majority of students received a passing score, and only a few were required to revise and resubmit. The totals this year were as follows:

Credit (score of 4-6):	102
Credit with distinction (7-8):	18
Credit after rewrite (3)	1
No credit (portfolio not completed):	0
Incomplete:	0

We are happy that the rate of rewrite and no credit have finally come to zero, and there was only

one Credit after Rewrite (Winter 04). This is clear indication that outcomes assessment has been more and more accepted by students. In fact, we feel that it has now become part of the department's culture.

As in previous years, it is apparent that our students understand and meet the goals of the English major. Moreover, the agreement rate among the readers was extremely high.

It is important to mention that the purpose of the scoring process is not to re-grade the papers and exams in the portfolios. The scorers focus on the reflective essay and review the course work only briefly to gain a sense of how it accomplishes what the student claims.

III. IMPLEMENTATION: USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

As a direct result of our experience with this project, we have added English 385--Literary Theory and Criticism--as a course requirement to the literature track of the major and for those in our other two tracks who are going on for their single-subject credential. We also highly recommend this course to students in our other tracks who are considering going on to graduate work in English. This year, the students' comments on meeting the "theory goal" (To know that literature can be studied in a variety of ways and to be familiar with some of these critical approaches") have shown further improvement over the 2003-2004 year. They are much more adept in describing their understanding of literary theories than students were several years ago.

Goal I--"To be familiar with the major writers, periods, and genres of English and American literature, and to be able to place important works and genres in their historical context"--continues to be somewhat problematic, due to its seemingly endless scope. We have always had issues with this goal but do not seem able to figure out what to do.

The Writing Goal-- "To understand writing as process and, in their own writing, to demonstrate an awareness of audience, purpose, and various rhetorical forms as well as a high level of control of the conventions of standard written English"--still lacks depth, according to some faculty readers, most of them are composition specialists. They felt that students were merely using catch words or simply rephrasing the language in the Goals and Objectives, without a necessary understanding of them or a necessary demonstration of how it is met (except that they revised their papers in some classes).

The linguistics goal has likewise proven elusive. Despite the fact that we now require an additional piece--from four to five, one of which has to be from a linguistics class--our linguistics faculty were still not entirely satisfied, noting that most students did not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the subject.

We continue to find that reading and scoring the portfolios provides a useful perspective on our graduating majors. The reading sessions are a constructive setting for the participating faculty members to come together and think about our program. We have had helpful discussions about nearly all the goals, and the experience clearly helps us understand what our students are learning

in our program and helps us see areas that may need to be modified. The instructors who teach the course find that most students regard the project as a useful mechanism for reflecting on their English majors.

IV. TIME-LINE AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

In the coming year, we will continue to offer 516 to our senior English majors. Their completion of a portfolio appears to be a productive activity that helps them reflect on what they have learned in the major. And our system of rotating our faculty as readers of the portfolios has proved to be a valuable way for the entire full-time faculty to have first-hand experience in the assessment process. In the several years that we have been carrying out the assessment, we have examined most of our eight goals, and in the case of Goal III we have changed our requirements for the major.

In 2005-2006, we plan to revise our goals and their corresponding objectives to cater to the new English major as well as the new subject matter competence waiver program (for credential-bound students), both of which are in 2005-2006 catalog. The following are likely results:

1. In the Mission Statement, foreground the credential subject matter program, by stating that teacher preparation is an important mission of our undergraduate programs.
2. Either add one goal for credential students that reflects the new requirements in the CCTC standards such as journalism, acting, media, creative writing, field experience, and literacy or include these elements in Goal VII, our “Credential Goal.”
3. Add objectives in relation to (2).

At the same time, we will continue to focus on issues in the major that the portfolios and our assessment of them bring to the surface. We will also re-examine the structure of the course to determine if it is providing us with the most effective assessment information.