English Program Assessment, 2014-2016 Cycle

Status Report, March 2015

Introduction and overview:

The CAS English Program began its current cycle of program review in Fall 2014. The last cycle of program review ended in 2011; due to turnover and other institutional factors, the English Program did not receive feedback on its outcomes report until June 2014, so its response to those recommendations are being incorporated into the current review cycle. (The full text of the response to the last program review is appended to the end of this status report). The English Program expects to be in active program review through Spring 2016.

The English Program at Trinity offers a major and minor, as well as a variety of General Education courses. English Program faculty members also participate in the delivery of Critical Reading (CRS) courses. The program currently has in the neighborhood of 15 majors and 15 minors, which is healthy in comparison to some previous years. The early stages of review have revealed that not all the majors are identified in Trinity’s institutional records, so correcting this will be a new objective for the assessment cycle.

In terms of Gen Ed, all first year students and some transfer students in the College must take Engl. 107, College Composition, which means the program serves approximately 300 students a year in that course. All Trinity students are also required to take a literature course as part of their Gen Ed requirements in the humanities. In Spring 2015, approximately 100 students enrolled in English courses filling a Gen Ed requirement, the bulk residing in Engl. 150, Writing about Literature.

In terms of assessing student learning outcomes, the English Program is focusing on a single programmatic goal, goal two, which states: “Students will develop facility in original writing in various genres, particularly argumentative writing.” Assessment of learning outcomes pursuant to goal two will occur across both Gen Ed and major course categories. Collection of sample papers in relevant courses began in Fall 2014 and continues in Spring 2015. The English faculty will read these papers over the summer, using the AAC&U “Rubric for Written Communication” to assess demonstrated proficiency.

The program is also undertaking several administrative assessments to evaluate its success in supporting majors and minors, specifically. Projects currently underway include: one, an analysis of transcripts to see whether students are following the program’s recommended sequencing of courses; two, a review of syllabi for Engl. 107 and Engl. 150 aimed at identifying clarity and consistency of stated goals, objectives, and requirements across multiple sections of those courses; and three, an analysis of the delivery and outcomes in the program’s film courses. The program has also developed a preliminary curriculum map, appended below, as well as an updated advising sheet.

A more detailed report on each of the initiatives mentioned above follows. The assessment plan further includes several questions/issues which we are only beginning to explore at this point, including conversion of Engl. 107 to a mastery grading model, the utility of the program’s “world literature” requirement, the feasibility of developing a meaningful internship/practicum component for the major, and the redevelopment of Engl. 389, Critical Theory, to better serve the needs of upper-level English majors and minors.

**Assessment of Goal Two, Writing Proficiency:**

As stated earlier, the English Program is focusing its current two-year program review cycle on assessment of Goal 2, writing proficiency. Trinity’s General Education Curriculum features two 100-level English courses aimed at improving students’ writing proficiency, ENGL 107 (College Composition) and ENGL 150 (Writing About Literature). Most Trinity students who enter the College as first-year students will take both of these courses.

As part of the current cycle of program review, the English Program is collecting sample essays from several sections of ENGL 107 and 150. The collection process began in fall 2014 and will continue throughout the two-year program review cycle. The department faculty will gather in May 2015 and 2016 to review these essays on a blinded basis (i.e., students’ names will be removed), using a rubric for writing proficiency promulgated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities to determine whether the courses are meeting their stated goals and objectives vis a vis writing proficiency. The English Program will also assess the 107 essays to consider whether mastery grading (i.e., C or better would be required for students to pass the course) should be implemented.

As part of program growth and evolution, the English Program review cycle is targeting as an objective more professional development of faculty and adjuncts vis a vis the teaching of composition, as well as raising of Trinity’s profile as an acknowledged site for innovative and effective writing instruction. One of the faculty members, Wendy Bilen, is collecting data on facilitated peer conferences; she will present at the Student Success in College Writing conference in Savannah, Georgia, on April 18.

Professor Bilen also continues to collect data on student acquisition of citation skills with the goal of devising some effective pedagogy and resources, not only for the English department but also for the broader campus. The goal is to produce in-house resources such as slides, checklists and handouts, for use within the Trinity community. This effort contributes to the goal of producing “portable” resources that can be used in various courses across the curriculum, ideally reinforcing core composition concepts for students by making them more standardized across the institution and thereby more transparent and accessible.

The program is undertaking several other assessment projects focused primarily on majors and minors. For example, English is currently surveying English majors and minors to determine whether they are participating in or plan to participate in an internship. This is part of an initiative to re-examine the role of the internship within the major and determine whether to include it as a requirement. This project has implications for upper level English courses, in terms of whether these courses adequately prepare students for writing skills required in the workplace.

**Analysis of English Major Transcripts:**

As of Spring 2015, the English department has 15 majors, including the following students:

Kathya Bello-Bortello

Kendra Colbert

Tynelle Cooper

Rebecca Davis

Alanna Fields

Tierra Graves

Kayvona Hewitt

Emma Kamara

Dominique Magruder

Ricka’e McCotter

Sayra Molina (graduated January 2015)

Naysia Phifer

Rachel Pickarski

Tijisha Richardson

Patrice Sykes

The program has undertaken an initial transcript analysis of course sequencing for English majors based on the nine declared students in Fall 2014. Three of these students are transfer students. Three took English 105 as their first composition course. Three took English 107 as their first composition course. For the purpose of this analysis, the students’ “first semester” is the first semester in which they attempt a literature course.

Of the nine students studied, eight took only one English course in their first semester. The other student, a transfer, enrolled in two 300-level courses.

Only 44% of the majors began the major with English 150. However, this number also includes transfer students who earned credit for advanced composition classes at other universities. The underclasswoman who successfully completed the 400-level major figures class is an outlier.

In the first semester, course enrollments were distributed as follows:

4 ENGL 150

1 creative writing course

2 200-level major authors (surveys)

2 300-level major requirements

1 400-level major requirement

In their second semester of the major, seven of the nine students took two or more English courses. Five students took three or more.

In the second semester:

1 ENGL 150

2 creative writing courses

6 200-level major authors (surveys)

7 200-level electives

2 300-level major requirements (1 literary theory)

1 400-level major requirement

In their third semester, all nine students took two or more English courses in the third semester. Only two took three or more.

In the third semester:

1 ENGL 150

2 100-level electives

2 creative writing courses

6 200-level major authors (surveys)

4 200-level electives

4 300-level major requirements (1 literary theory)

2 400-level requirements

In the students’ fourth semester, all students took two or more classes. Three students took three or more.

1 creative writing course

3 survey courses

4 200-level electives

5 300-level major requirements (1 literary theory)

3 400-level major requirements

Only 3 students have enough data to analyze the 5th semester.

This analysis suggests that students are for the most part taking courses in the desired sequence.

**Review of Syllabi, Fall 2014**

Three fall 2014 course syllabi from ENGL 150, Writing About Literature, were reviewed. All instructors teaching ENGL 150 in the fall responded; two were adjunct professors, one a full-time professor.

Syllabi were reviewed for

* Stated goals
* Major papers:
  + Total number
  + Total pages
  + Types of papers.

Findings are summarized below.

Goals are stated. All three sections list goals and objectives on page 1, section A (“Course Goals and Objectives”), section B (“Why am I here?”), section C (“In this course, we will…”).

Several goals are held in common, substantially and sometimes in common language. Those are:

* Read, comprehend, discuss literary texts
* Build argumentative claims and support theses about literature in papers.

Consensus ended there. Goals mentioned by some but not all instructors included:

* Identify various literary genres and their elements
* Apply elements of genre to analyzing individual texts
* Learn about the power of literature
* Push your writing and use of research (in this case, literary criticism) to a higher level
* Use conventions of literary papers

Recommendation: The English faculty should develop standardized goals and objectives for all ENGL 150 sections.

The number of papers ranged from four to five, and stated page requirements were consistent at 17-18.

While papers are labeled differently, instructors consistently require a paper for each of three genres (fiction, poetry, drama). One paper consistently requires “use of scholarly sources.”

Recommendation: That English faculty develop objectives for one or two papers that remain consistent across sections. These objectives should be informed by program and General Education goals, and will yield opportunities for consistent assessment. Professor Bilen has already put for a proposal for such standards, which the English Program will consult.

Three fall 2014 course syllabi from ENGL 107, College Composition, were reviewed. Two were from adjunct professors, one a full-time professor.

Syllabi were reviewed for

* Stated goals
* Major papers:
  + Total number
  + Total pages
  + Types of papers.

Findings are summarized below.

Goals are stated. All three sections list goals and objectives, though under different headings (including “After all this work, what will I learn?”)

Several goals are held in common, substantially and sometimes in common language. Those are:

* Improved skill in critical reading
* Improved skill in discussion
* Improved skill in (written) response
* Conceiving, drafting, and revising short essays
* Engaging in peer feedback as part of the revision process
* Locating and using information sources
* Incorporating researched material into essays
* Improving sentence style and clarity.

Recommendation: That English faculty revisit ENGL 107 goals, standardizing a core set of goals, standardizing the language with which said goals are stated,and iterating standardized objectives as well as a commonly agreed upon method of assessing learning outcomes for a designated group of objectives.

The number of papers ranged from three to five. Graded steps in writing process and graded revisions were required, but not consistently among sections. A paper involving academic research is consistently assigned between sections; the standards for that research are not as apparent.

Recommendation: That English faculty discuss standardization strategies for core components, reaching agreement upon at least one paper assignment to be duplicated in all sections, and clarifying the objectives, requirements, terminology, and resources involved in a research paper. Professor Bilen has already put for a proposal for such standards, which the English Program will consult.

Appendices

1. Response to English Program Assessment Report

June 2014

**Introduction**

The description of the English program provides an overview of its purpose and explains ways in which it serves the College of Arts and Sciences. Courses within the program are designed to improve students’ writing skills, meet General Education requirements, and to meet the requirements for a major or minor in English. The summary outlines the number of faculty members, as well as the number of students who are served by the program.

*Suggestions for Improvement in the Introductory Presentation****:***

* Course numbers are listed (ex. 105, 107, 150, 220, 381), but not the names of the courses. It would be helpful to outside readers to provide the names of the courses and indicate whether they are General Education, Major, or Minor courses – or indeed what role they play in the program (this can be done in a table or appendix; it would also be accomplished with a curriculum map).
* Create a table to report the following: 1) an estimate of the overall number of students served in the English program (ie, Gen Ed enrollments in major courses for the past four semesters, etc.); 2) the number of majors and minors (separately); 3) the number of students who graduated with a degree in English since the last Middle States Review.
* The report states that changes were made to the program to make it “more attractive” as a major. Explain any data-driven changes to the major. Were any changes made after analyzing the results of the data collected in the courses?

**Program Goals and Objectives**

The goals of the English program are well-aligned with those of the university and the College of Arts and Sciences, and are grounded in the university mission. Appropriate assessments have been developed to determine if the goals and objectives are met by students in some of the courses, but not in others.

*Suggestions for Improvement in Assessing Student Learning Outcomes for Goals and Objectives:*

* Designate a number for each goal to ensure consistency in your report. The goals do not seem to correlate with those listed in the Excel spreadsheet on the UCAP Resource page as they are written - for example, goal 7 on the spreadsheet differs both on the spreadsheet and in the report. It is unclear whether there are seven or eight goals in the program. Also, ensure the goals are consistently written.
* Create a table with the goals, objectives, and assessments, in addition to listing them in the narrative. Visual representation of the materials will help assessment stakeholders summarize information.
* **Data and Analysis**

Four courses were selected to assess whether the goals and objectives of the program were met. Data were collected and analyzed to measure student learning outcomes as well as to determine if any changes needed to be made to the program to meet the goals.

*Suggestions for Improvement in Data and Analysis:*

* The assessments should measure whether students met program goals and objectives, in addition to course objectives. Some of the assessments do this, but others do not.
* It would be helpful to provide a detailed description of each assessment and what it is designed to measure. Include sample rubrics so it is clear what the assessments measured and how they were scored.
* What does 71% mean in terms of whether or not the students met the program goals and objectives? For example, indicate the number of students who met the program goals and objectives, as well as the number of students who did not.

**Conclusions**

Data collected in two of selected courses for assessment yielded pertinent information regarding whether the students met program goals and objectives. The other two courses provided interesting information which led to potential course changes, but these data did not directly provide evidence that the goals and objectives of the program were met by students in these courses.

*Overall Suggestions for Improvement:*

* Make sure the assessments provide a valid measure of whether the students in the English program meet the goals and objectives of the program.
* Provide tables with assessment and data.

The English Program has put forth a valiant initial effort to define its goals and objectives, create curricular coherence, select meaningful assessments and demonstrate student learning outcomes. It is also clear that the program uses assessment of student learning outcomes to inform curricular change. The English Program has a unique assessment challenge in that it must measure student learning outcomes not only for its major courses but also for the foundational writing courses as well as other service courses in the General Education Curriculum. This is neither a small nor insignificant project! With the 2011 assessment as a foundation, the English program is well poised to move forward into its next assessment cycle. The key outcome of this project is to improve student learning outcomes through curricular recommendations and revisions, which the English program has historically done most effectively. Telling this very compelling story could form the focus of the next assessment. We know that the English program is constantly seeking to make its curriculum a more effective vehicle for learning for ALL Trinity’s students – we look forward to reading about that process in the next assessment report!

1. Curriculum Map

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Goals: Students will** | **ENG**  **107** | **ENGL 150** | **English Electives** | **Global Literature** | **Surveys** | **Major Genres** | **Major Figures** | **Lit/Crit Theory** | **Senior Seminar** |
| **1. Read, understand, analyze texts** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
| **2. Develop facility in writing, especially argumentative essays, for multiple audiences** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
| **3. Understand the role literature has played in human culture throughout history** | **--** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
| **4. Develop familiarity with literary and film conventions** | **--** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
| **5.Learn and practice the conventions of literary research** | **--** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
| **6. Explore and develop their own values (social justice/race/gender) through the study of literature** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*** | **\*\*\*** | **\*\*\*** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**\* introduced**

**\*\* reinforced**

**\*\*\* mastered**