Fall 2006/Spring 2007 English Department Writing Assessment Report

Prepared by the Writing Assessment Committee

Narrative Submission:

1. **What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in the AY ending June 30?**

   In 2005/2006, the Writing Assessment Committee scored essays from 198T: Senior Seminar and 120A: Advanced Composition, using a rubric based on the English Department Writing Standards. The purpose was to focus on the two courses required of all English majors in order to get a sense of our students’ writing abilities, with the goal that what we found could help inform the way we teach. In 2006/2007, the Writing Assessment Committee used the information from that assessment to “close the loop” and begin taking actions to improve teaching and learning based on the information we gathered from our assessment.

2. **How did you assess these learning outcomes?**

   **Describe the measures you used and the information gathered.** We used the data collected in 2005-2006 based on an evaluation of the essays from 198T and 120A and using the rubric. What we found was consistent with previous assessments: students were successful at close reading of primary texts, but struggled with analyzing and integrating secondary sources and writing complex arguments.

3. **As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?**

   a. **If so, what are those changes?**

      In fall of 2006, the Writing Assessment Committee created a final draft of the revised learning outcomes for 120A and submitted these to the department to be disseminated to all instructors teaching 120A in the future. (see attached)

      In spring of 2007, the Writing Assessment Committee revised the course description for 120A to reflect the new learning outcomes. (see attached)

   b. **How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?** The department will once again collect essays from Engl 120A and 198T and assess them at the department retreat.

4. **Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics, course alignment?**

   The WASC Standards for Assessment states that what we learn from assessment should be “applied to the design of curricula” and to “the design and practice of pedagogy.” In her fall 2006 assessment workshop at Sacramento State, Mary Allen argued that after collecting data, it’s critical to close the loop through
“collective reflection and action.” The Writing Assessment Committee feels that evaluating student writing is an important part of assessment and should continue, but the most important aspect of assessment should be improved teaching and learning, and this requires a focus on closing the assessment loop.

Activities for Closing the Assessment Loop

- In fall of 2006, the Writing Assessment Committee organized a retreat for 120A instructors. At the retreat instructors discussed the statement of shared learning outcomes for 120A and created a revised course description for 120A based on these learning outcomes. 120A instructors agreed that we would include a version of the revised course description and learning outcomes on all 120A course syllabi to create more consistency across sections. 120A instructors also shared ideas for writing assignments and activities, and agreed to take a greater role in assessment in the future by conducting group readings of high, medium, and low essays.
- In spring of 2007, the Writing Assessment Committee began collecting syllabi, rubrics, writing assignments, etc. from 120A instructors to be put on a 120A course website. This website will be published by the fall of 2007 and serve as a resource for 120A instructors.
- The department also engaged in its full Program Review which will most likely yield areas of assessment.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

- The Writing Assessment Committee will hold a retreat for present and future 120A and 198T instructors before the fall semester. At the retreat, we will discuss learning outcomes, rubrics, and look at example student essays.
- The Writing Assessment Committee will work with the 198T instructors to draft a statement of learning outcomes.
- The Writing Assessment Committee will begin to collect materials from 198T instructors for a resource website similar to the 120A website.
- A representative of the Writing Assessment Committee will ask 198T and 120A instructors to copy high, medium, and low essays and meet to discuss the essays as a group.
- The department will also address the recommendations from its 2006-2007 Program Review which are likely to include the development of additional learning outcomes in specific areas which we will then consider for further assessment plans.
120A Course Goals

- Students will engage in research focused on academic inquiry: they will evaluate, analyze, and interpret a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to enter into scholarly conversations; learn how to integrate primary and secondary sources into their texts; and practice a variety of research methods and rhetorical strategies.

- Students will read, analyze, and interpret a range of challenging and complex texts, which may include print, visual, electronic, and spoken discourse.

- Students will be challenged to move beyond formulaic writing and practice the rhetorical strategies appropriate to a course in advanced composition: writing for a variety of audiences, a variety of purposes, and in a variety of genres, which may include both print and electronic forms of discourse.

- Students will engage in a writing process which will include extensive revision and feedback from both peers and instructors during the writing process.

- Students will reflect on their own writing process and gain an awareness of themselves as writers and researchers.

- Student writing will be the focus of the course: students will learn more about themselves as critical consumers and producers of texts.

New 120A Course Description

**ENGL120A. Advanced Composition.** ENGL120A is an intensive writing workshop in which student writing is the focus. Students will engage in a writing process that will include feedback from peers and instructors throughout the process. This writing process may occur in a variety of rhetorical situations and genres. Through reflection on their writing and their writing processes, students will gain an awareness of themselves as writers. By the end of the course students will complete an extensive research project focused on academic inquiry. ENGL120A is a requirement for English majors. Prerequisite: WPE placement into a Writing Intensive course; should be taken junior year. 3 units.