English Department Assessment Report 2011

At the conclusion of the 2010-2011 year, the English department’s assessment committee has new data to report as well as discussion and response to past data. This year marks the first year we have included minors in the standard assessment.

We administered the English department assessment exam on 17 April 2011 to our graduating seniors, giving us data from (now) three graduating classes. As we indicated in our assessment report submitted 1 October 2009, the assessment committee intends to refrain from reviewing and analyzing this data extensively until the fall of 2011 (after this spring’s results become available to the entire department). However, because we had a larger and more complete data set available in the fall of 2010, the department engaged in a preliminary discussion of the results with a view to enhancing our curriculum. In our department meeting of Sept. 21, we noted that there has been a general improvement in all areas. We discussed potential reasons for the improvement including a better awareness of the test among students and attempts within the courses to cover particularly problematic areas.

Now that the 2011 senior English majors have completed the exam, we will take a look at the cumulative data at our first meeting in the fall, paying particular attention to the questions we flagged (that subset of questions that either over 89% or under 33% of the students answered incorrectly) and attempting to discern and interpret any relevant patterns. As was the case last year, almost all of our graduating seniors took the exam, a success rate that is, at least in part, a product of the ongoing development of a culture of assessment within the department. The department also continues to assess 151, 253, 255, 257, 258, and 261 for the textual analysis mode and is planning to make use of that data for the purposes of departmental assessment as well.

Spring 2011 saw the continued beginning of building an assessment program for the English major with an emphasis in creative writing. Seniors with an emphasis in creative writing took the department exam, and Helena Mesa and Danit Brown continued their assessment tool in English 205, the entry-level creative writing course, building a data set that will be large to use effectively by the fall of 2012.

In the fall 2010, the committee decided to extend the standard assessment exam to the minor, since students in the minor also take a number of survey classes, and these constitute a core (albeit a smaller core) as they do for the major. Because there are fewer minors than majors, it may take several years to accumulate a meaningful sample from the minor assessment.