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English Department Assessment

Plan of Action

Having recently spent two years reevaluating and revising its major, examining a national variety of models, consulting current students as well as the full faculty, and developing three new courses, including a three-term Foundations of the English Major sequence (ENG 301-2-3), English is excellently positioned to benefit from implementing regular assessment procedures. For this first cycle the Curriculum Committee will assess the first and third of the department's Learning Outcomes: our students' ability to "read literary and/or cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions" and to "perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts." We will gather final essays (submitted electronically) that have been produced in two consecutive terms of the new Foundations sequence (ENG 302 and 303) by a randomly selected group of students enrolled in both. Using a rubric we have developed each committee member will read and score the essays. After we analyze the results the committee chair will distribute them (along with our evaluation) to the three-professor teaching team, who will share them with the successor team. As the designated oversight body for this and another newly developed course (ENG 205 Genre), the Curriculum Committee will serve as an additional reservoir of institutional memory for this assessment--in addition, that is, to the instructor teams.

For several reasons, this course provides a uniquely suited means of assessing the selected learning outcomes. In content, assignment design, scope, and variety of media studied (visual and print) the Foundations sequence epitomizes the redesigned English Major. In these respects it is representative. As a year-long sequence taught by the same team of instructors (who serve for two years), the course also represents an exciting pedagogical experiment and a substantial department investment in its new major, one we would want to assess in any case. Finally, because the course will enable the committee to sample the same students' work in sequential courses taught by the same instructor team, this assessment should provide a unique temporal snapshot of outcome performance.

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