

Department of English  
**2010-2011 Annual Assessment Update**

- I. Mission Statement, Program Goals, Student Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Map, and Multi-Year Assessment Plan
- Locations in on-line Program Review “share”:
- A. Mission Statement and Program Goals  
smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/guiding documents/mission-student learning outcomes
  - B. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)  
smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/Guiding Documents/Program Learning Outcomes
  - C. Curriculum Map smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/Guiding Documents/Curriculum Chart
  - D. Multi-Year Assessment Plan  
smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/Guiding Documents/Multi-Year Assessment Plans/Multi-Year Assessment Plan 2005-2010; see also  
smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/Guiding Documents/List of Current Projects with proposed timeline/

II. Follow-Up on Action Items Identified in Previous Report

**Item 1:**

- A. *Action:* Comply with standards for Human Subject Research: remove names of students whose essays were evaluated in Bibliographic essay evaluation and the names of the faculty raters (see Appendix M of Six-Year Program Review Report). Assigned to: Eliane Yochum.
- B. *Brief Update:* Changes made to on-line document archives following Nov. 3, 2010 meeting with DCEE. (See  
smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\_review/english/)

**Item 2:**

- A. *Action:* Evaluate, streamline and tighten new mission statement. Assigned to: Chair and department members.
- B. *Brief Update:* On Nov. 16, 2010, the Department revised our mission statement and unanimously approved it. The new approved text is as follows:

Department of English

MISSION STATEMENT

**The study of language and literature offers practice in the discipline of paying attention to the beauty and brokenness of the created order as students learn to read carefully, think critically, and write with rhetorical sensitivity.**

As our students explore various genres across various centuries, they will investigate the interplay of form and content as well as the

interaction of text and historical context. As they wrestle with the ethical questions implicit in texts, they will examine their own assumptions, even as they witness an expansion of their sympathies. As they gain new knowledge of the understanding and use of the English language, our students will view the expressive capacity of English, in all its complexity, as an invaluable gift of which they are to be faithful stewards.

(See [smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\\_review/english/Guiding Documents/Mission Statement and Student Learning Outcomes/Mission-Student Learning Outcomes](smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program_review/english/Guiding Documents/Mission Statement and Student Learning Outcomes/Mission-Student Learning Outcomes))

- C. *Additional issues:* We decided as a department that not all of us understood or accepted what was implied in the original words : “. . . as [students] encounter the incarnational value of literary art, an art that can represent God’s creative reality.” Our compromise was to accept the words bold-faced above, and to print the bold-faced sentence as a separate first paragraph. In March, we decided to print the new mission statement in the English Department section of the 2011-2012 college catalog where registering students would encounter it. In the 2011-2012 academic year, we plan to post it with our PLOs and SLOs on the department website.

**Item 3:**

- A. *Action:* Analyze and act upon results of alumni surveys. Assigned to: Steve Cook and Paul Willis (survey and analyze) and department (discuss).
- B. *Brief update:* Survey results were posted to the department server by October 5; faculty were urged to read them. On December 10, Cook and Willis were assigned to analyze survey results. On March 22 they brought their findings to the department for discussion. Of the 79 alums from 2003-2009 who received the English alumni survey, 61 responded. Alumni were asked to comment discursively by e-mail on the longer term effects of their English education, under these five categories:
1. Empathy, connection with others
  2. Faith perspective
  3. Analytical ability
  4. Effective communication and careful writing
  5. Career preparation

The strongest response was in the “empathy” category, with students saying they wanted to carry forward the intimacy and care they received in the department. The department was pleased with the warmth, concreteness, and substance of the respondents’ appreciations for the educations they had received in the department. We were impressed and gratified to see the many career paths for which their English majors had prepared them. Respondents offered several suggestions, including these:

1. require a fourth-year internship of all students,
2. offer a business writing course, and
3. offer more practice of analysis in our instruction.

In its discussion, department members committed themselves in our advising

1. to remind students to explore the Major Honors Project option,
2. to explore internship possibilities, and
3. to continue workshops concerning career options for English majors.

Encouraged by our alumni survey respondents, we also

1. Launched a new Literary Society, with Prof. Carolyn Weber as faculty advisor, thus increasing cohesion and personal connections in our scholarly community. The Literary Society met at least half a dozen times during the course of the year, sponsored workshops and readings and discussions, and each time drew together 12-30 students both from inside and outside the major, and at all grade levels;
  2. Purchased and posted a glassed-in bulletin board for mounting photos of our majors in Reynolds Hall
  3. Held two "Composition Pedagogy" workshops in the fall, organized by Prof. Skripsky. Skripsky, Larsen Hoeckley, Friedman, and VanderMey shared best practices with other members of the department, thus strengthening our teaching of analytical thinking in composition; and
  4. Held two evening panel discussions on Christian approaches to feminism, thus fostering interdisciplinary discussion. The evenings, organized and led by Profs. Skripsky and Friedman, were each attended by 50+ faculty and students.
  5. Sponsored an open reading in Clark Hall Lounge called "(Be)longings" for students wrestling with questions of identity, desire, and sexual orientation (March, 2011)
- C. *Additional issues:* The survey reinforced our sense that students needed counsel on career options for English majors. In October, accordingly, we offered a workshop on career options for English majors. It was led by Skripsky, Friedman, and Dana Alexander of Career and Life Planning, with local alumni speaking about their careers. The department debriefed the event and decided that we should hold the workshop again, this time including alumni reporting a wider and more encouraging array of experiences.

**Item 3:**

- A. *Action item:* Introduce changes based on analysis of pre- and post-tests for ENG-046. Assigned to: Instructors for ENG-046 and ENG-047 (Larsen Hoeckley and Friedman)
- B. *Brief update:* We did not assess student performance on pre-and post-tests in ENG-046 or ENG-047 in 2010-2011. We will return to testing within the next two years if the instructors in ENG-046 can address the issues mentioned in "C" below. Whether and how to revise the test will be placed on the department's agenda for Fall, 2011.
- C. *Additional issues:* We have data from several years past, but the data was compromised in several ways, as spelled out in our Six-Year Report. Further, we acknowledge per the DCEE's advice that the number of questions on the test (50-80) is excessive, that the questions do not focus enough on students' higher-order cognitive abilities, and that the sample size is too large. The tests still have some pedagogical value. However, we agree that we should use the test for assessment only if we can compose questions that focus on then-current SLOs and meet the objections above, sampling only those students, if any, who are at the "mastery" level. Since most students in ENG-046 and -047 are not at senior or "mastery" level, we may need to build up a sample group

over several years. We might also decide to use essay questions or self-assessments rather than multiple-choice questions.

**Item 4:**

- A. *Action item:* Explain the impact of the round-robin e-mail conversation “Slouching Toward Bethlehem” on our mission statement, assessment priorities, or changes in curriculum or pedagogy. Assigned to: Chair.
- B. *Brief update:* All members of the department read this document in 2007. The conversation was circulated again in the Six-Year Report in Fall, 2010. The conversation was valuable to the department for providing mutual encouragement, mutual awareness, and mutual challenge, and it provides us with evidence of the variety of our sentiments. It has contributed only tangentially to the decision-making process. But in our discussion we collectively reaffirmed our commitment to 1) depth in English studies, especially reading and writing, 2) preparing students for a variety of vocations, including, for a select few, graduate studies in English, 3) the reflective life and personal relationships with our students, 4) teaching as central to what we do, 5) collegiality, 6) high standards for the England Semester, and 7) increasing diversity in staffing and curriculum. In view of our shared desire to prepare students better for their careers, we “closed the loop,” in a sense, by sponsoring a “career path” workshop in Fall, 2010. Further, our hiring of a medievalist in 2010 was a by-product of our round-robin discussions.
- C. *Additional issues:* Skripsky and Friedman should be invited in the year to come to contribute to the conversation as others have done. The whole conversation can feed into our on-going discussion of ways to revise our major curriculum, as does the analysis of alumni survey results.

**Item 5:**

- A. *Action item:* Explain how faculty publication and professional conference presentations impact student learning. Assigned to: Chair and department.
- B. *Brief update:* We have not done this and have no specific plans to do so, but I as chair commit to keeping in focus the impact of our faculty’s actions on student learning. We have brought scholars such as Jessie Van Eerden to campus to address our students after meeting them in professional conferences.

**Item 6:**

- A. *Action item:* Re. “senior interviews,” clarify what sampling principles were used to choose “selected graduating seniors.” Assigned to: Chair
- B. *Brief update:* We did not conduct senior exit interviews this year. In past years, we have been personal and tactical rather than scientific in our choices—the sample group would be too small to be representative of all our graduates. We have tried to choose not just top students and not just the most popular or influential. Our choices reflected the quality of trust and comfort in the relationship between professor and student/interviewee.
- C. *Additional issues:* The absence of interviews this year was not due to policy but to preoccupation with other matters at year’s end. Past senior interviews, however, have been multi-faceted, rich, encouraging, and challenging. We could do a better job of using them for our and the students’ benefit, especially

if we would tailor some of the questions we ask to our then-current SLOs. We could also link the senior interviews to our alumni survey questions, to provide a stronger basis for comparison of results. For the year ahead, we need to make a concerted end-of-semester and end-of-year effort to interview several more students, and then in the following year sift several years of results for implications for our program.

**Item 7:**

- A. *Action item:* Discuss the Bibliographic Essay Evaluation Form with the department (Appendix E in Six-Year Report; see [smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\\_review/english/Reports/2010-ENG-Six-Year-Program-Review-Report](smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program_review/english/Reports/2010-ENG-Six-Year-Program-Review-Report)). Assigned to: Chair
- B. *Brief update:* Chair discussed the evaluation form with DCEE in meeting on November 3, 2010. In this and subsequent department discussion, we concluded that the Evaluation Form we have used for several years, though informative and detailed, is too complex for assessment purposes. We decided not to use it again this year.
- C. *Additional issues:* The problem, we found, is only partly with the complexity of the form. The deeper problem is with the number and complexity of our SLOs. We went at the problem by simplifying our SLOs and carrying out an assessment exercise more precisely fitted to the one SLO we decided to concentrate on this year. (See discussion below under “III.”)

**Item 8:**

- A. *Action item:* Propose possible solutions to problem of inadequate library acquisition of discipline-specific resources. Assigned to: Sarah Skripsky and Jamie Friedman.
- B. *Brief update:* As reported in the minutes of February 8, 2011, Skripsky and Friedman conducted a survey of Choice Review database to make lists of “highly recommended” or “essential” titles from 1995-2011. The department, after discussion, prioritized areas of interest as follows: 1) Anglophone and World Literature, 2) Women’s Studies, and 3) Literary Theory and Criticism. The culled list was submitted to the library to guide its purchases. The Provost’s Office made special funds available for purchase of medieval literature titles, to support Friedman’s new work at the college. Other funds were made available by the library. We view this as a very successful collaboration with the library, one that promises to enhance students’ research options in growing areas of our curriculum, particularly in view of the interdisciplinary Genre Studies program currently being developed by Cheri Larsen Hoeckley and professors from other departments.

**Item 9:**

- A. *Action item:* Create subfolders in PR Archives, following naming protocols. Assigned to: Eliane Yochum.
- B. *Brief update:* Done immediately after Chair’s November 3, 2010, meeting with DCEE.
- C. *Additional issues:* The template for annual assessment reports asks for URLs for locating documents in the Program Review shared server. However, given

differences between PCs and Macs, that can't be successfully done (since each document is not a separate web page). I've provided "document paths" above and would propose that the template be modified to ask for them, too.

**Item 10:**

- A. *Action item:* Revise Program Learning Outcomes. Assigned to: Chair and Department.
- B. *Brief update:* We did not revise our "Program Learning Outcomes" in 2010-2011. (See table in [smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\\_review/english/Guiding Documents/Program Learning Outcomes](smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program_review/english/Guiding Documents/Program Learning Outcomes)) Instead, in a department meeting on December 10, 2010, we backed away from our nine SLOs, and asked ourselves, "What three or four simply-phrased things about our students' learning do we *really* want to know, and what would make a difference to our teaching if we found out?" Our collective answer was clarifying, substantial, and motivating. We agreed that we wanted to know the following:
  1. Can students "attend to" other voices in their reading and writing?
  2. Can students analyze character?
  3. Can students enter a scholarly conversation, in a way that is measurable by examining their ways of introducing and using quotations in their writing?
  4. Is a student willing to make significant, needed concessions in an argument?

In Spring 2011 we refined the language of one SLO and focused on it in an end-of-year assessment activity. The methods and results are described below under "III."

- C. *Additional issues:* Our three PLOs—Thinking Critically, Reading Closely, and Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity—do represent, broadly, the core of our educational goals for our students. The nine SLOs under them, however, are too many and too complex for us to cover successfully in a six-year period. We agree with the PRC that a prose statement of them might serve us well enough as a statement of aspirational goals. Before we could remap SLOs onto our PLOs, however, we needed to take a fresh look at our SLOs. We began that process in Spring 2011 with assessment of one SLO. We still need to refine the remaining two or three SLOs and map out the next several years' assessment activities.

**Item 11:**

- A. *Action item:* Renew discussion of English curriculum revision. Assigned to: Chair and department members.
- B. *Brief update:* Our longer-range plan calls for us to reconsider our major curriculum with the help of an outside reviewer. Over the summer of 2011 department members responded to a request from the chair by sending in e-mail answers to the questions: "What two or three aspects of the current curriculum would you want to preserve?" and "What two or three aspects would you wish to change?" The compilation of those responses will be sent to all department members before the end of Summer, 2011, to serve as the basis of a discussion to be held in Fall, 2011. We look forward to hiring an outside

reviewer, pending approval and funding, to comment on our curriculum sometime in the next two years.

### III. 2010-2011 Focus

At our departmental assessment workshop on May 5, 2011, we settled on the following wording for a SLO to assess for the year 2010-2011:

*Senior English majors integrate borrowed material successfully into their documented research papers.*

#### A. Assessment methods and data collection:

1. We drew from 18 papers (names removed) written by senior students in either Prof. Willis's Shakespeare (ENG-117) class or Prof. Delaney's Shakespeare on Production class from the Fall 2010 England Semester. To rate the papers, we used a rating sheet and instructions.

Our plan was to familiarize ourselves with the rating instrument, work through one paper as a group, and discuss any uncertainties in our application of the instrument. Next, we would distribute papers randomly so each member would evaluate a different paper, using the rating sheet. After we completed the ratings, we would total all responses in each category to see where, in the aggregate, our students were strongest and weakest. Then we would discuss the totals to see whether they would validate our current teaching practices and, based on the result, decide whether to make changes, individually or collectively, in our curriculum, course emphases, or teaching methods.

We unpacked the meaning of the SLO as follows: To integrate borrowed material successfully in their documented research papers, students must:

- a. Select borrowed material judiciously
- b. Represent the source's thought accurately
- c. Introduce the source sufficiently
- d. Integrate borrowed material smoothly
- e. Use quotation marks for all borrowed phrases
- f. Provide correct citations of the source, using MLA form, including Works Cited, and
- g. Follow through with appropriate comment, analysis, interpretation, or application.

Skripsky was concerned that "b" (above) is impossible to assess. We decided to focus on the observable traits in c, d, f, and g, using a 0-2 scale, where 0 = "present; 1 = present but weak; and 2 = absent.

2. Our benchmarks were very broad: we wanted to see whether a majority of our students could meet the standards we articulated on the rating sheet. And we wanted to see where they were relatively strong and weak in their performance.
3. Our rating sheet is stored on the Program Review server at [smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\\_review/english/](smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program_review/english/)?

#### B. Interpretation of Results

In our discussion, half the members were satisfied overall with the paper they rated; the other half were not. Those who were dissatisfied found their student unable to introduce and intellectually position borrowed material,

and/or they found the student unable to effectively analyze/interpret the borrowed material afterwards. We found ample evidence that our students are satisfactorily able to document their borrowings using MLA format.

The exercise was illuminating. Though narrower in focus than the Bibliographic Essay Evaluation form that we had been using previously to evaluate papers from the Shakespeare class, the rating sheet was more helpful in providing an overview of the aggregate pattern of students' strengths and weaknesses in handling quoted material. The rating sheet was specifically matched to our new SLO, and it returned both encouraging and discouraging news. It showed us that we would not gain much from any additional stress on documentation format, since students already performed well in that area.

We concluded that many of our students succeed at these skills, though many others fail to master them, even after instruction that involves detailed modeling. The faculty could not conclude that they were satisfied with the students' performances overall. Cook suggested that we teach more critical thinking and writing in ENG-006, -044, and -045.

#### C. Closing the Loop

The results are probably sufficient for the department to decide what area needs more emphasis in the classroom. However, we're not yet able to "close the loop" on the basis of these data, since we haven't yet discussed the implications of all the results. The department needs to return to these data in Fall, 2011, and decide on what should change in our teaching of documented scholarly writing, assuming that change in instruction is needed to improve student performance. If we can take new approaches that will make a positive difference, we might then have information worth sharing with the whole faculty in, perhaps, a workshop or colloquium. The results should also help peer tutors in the Writers' Corner to focus their help in areas where professors think the greatest improvements are needed.

### IV. Next Steps

#### A. Action Items:

1. Revise SLO statements and decide on SLO emphasis for 2011-2012, drawing conclusions from May 5 departmental discussion.  
Target date: September, 2011  
Oversight: Interim Chair
2. Sponsor another career options workshop for English majors.  
Target date: October, 2011.  
Oversight: to be delegated by Interim Chair.
3. Revisit results of May 5, 2011 assessment exercise—discuss implications for teaching and learning in courses where scholarly use of quoted matter is introduced, developed, and mastered.  
Target date: October, 2011  
Oversight: Interim Chair
4. Discuss whether and how to revise pre- and post-tests for ENG-046 and ENG-047 in light of assessment best practices and revised SLOs.  
Target date: October, 2011  
Oversight: To be delegated by Interim Chair



5. Pursue curriculum review discussion, in light of alumni surveys, "Slouching Toward Bethlehem," and Summer 2011 survey of English faculty. First, have Skripsky and Friedman weigh in on "Slouching."  
Target date: November, 2011  
Oversight: Interim Chair
6. Post new mission statement, SLOs and alignment chart on dept website.  
Target date: Beginning of Spring Semester, 2012.  
Oversight: Interim Chair and Eliane Yochum.
7. Render PLOs and Nine SLOs as prose statement  
Target date: February, 2012  
Oversight: Kathryn Artuso
8. Design and complete year-two SLO assessment activity with revised SLO and appropriate instrument  
Target date: April, 2012  
Oversight: Chair and delegated member of department
9. Redesign senior exit interviews with current SLOs grafted in.  
Target date: April, 2012  
Oversight: To be delegated by Chair
10. Conduct senior exit interviews  
Target date: May, 2012  
Responsibility: Department members
11. Evaluate senior exit interview results in light of November, 2011, curriculum review  
Target date: September , 2012  
Oversight: To be delegated by Chair
12. Design and Complete year-three SLO assessment activity with revised SLO and appropriate instrument  
Target date: April, 2013  
Oversight: Chair and delegated member of department
13. On-site visit by outside reviewer to evaluate and revise on revision of English curriculum  
Target date: May, 2013  
Oversight: Chair and outside reviewer

B. Updated Multi-Year Plan (See below)

Appendices: See documents below on-line in the department program review archives at:  
[smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program\\_review/english](smb://myfiles.westmont.edu/program_review/english)

1. December 1, 2010, PRC response to 2010 Six-Year Program Review Report
2. Updated Multi-Year Assessment Plan
3. Prompts or instruments used to collect data

Prepared by Dr. Randall VanderMey, Chair  
Department of English  
August 24, 2011

## MULTI-YEAR ASSESSMENT PLAN

### *English Department*

Outcomes	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Means of Assessment
1. Critical thinking-Christian orientation				X				Evaluated Bibliographic Essays
2. Critical thinking-Research and analysis	X			X				Evaluated Bibliographic Essays
3. Close reading-Literary content			X					Pre- and Post-tests in Survey Classes
4. Close reading-Literary contexts			X					Pre- and Post-tests in Survey Classes
5. Close reading-Literary Genres			X					Pre- and Post-tests in Survey Classes
6. Close reading-Literary Techniques			X					Pre- and Post-tests in Survey Classes
7. Writing-Grammar	X			X				Evaluated Bibliographic Essays
8. Writing-Modes	X			X				Evaluated Bibliographic Essays
9. Writing-Documentation	X			X				Evaluated Bibliographic Essays
10. SLO #1: Integrate Borrowed Material Successfully					X			Used Rating Sheet to Evaluate Documented Shakespeare Papers by 9 Seniors
11. SLO #2: TBD (Fall, '11)						X		TBD
12. SLO #3: TBD (Fall, '11)							X	TBD

**Comments/Reflection:** 1) In 2007-2008 we reorganized our approach to Program Review, and we developed a mission statement; 2) In Fall, 2010, we abandoned our nine SLOs and focused on a new and narrower one. The plan is to articulate two or three more SLOs in Fall, 2011, devise ways to assess them, and assess student performance on those dimensions in the succeeding years.