Assessing Student Learning in the English Major Capstone

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ACE 10 Question

The English department has developed a set of learning outcomes and a programmatic assessment process for the English major that uses the English major capstone (an ACE 10 certified course required of all majors) as a collection site for student work to be assessed. The course includes two components. First, students are asked to look back on their work in the major and select samples covering a range of learning outcomes in the major to be included in a portfolio. Second, students engage in a common intellectual inquiry and produce substantial final projects keyed to the common inquiry. This final project then becomes a key component of the portfolio.

Method of Analysis

The English department has thirteen learning outcomes for majors. We score four outcomes every year (the foundational outcomes) and the additional outcomes on a rotating basis. This year, we will be scoring outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, and 13. Our scoring is conducted by a group of faculty from across the subdisciplines of English studies using a rubric. Our learning outcomes and the rubric for outcomes to be scored this year are represented below.

Outcomes for the English Major

English Majors will:
1. demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of texts, writers, genres, and cultures.
2. identify and take critical positions on texts and literacy practices.
3. support claims they make in their writing with specific examples and evidence.
4. write and revise for a variety of purposes and audiences.
5. consider the significance of new ideas, literary, and cultural practices in the context of their own lives and worlds, including their personal, academic, professional, and civic goals and purposes.
6. understand the importance of cultural differences in the study of texts and literacy practices.
7. understand how texts and literacy practices are shaped by their historical, social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic contexts.
8. set their own learning goals and understand their own learning.
9. identify and take critical positions on texts and literacy practices with an understanding of what is at stake in assuming these positions.
10. use appropriate vocabularies for describing the work of writing (e.g., craft language for creative writing students, rhetorical language for rhetoric students).
11. conduct both primary and secondary research (including using the library) and understand the uses and limitations of the information yielded by various research methodologies.
12. understand how media and technology shape texts and literacy practices.
13. write with clarity, grace, and voice appropriate to writing tasks.

Findings

Our scoring of student portfolios is scheduled to take place on APRIL 11th. Stay tuned!

Improving ACE 10 Learning

The English Department Assessment Coordinator and subject area coordinators, as appropriate, present the results of assessment activities the subject to the department, and, based, on department discussion and feedback, individuals or committees in the department may take action to improve teaching and learning or revise curricula.

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Final Capstone Project

As we discussed at the beginning of the semester, your final capstone project will bring the interests and expertise you have developed in the English major and the reading and inquiry you have pursued for the major to bear on your final project. This project should help you achieve one or more of the learning outcomes represented in the capstone. This project will be key to learning within the major and in the minor and towards the completion of your graduation portfolio. It should be a project that will help you see your work in the major in terms of your understanding of the major and your development of your own interests. It should also help you achieve a number of the learning outcomes outlined in the assessment plan for the English major. This project will also help you figure out what kind of work you would do in the future and how you would proceed with your professional goals.

In the remaining weeks of the semester, you will be reading three more novels, reading poetry, and building a documentary about them Jointly and reading critical essays keyed to these literary works in context, and you will be writing additional class assignments and a public literary essay. Here are some of the key questions you should address in your project:

1. What project do you want to take on?
2. How will you design your project?
3. What effect will you make?
4. What do you need to learn to complete this project?
5. What tasks will you need to perform?
6. How will you justify the project you have devised?
7. How will you present the project you have devised?
8. What would constitute excellence and success for the project you have devised?
9. Do you have a prospectus, a proposal to me in which you outline your project and proposed tasks?
10. What is the relationship to our common reading and inquiry and to your interests and expertise?
11. What is the relationship to ACE 10?

You should develop with me a prospectus that addresses the above questions. When you have a prospectus that is appropriate to your level of development, you should present it to me. We then will plan to spend some time discussing your ideas and addressing any questions you may have about the project.