Humanities Program Assessment AY 2011-2012

English

10 Students Assessed

Day: 10

Evening: 0

Students continue to take the MFT in English; however, the MFT results tell us very little about the English program. For one thing, 10 is much too small of number from which to extrapolate. For another, the MFT tests literary content knowledge. As a B.A. degree, making sure that students are familiar with the content of the literary canon is only one aspect of the major. Finally, it is clear that motivation to excel on the test is still problematic. While some students do their best and score very high, it is evident that others do not.

The better assessment of the major comes from ENGL 431 Senior Seminar. In the DPAF, Dr. Campbell notes that there is some lack of familiarity with the major schools of literary criticism especially among those students pursuing the Creative Writing Track. This problem had been anticipated by the English faculty, and beginning with AY 2012 ENGL 490 was added to the core of the Creative Writing Track. Dr. Campbell also notes that there are other issues with assessing Creative Writing students in ENGL 431 rather than ENGL 408. While students from both tracks are expected to be able to craft a
substantial literature research project, clearly the more experience a student has with the academic study of literature, the better she will do. In that regard, Creative Writing students will always be at a slight disadvantage (as they are as well on the MFT). The evidence is fairly clear that those Creative Writing students who take a substantial number of literature courses do better on both assessments.

Speech Communication

3 Students Assessed

The Speech Communication degree uses both the culminating experience course and an “in-house” assessment test. Both show satisfactory results. Dr. Darnell reports on the DPAF that students exhibited the expected abilities and that the major is being well-assessed.

The assessment exam, while being too small of a sample for much analysis, shows students exhibited satisfactory familiarity with the field. Students could most likely benefit from more and better exposure to sound argumentation. Further, all students did poorly in the oral interpretation category.

Beginning Fall 2013, significant changes to the major will go into effect. It will be interesting to monitor any changes that occur over the next few years.
Philosophy and Religious Studies

2 Students Assessed

There is no major field test for this area. Assessment is limited to the culminating experience course: PHIL/RELI 490 Thematic Seminar in Philosophy and Religious Studies. Two students took PHIL/RELI 490. These two students were the last students to complete the combined degree; both had primary interests in Religious Studies.

The assessment of these two students confirmed what I had come to believe from previous years, i.e., that the combined degree was flawed. It was evident that both students lacked a sufficient grounding in the academic methods for Religious Studies. While one student’s project was acceptable, the other was hopelessly speculative and poorly argued. I look forward to observing student performance over the next few years to see if there is a marked difference with the more focused Philosophy only major.

However, given that we continue to have very low numbers, it remains difficult to determine how much of what is observed reflects the program and how much is merely the accident of personality.