Humanities Program Assessment for the 2006 Calendar Year

Sources of Evaluative Information:
Direct
[MFT Scores]
[Portfolios]
[Senior Research Project]

MFT SCORES

This year 5 students completed our Senior Seminar class and all completed the MFT. 4 were day time students while 1 was evening. While ETS states that its Mean and Median figures come from “Seniors Only,” it should be noted that Columbia College English majors are only required to have 60 hours completed in order to take English 431, our Senior Seminar course. Therefore some of our students were clearly only Juniors when taking the exam. The number of scores we now have is obviously not high enough to warrant any statistically valid observations about our Departmental Summary Assessment Indicators and do not yield much decisive data in relation to subscores. In the next two years, because of course rotation in a newly designed major, we might well see, for example, the Departmental Summary Assessment Indicators completely reverse.

The total scores were as follows: 159, 134, 180, 155, and 149 for the evening student. 1 of the day scores was well below the average mark of 50%, scoring in the better than 10% level. 1 of the day scores is right at the bottom of the 50% range. Two day scores are better than average with one better than 90%. The evening score was at the 35% range.

This small sample shows a wide spread, with 3 of the 4 day students scoring at or above the average, one scoring well below and the evening student scoring below average. This seems to be the pattern so far. A majority of our day students score at or above the average with a few scoring in the top 10% over the last 2 years. There are usually one or two significantly lower scores. So far evening scores are collectively lower than day scores. But with the small numbers we have, no real statistical conclusions may be made.

PORTFOLIOS

Students in ENGL 431 submitted portfolios in addition to their research project in ENGL 431. The new English major put in place 2 years ago requires a portfolio representing a student’s cumulative work at Columbia College be submitted as a component of ENGL 431. Beyond this initial structure, no assessment strategies had yet been designed. Tying students’ grades in ENGL 431 to the portfolio at all will be impossible until the program has been in place for 4 years so that incoming freshmen are introduced to this requirement of their Senior Seminar class. We have begun developing portfolio assessment strategies that we will work further on these in the fall, putting in place a system to introduce incoming majors to this requirement. For these strategies, please see section on proposed Portfolio Assessment.

SENIOR ESSAYS

Senior Seminar papers of 20 to 25 pages with Bibliographies of at least 25 sources were submitted.

Agency for Program Evaluation/Change:
Full-time faculty
Academic Assessment

Academic Assessment of results (extent to which learning goals were met):

MFT SCORES
From these scores, we believe our department is meeting a significant number of its learning goals.
However, these tests really measure a combined course load from our old English major and from the two new tracks created in the new English major. Until our new major has been in place for more than 4 years it would be inaccurate to say MFT scores represent our current curriculum.

SENIOR ESSAYS
Dr. Christie should have submitted an Assessment of the Major form last fall. Please see this form regarding his assessment and grading of essay projects. Comments all directly relate to the quality of senior essays submitted. Need for better preparation in organization and revision of longer research essays is still a concern overall. This is being addressed in our new Sophomore Seminar (ENGL 221) course offering but it is too early to assess results.

Feedback Loop Results:
[specific changes in curriculum]
[specific changes in pedagogy]
[creation of new student orientation]

I recommend three areas of change as a result from assessment of last year’s direct sources of information.

1. **Curriculum**: raise ACT standards for ENGL 112, require 112 as a pre-requisite for ALL English courses above 112 and require a 200-level pre-requisite for all 300- and 400-level courses. In raising the standard for 112, and adding pre-requisites, our program can raise standards of expectation in 300 and 400 level major-area courses, which will directly translate into improved MFT scores and Senior Projects.

2. **Pedagogy**: ENGL 221 Sophomore Seminar needs to be designed to deliberately introduce students to basic research strategies AND gaps in literary periods (a liability of the new major as it was cut 20 hours). This can be done easily by establishing the course as a “threshold course,” which demands a final exam in MLA research citation and requires two research projects in literary fields the students choose as their weakest.

3. **New student orientation**: Incoming English majors AND transfers must be advised in the importance of ENGL 221 and must be required to begin building their portfolio immediately from their best work. Some sort of departmental end of the year review for each student that would provide feedback on their best work (i.e. their portfolio selections) would be ideal. I am unsure of the exact mechanism for this and will need Full-time Faculty feedback on this to move ahead.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danny Campbell (chair, Department of Humanities)
May 9, 2007