

Department of English -- Letters and Science Assessment Report 2013

Overview:

Instructional Degree Programs:

Literary Studies, BA, MA, PhD
Creative Writing, BA, MFA
Composition and Rhetoric, PhD
English Language and Linguistics (ELL), MA, Applied Linguistics, Interdepartmental PhD in
Second Language Acquisition, PhD in ELL

Instructional Service Programs:

English as a Second Language (ESL)
English 100 (Composition)

Other units:

Writing Center

DARE – Dictionary of American Regional English

Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing

Journals: *Contemporary Literature, Madison Review, Madison Journal of Literary Criticism*

Faculty:

Tenure track faculty: 49 (44.3 FTE)
Academic Staff (long term): 26
Academic Staff (short term): 16
Classified Staff: 11
Teaching Assistants (Fall 2012; fewer in Spring semester): 137

Students:

Undergraduate English majors: 547
Writing Fellows (from several disciplines): 45
Graduate students: 199

Enrollments 2012-13:

Undergraduate: 9, 535
Graduate: 565
FIG courses taught by English tenure-track faculty: 7

Objectives (Purpose): the transformation of English for the 21st century

The English Department is committed to meeting the needs of undergraduates across the UW campus, guided by the University's Essential Learning Outcomes. Over the last three years, we have hired key new faculty with Mellon and MIU funding to assist our development of a twenty-first century curriculum in literature, writing, media, and language. During this period we have also transformed the undergraduate major, after consulting with student and faculty focus groups and conducting a two-year internal review. We have now successfully shaped a new curriculum that offers updated approaches to the skills and knowledge that are at the core of the University's teaching mission, including inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; written communication, information, media, and technology literacy, and local and global intercultural knowledge and competence. The new major has been reviewed and approved and will go into effect in the fall of 2014.

Since 2010, we face a set of new concerns: declining enrollments that now affect English and humanities departments across the nation. This new trend has prompted us to rethink the courses we teach and the integration of courses in a twenty-first century curriculum. We are working to extend the traditional emphases of our major to emphasize communication across multiple and emerging media. Toward these ends, we have begun to reimagine the introductory courses we offer and to think more widely about how the work of an English department can be more explicitly responsive to new media: our commitment to the development of Digital Studies and the new Design Lab are crucial parts of this broadening program. Our students, both undergraduate and graduate, have begun to take up these new challenges. Graduate students have remediated traditional essays to make their arguments visible to a wider public; undergraduate honors students have done the same with their own honors theses and enrolled in courses on the public humanities as well as making use of the Design Lab tutorials to remediate written theses for presentation to a broader public audience. New faculty hires with the support of MIU and Mellon will help us continue to build this new curriculum going forward.

Improving the learning outcomes of undergraduates does not fall to faculty alone. Understanding full well the importance of academic advisors, in 2011 and 2012 we hired two knowledgeable and extraordinarily effective new advisers, one for all students and the second, with MIU support, to direct students toward available careers. Students have already begun to show a deep appreciation for these invaluable resources.

Our report below falls into **two categories**:

- 1) transformations** to the Department's approach to undergraduate teaching, including the hiring we have done, assessing the impact of each hire on the quality of undergraduate education; deep changes to the curriculum; and major improvements to undergraduate advising.
- 2) assessment efforts**, including focus groups, exit interviews, retention assessment, English 100 assessment, and the Writing Fellows.

1. Transformations in undergraduate education

I. Hiring

In the fall of 2014, the new major and curriculum that are now approved will become effective, at precisely the time when our MIU and Mellon faculty hires will be ready to help us as a faculty teach the new sophomore seminar for majors and add greater faculty numbers to all the levels of our undergraduate curriculum. In 2012-13, we made a commitment to staff our large lecture classes with tenure-track faculty. During the past year, seven tenure track faculty members taught the small section FIG courses.

UW-English has benefitted from four MIU initiatives and five Mellon faculty hires. The first two MIU awards, for Digital Studies and Design Lab, were developed by Professor Jon McKenzie in collaboration with Communication Arts and the School of Education. The third and fourth are MIU awards made specifically to English: 3 faculty hires to support our curricular redesign for the undergraduate major and 50% of the new career adviser, who also serves the Departments of Philosophy and Comparative Literature.

In what follows we address the MIU reporting requirements under three categories: hiring, curricular redesign, and advising, which includes both the scaled up advising our new undergraduate adviser offers students taking English courses, both majors and other students not as yet declared, and career advising. In the faculty hires we conducted in 2012-13, both applicant pools were diverse. For the Renaissance hire (funded by one-half of Howard Weinbrot's salary at the time of his retirement, per agreement with Dean Sandefur), 64 applicants responded to the diversity questionnaire; 11 of them were minority candidates and 28 were female. For the MIU hire in Queer Theory Studies, 37 applicants responded to the diversity questionnaire; 7 were minority and 21 were female.

A. MIU Faculty Hires

In 2010, the MIU awarded English three new faculty hires to support our redesign of the undergraduate curriculum to include a sophomore level seminar focused on intensive writing and critical thinking for majors, and to augment the number of tenure-track faculty who teach undergraduates at all levels. To date, we have hired two of the three new faculty. In 2013-14, we expect to hire our third colleague, who will teach creative writing to the expanding population of undergraduate students who take the creative writing track in the English major.

1. Our first MIU faculty member, **Catherine Vieira**, was hired beginning in 2012 to develop our new emphasis on global and intercultural knowledge. Her research contributes to the field of composition and rhetoric studies—a faculty unit in English that supervises much of the writing instruction in the College of Letters and Science. Professor Vieira's work concerns the social history of literacy, with a particular focus on migrants across national and linguistic boundaries, a topic that will engage all students and draw the presence of students who have emigrated from other cultures into curricular focus. She uses ethnographic and qualitative methods to study how the inscription technologies of reading and writing shape the

experience of migration. Her first book project (under review), *Literacy and Legality in Immigrant America*, analyzes the role of immigration papers—visas, green cards, and passports—in migrants’ lives and literacies. Her second book project will trace the consequences of mass migration for literacy in migrants’ home communities. This new project examines the local uptake of “writing remittances”—such as computers, letters, and emails—sent home to family members from migrants abroad. Underlying this research agenda is a commitment to improving not only research but the teaching and learning of literacy across languages and social groups. Professor Vieira has developed several courses for undergraduates that seek to bring students for whom traditional disciplines and the craft of writing may be challenging. The titles, descriptions, and audiences for these courses are specified below:

Why is Writing Hard? (English 236, fulfills Comm-B Requirement)

Writing is hard for nearly everyone—for college students working on research papers, for published authors, for UW professors. But why? This Comm-B course does not promise to make writing *easier*. But it will help us understand our own and others’ writing processes and challenges. By engaging with theories of how and why writing is hard, we will gain a more secure footing from which to grapple with the writing difficulties that inevitably arise, not only in college, but also in life.

Literacy and Cash: Global Histories of Writing and Money (English majors)

Most English majors choose their subject not because they want to make money, but because they love the written word. The written word, however, has long been implicated in global economics. In this course, we will examine the relationship of writing and money as it has been experienced across diverse time periods and places, including ancient Mesopotamia, colonial Latin America, revolutionary China, 20th century Wisconsin, 21st century Slovakia, and a future dystopic New York City. In doing so, we will see how the writing of accountants, priests, farmers, students, poker players, artists, and teachers has been implicated in global economic trends. Students will track their own writing’s relationship to money, incorporating their findings into an “auto-ethnographic” term paper.

Composition Theory and Practice for Educators (for future English teachers)

Who are *you* as a writer? What makes a writer a writer? And how might we nurture writers’ development in our classrooms? This course, for future teachers of English and for those interested in writing, will explore these questions. In particular, through extensive writing and reading of composition theory, we will develop a vocabulary to understand our own and others’ writing processes, challenges, and talents. Moreover, we will grapple with two of the most complex tasks in the teaching of writing: developing authentic writing assignments and responding authentically to real high-school students’ work.

Writing Across Borders (for undergraduates interested in service-learning) In schools, workplaces, and online, we are often communicating across national and cultural borders. Yet few of us do so well! This course thus asks (and answers) the question: How might we best write in a multilingual, multicultural world? We will first address some central theories about the relation of written language to power. With this basis, we will partner with the Madison-Area Literacy Network to tutor adult English-language learners. In these interactions, we will both teach and learn, coming to appreciate the complexities of writing across borders. Students will write a final paper examining their experiences in light of our reading and will also write a document (website; pamphlet; lesson plan materials) that the literacy network can put to use.

2. Our second MIU hire, **Ramzi Fawaz**, will begin teaching at UW-Madison in the fall of 2013. Hired to address growing curricular attention across UW-Madison to the presence and cultural impact of the LGBT community in contemporary scholarship, Professor Fawaz, of Lebanese descent, brings a superb grasp of the theory and practice of Queer Studies and contemporary American literature, including cutting-edge research into the importance of the comic book as a popular genre with political implications. His work offer us both a productive link to the widening LGBT community of scholars and key support for the contribution of UW English to the new LGBT certificate for undergraduates. His teaching areas emphasize American literature after World War II, and he will enrich our current offerings to undergraduates by adding courses on radical feminist fiction, graphic novels, science fiction, and children's literature, as well as Queer Studies Theory and literature. His courses offerings will include: **Community and Belonging in 20th Century U. S. Literature and Culture, Fantasy and Enchantment in Modern America, Introduction to LGBT Literature, Ghostly Matters: The Haunted Imagination of Early American Literature, and Reading for the Masses.**

After some discussion with the College and within the department, we have requested that our third MIU faculty hire be a prose fiction creative writer. Originally, we had applied to hire faculty who would teach the early part of the historical core (medieval or early modern). At the time, enrollments were pressing and faculty in the early periods overloaded. Now that enrollments have changed, so too have pressures on teaching loads: the demand for creative writing courses among English majors and non-majors is now exerting the most urgent pressure on the faculty. Since the new faculty member will teach 4 courses per year, including 1 graduate seminar every 2 years, the new hire in prose fiction would add three to four undergraduate courses to our offerings, and every one of these will fill to capacity.

B. Mellon Faculty Hires

1. Dr. Elizabeth Bearden was hired in 2011 to fill the *religion and literature* Mellon line. She works extensively on global and cosmopolitan perspectives in the early modern period to argue that early modern romance writers unsettle a range of binaries including male/female, barbarian/civilized, Christian/Jew, European/non-

European, among others. Her book *Emblematics of the Self* (2012) situates European Renaissance culture in a broader transnational context.

2. **Dr. Joshua Calhoun** was hired in 2012 for the Mellon *print culture* position that is designed to foster humanities research and teaching that crosses intellectual, disciplinary and territorial boundaries. In the case of Dr. Calhoun, those border crossings are particularly unusual and exciting. His dissertation, "Legible ecologies: animals, vegetables, and reading matter in Renaissance England," deals with the ecological materials (recycled clothes, felled trees, slaughtered animals) that make up the basis of early modern texts. Dr. Calhoun has a demonstrated record of working beyond his university with the local community that made him a great fit with the Wisconsin Idea. He conducted a Shakespeare reading group for members of his community in the Adirondacks, and in 2012-13 he organized practical paper-making demonstrations for school children and adults
3. **Dr. Christa Olson** joined the English faculty in 2010 in the area of Composition and Rhetoric. She specializes in visual rhetoric as part of the building of political communities, and helps to develop the global and intercultural focus of English by working in Latin American archives, drawing our students and faculty into conversations about Hemispheric studies. During her first year at UW-Madison, she created and taught English 900, a new course on visual rhetoric, and participated as an influential member of a year-long set of deliberations on the undergraduate major which resulted in a departmental vote in the spring to transform the major. With her first book forthcoming, she is now preparing to write about civic engagement in both hemispheres.
4. **Dr. Nirvana Tanoukhi** joined the faculty in 2010 as a scholar of world literature with a particular emphasis on African, Arabic, and Caribbean literature, after a two-year postdoctoral position at Harvard University's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. She also helped Harvard launch its first global conference on transnational and transcultural studies in Beijing. Her work in world literature and theory has helped to expand the department's curricular and research emphasis on global English literature and culture.
5. **Dr. Monique Allewaert** joined the faculty of UW-Madison from Emory University in 2011. Her scholarship on ecology and agency in early American and Caribbean contexts made her the ideal candidate for the Mellon position in *discourses of immigration and migration*. Dr. Allewaert received her Ph.D. from Duke University in 2006. Her first book, *Ariel's Ecology*, will be published by University of Minnesota Press in June 2013. Dr. Allewaert pursues a wide-ranging and hemispheric approach to early American studies. She is committed to thinking about the status of the human as that question is at issue in slave and colonial contexts. Her expertise and scholarship have invited connections with LACIS, Global Studies, Digital Studies and questions about archives, science and print culture that will be of interest to colleagues working on the History of American print culture.

II. Curricular Redesign

The English Department faculty are enthusiastic about teaching and planning new courses that emphasize specific Learning Outcomes, including civic knowledge and engagement; ethical reasoning and action; foundations and skills for lifelong learning; and synthesis of knowledge across disciplines. Professors Castronovo and Zimmerman regularly teach courses on the development and difficulty of civic action in the American public. Professors Allewaert, Hussen, Keller, and Sherrard Johnson emphasize the role of race and difference in the work of imagining and crafting the American polity. Professor Levine's course for non-majors on the detective fiction brings together ways of knowing across several disciplines; and Professor Kelley plans to teach a course on literature of the human, inhuman and monstrous by integrating humanistic ways of knowledge with biological thought about life forms.

But we have also undertaken much more sweeping efforts. In an effort to enhance undergraduate student learning through curricular redesign, the English Department has introduced several large-scale changes. We perceived three major obstacles to undergraduate learning. First, the major had been troubled by bottleneck courses and outdated requirements that did not serve students well. Second, the numbering of our courses, which dated from the 1960s, was confusing and illogical, misleading students who would otherwise take advantage of a range of engaging offerings. And third, a taskforce of faculty focused on undergraduate learning outcomes realized that writing instruction seemed to students piecemeal and incoherent. To address these obstacles to undergraduate learning, we have now put in place three changes: a sweeping **transformation of the major**; a thoroughgoing **reorganization of our undergraduate course array**; a set of shared, explicit criteria for students to use to **improve their writing**.

A. Sweeping transformation of the English major

In the old English major, students were expected to take a number of requirements that created bottlenecks and were organized in a way that lagged behind the times, neither meeting meaningful learning outcomes nor reflecting exciting research in the field. We focus below on the changes to the major that will help us to respond to the core mission of the MIU:

- 1. Reorganization of the literature surveys:** Our old requirements included three literature survey courses, one of which students must take in a 4-credit, writing-intensive version. In order to meet demand, the department had to offer all of these courses *only* in large format, 4-credit versions every semester, which meant that in practice students were compelled to take all three survey courses at 4 credits. The English Department believes that it is important for students to have some sense of a large historical sweep, and that surveys orient students to fields they will want to pursue in more depth. But we also believe that better, more engaged learning happens in smaller-sized courses, and we wish to encourage our majors to take a variety of smaller courses across our offerings. Our redesigned major, therefore, requires a 2-course survey sequence instead of 3, with each course being offered at 3 credits. The new sequence helps us to meet two crucial goals of the MIU:

- a. **To eliminate bottlenecks:** So much student time spent in large survey courses gives majors relatively little flexibility and freedom. In the past students have struggled to graduate because there have been too few spaces in these courses. Students often complain about this and express frustration that they must put so much time into large overview lecture courses, instead of being able to study particular topics in depth.
- b. **To enhance high-impact practices in written and oral communication:** All of the traditional surveys were intended to be writing-intensive courses, with three credits devoted to literary understanding and one to writing instruction, but the old model had two problems:
 - i. All of the writing was taught by TAs in discussion sections, whereas the Department strongly believes that it should be faculty who are primarily engaged in intensive writing instruction for majors.
 - ii. Striving to cover lots of material according to the traditional survey model, both faculty and teaching assistants tended simply to use the extra credit hour to offer more literary content, paying the same level of attention to writing in these courses as they do in other courses.

2. New required writing intensive course: English 245, the Seminar in the Major:

In order to help students develop their writing skills in a newly effective way, in keeping with the goals of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates and recent research into effective college teaching and learning, the English Department has created a new requirement: a small writing-intensive seminar class, English 245, in which undergraduates are asked to deepen and practice oral and written communication skills with tenured and tenure-track faculty. The texts and topics will vary to reflect each faculty member's current interests. This new requirement allows us to address the following goals:

- A. **To offer small class sizes with meaningful faculty contact:** recent research into effective teaching and learning at the college level stresses the value of faculty contact, active participation, and constructive feedback. English 245 will be taught *only* by tenured or tenure-track faculty, and it will be limited in enrollment to 20 students, encouraging the kinds of active learning and engagement that provide the richest and most effective education for students.
- B. **To enhance high-impact practices in oral and written communication:** although students cannot become skilled at every element of writing in a single semester, writing-intensive courses, with frequent assignments and feedback, have been shown to be the best means to improving student writing. In English 245, students will be required to meet with professors in individual writing conferences and will write at least 30 pages, including drafts and informal assignments spread throughout the semester. English has always stressed writing, but this new requirement allows us to shift

some of our energies and our values from covering content, as we have done in the existing surveys, to the development of writing and critical thinking skills in lively small seminars.

1.3. New required course in English Language/Linguistics or

Composition/Rhetoric: Like other disciplines across the humanities and beyond, English has returned again and again to the question of its boundaries, its borrowings from other disciplinary formations, and questions about its core mission. At Wisconsin, English has long been an interdisciplinary department, joining literary studies to linguistics, the history of the language, literacy and composition studies, rhetoric, and creative writing. But this interdisciplinarity has never been well reflected in the undergraduate major, which has offered separate tracks for students interested in Literary Studies, English Language and Linguistics (ELL) and in Creative Writing. Composition and Rhetoric faculty have in the past needed to focus most of their attention on graduate training and on administering the teaching of composition for the campus more broadly, meaning that many undergraduates have no idea what this field is or means. Some undergraduates stumble on courses in ELL and love it, but many are unfamiliar with linguistics too. English now invites majors to explore the interdisciplinary riches of the Department through a new requirement: one 3-credit course in either English Language/Linguistics or Composition/ Rhetoric. Since the numbers of faculty in those areas are now larger than they have been in the past, this requirement both eases the burden on literary studies and creative writing faculty and introduces students to fields within English they might otherwise never explore. This requirement therefore helps us to address the MIU goal:

To eliminate bottlenecks: by distributing majors across courses taught by faculty across the Department, we relieve the strain on literary studies faculty and ensure that tenured or tenure-track faculty are teaching incoming majors.

2.4. A newly reconfigured pre-1800 course requirement: In the past, we have required one 3-credit Shakespeare course and a second course in literature before 1800 that is not Shakespeare. Since students are reluctant to study literature from the relatively distant past, the English Department has retained a requirement for 6 credits in literature before 1800. But we now free both students and faculty to move beyond the focus on Shakespeare, if they wish. Literary scholarship and teaching used to be dominated by the study of the single major author. In the past three decades, scholars have put an increasing emphasis on cultural contexts, understanding literary history not through a series of “great men,” but as cultural objects created in densely overlapping material, aesthetic, and intellectual contexts. This has meant that Shakespeare, though indeed the most influential writer in English, should be understood as responding to other writers and thinkers, taking part in the literary and intellectual currents of his time. Faculty in the department would like to be able courses that reflect this broader set of contexts, rather than falling back on the old model of the single author. This change helps us:

To eliminate bottlenecks: the Department has had to offer multiple Shakespeare courses each semester, often with the result that students have struggled to find spaces. Faculty in the early modern period complain that they have little freedom to teach anything besides Shakespeare, and wish that they could teach a broader array of texts, including those by women writers.

B. A thoroughgoing reorganization of our undergraduate course array

The second major curricular transformation involves the course array. Undergraduates have long been confused and frustrated by a surprisingly mundane problem in the English Department: the numbering of our undergraduate courses. In the old system, we numbered courses according to two *different* logics: some courses were numbered by field, others by level of advancement. Medieval literature courses had 300 numbers, while American literature courses were in the 600s. Many students misread these designations, and with serious implications. Routinely students reported feeling too intimidated to enroll in American literature courses—not because of their content, but because of their high numbers. Graduate programs considering our majors, too, sometimes assumed that our most advanced Medieval literature courses were introductory. Working with the Registrar, the L&S Curriculum Committee, and many cross-listing departments, the English Department has undertaken the task of renumbering the entire curriculum, reorganizing courses according to their level of advancement.

The logic of the new sequence is now logical and clear, and when it goes into effect in fall 2014, we predict that it will greatly help undergraduates to find courses that are appealing and appropriate for them:

- courses at the 100 level are introductory courses without prerequisites appropriate for all students
- courses at the 200 level are introductory courses to the field for majors and other interested students
- courses at the 300 level are introductions to subfields, genres and periods
- courses at the 400 level are focused and special topics courses
- courses at the 500 level are advanced courses with substantial theoretical content
- courses at the 600 level have been largely eliminated because students usually interpret these offerings as graduate-level courses

C. Shared, explicit criteria for students to use to improve their writing

The third transformation of English undergraduate education has emerged from a small taskforce of faculty in the Department who were concerned about undergraduate learning outcomes. They had discovered an unsettling fact: most undergraduate students said, when asked, that they believed that faculty members employed entirely personal and erratic criteria for evaluating analytical writing. The faculty have a different sense—that we share criteria and objectives, in general, but that we weigh aspects of student writing differently. What the taskforce discovered was that faculty use a variety of terms to describe similar skills. One faculty member might ask a student to “develop a new idea,” while another

might say that “originality” is an important aspect of a paper. These are similar values, but expressed in a way that students do not readily see them as common. We discovered that undergraduates were going from course to course imagining that their job was to please each faculty member in piecemeal fashion, rather than to take responsibility for their own improvement as writers as they progressed through the major.

To begin to address this passive relationship to writing, the English Department solicited writing assignments from all English faculty and developed a document, called “shared criteria for writing,” which outlines 8 common standards considered important by all professors in the English Department. It includes the various terms professors might use, and explains why and how each writing criterion matters beyond the classroom—how each skill is transferable to workplaces and other contexts outside of the university. We see this document as helping to enhance the UW-Madison Essential Learning Outcomes of written communication and personal and social responsibility, and we stress the “real world” application of writing skills. We currently distribute this document to our classes on a voluntary basis to encourage our students to think through their own objectives as writers: where do they wish to improve? What kinds of assignments help them with some skills rather than others? We imagine using this document more systematically in semesters to come as a helpful tool of self-assessment for undergraduates.

These curricular changes and the sharpened collective focus on how and why we teach writing and analysis will together provide the foundation for the new curriculum beginning in the fall of 2014.

III. Undergraduate advising

Advising is a key component of undergraduate education, and we have begun to see the deep benefits of excellent advising in English. Two new advisors are currently transforming the experience of English majors.

A. In December of 2011, we hired a new undergraduate adviser, **Karen Redfield**, who came to us with decades of experience as a teacher and unit head for Madison College, a Ph.D. from UW-English in composition and rhetoric, and a considerable reputation as a scholar of American Indian literature with strong outreach credentials. Her effect on undergraduate majors and non-majors has been electric and sustained. She advises 400 students each semester and well over 800 across the academic year and during the summer. She has instituted a Fall Welcome and December gathering for majors and expanded the May awards reception so that it is now an event that honors all graduating seniors. She is the faculty adviser for the new club for majors, MUSE (Madison Undergraduate Society for English); the linchpin in departmental efforts to create a lounge for undergraduates; and the coordinator of workshops and special advising sessions for majors.

A.B. In 2012-13 Karen Redfield coordinated the search for a new MIU funded career adviser. The effort began with Dr. Redfield’s willingness to manage the development of the PVL for this position, in collaboration with Dr. Gery

Essenmacher, Associate Dean in the College of Letters and Science for Student Academic Affairs, and the chairs of the three departments served by this new career adviser: English, Philosophy, and Comparative Literature. Dr. Redfield then trained Ms. Knipschild and has since worked closely with her to pursue career advising and opportunities for our majors.

Since her arrival in mid-year, the new MIU career adviser, **Karen Knipschild**, has galvanized the presentation of career opportunities for English majors, conducting six workshops which a total of 110 students attended. The topics of those workshops reflect her charge to three departments: Resume and Career Fair; Career Exploration; separate English and Philosophy career panels, a skills workshop with a professional staffing speaker. Ms. Knipschild has done a superb job serving majors in these departments (547 in English, 200 in Philosophy, and 15 in Comparative Literature). She offers appointments and drop-in sessions to students, sends students weekly internship listings, and has organized a number of career panels, drawing on alumni and current staff from the involved departments.

As a member of the Career Alliance, Ms. Knipschild attends monthly meetings with other MIU advisors as well as weekly advisor training sessions with Dean Rebekah Pare from Student Academic Affairs. She has also attended training sessions in ISIS, Advisor Notes and for SOAR. Working closely with Dr. Redfield, they have developed ideas to make departmental websites more of a working resource for students. Specifically, Ms. Knipschild developed an electronic survey that the English Department will implement to communicate with its alumni. On a personal level, Ms. Knipschild is, as Russ Shafer-Landau, chair of Philosophy, put it, “a pleasure to work with: efficient, full of good ideas, a team player.”

2. Assessment

As a faculty, we practice constant assessment of undergraduate learning in the writing assignments we offer in classes; these are simply part of the way we teach students to write and communicate their developing knowledge. In workshops, student performances in class, and extra-curricular intellectual development, students and faculty routinely emphasize speaking to a wider public as we work on reading and writing about literature, culture, and ideas. By offering courses that emphasize the individual intellectual and critical activity students bring to reading literature and other forms of communication, we make it possible for students to recognize and evaluate their own intellectual processes, and the ways they come to judgment. We think of this work as at once literary, rhetorical, and civic, insofar as it helps students recognize themselves as civic and civil citizens, engaged in the work of becoming an educated public voice.

But we also recognize a need for a more comprehensive kind of assessment, and we detail our recent and emerging **assessment strategies** below.

| **A. Focus groups.** In redesigning our curriculum for the English major, we conducted student focus groups through the first year of the process. The new undergraduate adviser has continued to solicit student input for aspects of the program, and with a goal of building a sense of community among undergraduates. Two consequences of this effort, a new English Club, MUSE, and the decision to repurpose a room entirely for undergraduate use, have happened this year.

| **A.B. Exit Surveys.** This year we have begun to solicit surveys from graduating seniors. Those in Creative Writing courses have already risen and reported, recognizing the sense of craft and development they have gained from creative writing courses and calling for more efforts to publicize and publish their work. The exit survey designed this year for graduating seniors includes these questions: what skills have you learned as an English major? As a writer? As someone who reads and analyzes written or other media? Describe one unanticipated outcome of your coursework as an English major. What aspects of your English coursework or program would you seek to improve? How? Did you confer with your adviser? How and how often? Did you seek out career advising opportunities? If you wish, please include a sample of the writing you are proudest of from one of your English courses. Responses are beginning to arrive, and we expect more after graduation.

| **C. Shared writing criteria:** in using the shared document described above, we hope as a faculty to clarify the work of writing and thinking as a common goal of all classes and instructors.

| **B.D. Retention:** because student drops or poor performance occur in some of its courses, we have canvassed our faculty to find out more about those students who do not do well or perform poorly. Creative Writing reports little difficulty with student performance in their courses, noting that the First Wave and SOAR programs have done much to prepare students who wish to write creatively to do well. Although the Director and Assistant Director of English 100 have worked quite effectively with English 100 instructors to minimize drops among diversity students and enhance strong performance across sections of English 100, we recognize that these results are not consistent across the curriculum. To address retention concerns, Dr. Redfield has identified actions that she will pursue:

1. Utilize new Probation Report system

- Make contact with faculty and TA's
- Explain support from advisor(s)
- Connect students to services: UHS, McBurney, financial aid, etc.
- Create smaller support communities within English: returning adults, parents, vets, double majors, special interests/needs
- Ask other advisors for best practices in retention

2. Engage students through advising and career workshops

- Show students values of being declared
- Show students the wide range of potential careers in English

- Make sure students know about Karen Knipschild's services and support

3. Strengthen connections already made; make new ones

- Multi-cultural student center
- LGBTQ student center
- AIS program and American Indian Student and Cultural Center

4. Provide information, workshops, and support for faculty

- UHS "red folder" presentation
- New demographics: age, hours worked, goals with English
- McBurney, Vet Center, etc.
- Ask faculty what support they need from advisors

G.E. **English 100 assessment.** The English 100 Program engages in a range of program-specific and large scale assessment activities as part of its role as General Education Communication A course. Each year as part of its instructor training, the English 100 Program offers a range of activities which prepare instructors to assess student work and student learning, including the one-week training program prior to the fall semester, the pro-seminar for the teaching of writing that new instructors take in the fall, and professional development workshops offered throughout the academic year.

In 2012-2013, the program focused on the use of **portfolios** as an assessment tool for student learning. For the last 10 years the English 100 curriculum has used portfolios to provide students with the opportunity to integrate drafting and revision (a major learning outcome for Comm A) and to document growth in their writing. This year we developed professional development programming to intentionally focus on portfolios as a learning tool and offered several workshops on teaching with portfolios. Instructors had several opportunities to bring student portfolios to assess and discuss in order to create a common sense of student development and achievement.

Additionally, the program surveyed instructors on their use of technology in the classroom to gauge how to improve support for teaching with technology.

Finally, the program has participated in a number of assessment studies as part of its Comm A status. Below is a summary of English 100 participation in recent large-scale assessment activities.

2012-2013	Written Communication Value Rubric Project (Provost's Office)
2011-2012	Instructor Focus Groups for Comm A Information Literacy Assessment Study (General Education)
2010-2011	Comm A Pilot Study (General Education)
2009-2010	Comm A Benchmarking Study (General Education) Grade Gap/Future Gap: Addressing Racial Disparities in L&S Introductory Courses (L&S Equity & Diversity Committee)

D.F. Writing Fellows Program. The Undergraduate Writing Fellows Program routinely assesses its success. The program brings talented undergraduates and committed faculty together in a cooperative effort to improve student writing and learning. The program carefully selects and extensively trains students from a wide range of majors, to be peer writing mentors in writing-intensive courses across the University. A vibrant, remarkably engaged group of peer mentors, the Undergraduate Writing Fellows share their writing skills and intellectual curiosity with other undergraduates and make a real difference in undergraduate education at UW-Madison. The Fellows themselves form a wonderful learning community, dedicated to studying writing and helping peers excel with their writing and in the process building friendships that last long after graduation.

1. Assessment of demographic Information

Summer Collegiate Experience students (whom the Fellows assist in the summer) are all first generation college students and students of color. We do not receive demographic information on the classes Fellows assist with during the school year as they are an assortment of courses at different levels. Within the Writing Fellows program itself about 10% are students of color. Writing Fellows during 2012-2013 academic year: total: 44 (20 seniors; 14 sophomores and juniors) from 20 different majors within L&S:

Summer 2012: Writing Fellows assisted 150 students in the Summer Collegiate Experience program (first generation and minority college students)

Fall 2012: 446 students mentored in 21 courses (10 FIGs)

Spring 2013: 385 students mentored in 15 courses (38 Fellows in spring); 1 section of 10 first-year students taught by 2 Writing Fellows in the Rose Pathways Writing Workshop in Chadbourne Residential College (2 Writing Fellows)

2. Student evaluations.

Students in courses with Writing Fellows consistently give Fellows very high evaluations--3.3 or higher (on a scale of 0=poor; 4=very good) in answer to the question "how would you rate your experience with your Writing Fellow overall?"

From students who worked with Writing Fellows in fall 2012:

From a senior English major in GWS 340:

"[My Fellow] gave feedback/suggestions to help not only with this paper but with all of my writing. He really wanted to listen/stay true to my original ideas rather than tell me what changes I should make."

From a Senior Neurobiology major in History 242:

"[My Writing Fellow] wrote very detailed comments that showed me he spent a lot of time on it. He really helped with the structure, not just the grammar. He did a great job."

From a Junior Sociology and Legal Studies major in Political Science 425:

"[My Fellow] didn't only correct my grammar but instead gave more ideas and helped me focus on what I was writing about. She didn't leave until I understood what she meant. I loved [her] help!"

G. Graduate Programs in English

Since 2010, we have shrunk the size of our entering Literary Studies students and maintained or slightly decreased the size of the other graduate programs in English (see overview above). We have done so to match our entering class size with the post doctoral placements graduates are securing across our programs. In addition, we have provided considerably more support, including some summer fellowships, to decrease students' time to degree. Finally, we are encouraging graduate students to think widely about how their doctoral and master's degrees might lead to many careers in the public sphere, including the growing emphasis on public outreach and the public humanities. Graduate placements to date in 2013: 5, all tenure-track assistant professors; 27, for 2010-11 and 2011-12.

3. Conclusion

Key findings and impact

We seek to redress the lower undergraduate enrollments that have affected English and the humanities at UW-Madison and across the nation by making good use of our revised curriculum and new hires to craft an approach to literature, writing, and language that is flexible and aligned with the new media technologies and emerging fields of inquiry for students and faculty. We are aiming to bring these new foci into all levels of our curriculum, from English 100 and the FIG program, in which our faculty already participate, to the rest of the curriculum and beyond, to the wider public that we wish to connect more visibly to our teaching and outreach mission.

Next Steps

We have further work to do to design assessment plans that make sense for our department. We take the interest in new media technologies, interest in the public humanities, and career advising as collective markers for the work that lies ahead. Our future task will be to shape our curriculum so that all of these factors are at the core of what we do and how our students prepare themselves for post-graduate careers. We hope thereby to make visible to students, non-majors, undeclared students, English majors, and graduate students what many career trajectories already signal: that the English major is in demand because she or he has the

training, intellectual rigor, and flexibility most needed in today's working society, where the average worker will change jobs 6-8 times over a lifetime. Business and medical school admissions teams recognize the English and Humanities majors as students who know how to write and think and analyze as well as communicate what they know to others.