Program Assessment Report
Assessment Reporting
Spring 2010 – Spring 2011

Program Information

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<th>Degree Program(s):</th>
<th>English MA</th>
<th>Department:</th>
<th>English &amp; Comp. Lit.</th>
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Student Learning Outcome (SLO)

#7: Students will be prepared for further graduate study.

Evidence for Need:
While we had some success last year with two graduates going on to doctoral programs, and one to an MFA program, three others who applied did not receive admission.

Changes to Curriculum or Pedagogy:
In examining the results from the previous year, graduate faculty largely concluded it was an issue of helping students to correctly market themselves as applicants. Ultimately the only changes made in the department were in advising. The MA Adviser now takes great care to explain to students interested in going on to the PhD that they need to do a national search and not just expect one of the few doctoral programs in the Bay Area will accept them (especially given the tremendously competitive nature of Stanford, Berkeley and the other UC’s in English). Also, graduate advising now emphasizes the role of research in choosing a program that is a right fit for the student and in contacting programs to find out more about them. Making personal connections via email and at conferences is also emphasized.

We also instituted an “exit interview” of graduates beginning in 2009-2010 so that we can keep track of at least their immediate graduation plans. With most students being working adults with long commutes, less than 50% of graduates are now taking the time to do this but we are hopeful that it will catch on.

Evidence for Impact:
What is the evidence that the actions taken above impacted student learning for this outcome?

2010-2011
Four students applied for doctoral programs and four students were accepted in English at SUNY Buffalo, English at Purdue University, Rhetoric and Composition Program at UC Davis, and Slavic Studies at UCLA. Three of the four have also reported receiving very healthy support packages. In basic numbers we have gone from a 50% success rate of getting our graduates accepted into further graduate study in 2010 to 100% success rate this year. Yet this is hardly scientific given the small numbers we are working with. Two of the graduates who failed in 2010 were two of the successes in 2011.
Anecdotally, a student who graduated last year returned to say how well we had prepared her for her doctoral work at Southern Mississippi. Ironically, anecdotal, personal responses from individual students pursuing individual and unique careers in a variety of different doctoral programs may be our best evidence for this SLO.

Areas in need of improvement:
We still need a better system for keeping in touch with our alumni. Some students may wait years after graduation to apply to doctoral programs and the results are not always communicated to us. We wish that the alumni association and the department could work together in keeping lines of communication open. We also hope that students will continue to keep us informed about both their failures and their triumphs. The MA program would appreciate having a certain amount of staff time set aside to getting in contact with alumni and determining how we are serving our past and present students.

Another issue is with the assessment process itself. Being prepared for further graduate work is not required of all MA students and is ultimately assessed by faculty and institutions outside our department—so our own assessment of this SLO is ultimately an indirect assessment, not unlike for SLO #6 which ensures that students are prepared as teachers. The real proof of both of these SLO’s only develops after graduation and both SLO’s are really options for students with particular ambitions and not requirements for graduation with the MA. Yet, if our department were not able to prepare people for PhD programs or to teach in the field, our program would cease to function as a graduate program. Thus these last two SLOs are optional for students but absolutely essential for the program. Our question is: should we cut these from our program assessment process or would cutting anything so necessary to the identity of the program from assessment potentially leave these aspects of the program vulnerable to cuts in the era of ever decreasing budgets?