

WESTMONT COLLEGE

**Department of English**

**PROGRAM REVIEW**

**SIX-YEAR REPORT**

**2004-2010**

**SUBMITTED: SEPTEMBER 21, 2010**

**WESTMONT COLLEGE  
Department of English  
Program Review**

**SIX-YEAR REPORT  
2004-2010**

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**Department of English**

**SIX-YEAR REPORT**

**2004-2010**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**A. Mission Statement and Outcomes**

Over the past six years, the English Department's Mission Statement has gone through a couple of iterations. In Fall 2008, the Department adopted the following wording after working to shorten it and align it better with our student learning outcomes:

**Mission Statement for the English Department**

We seek to teach students to think critically, to read closely, and to write with rhetorical sensitivity as they encounter the incarnational value of literary art, an art that can represent God's creative reality. As our students explore various genres across various centuries, they will investigate the interplay of form and content as well as the interaction of text and historical context. As they wrestle with the ethical questions implicit in texts, they will examine their own assumptions, even as they witness an expansion of their sympathies. As they gain new knowledge of the understanding and use of the English language, our students will view the expressive capacity of English, in all its complexity, as an invaluable gift of which they are to be faithful stewards.

**Three Major Goals and Nine Learning Outcomes**

[See chart on next page]

| Goals   | Thinking Critically  | Reading Closely   | Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b>  | <p>1. Students will take their own cultural and theological framework into account as they read literary texts, and articulate how this synergy between faith and art influences their angle of vision and expands their <b>affections</b> and sympathies.</p> <p>2. Students will demonstrate intellectual curiosity by examining their own assumptions, entertaining new ideas, engaging in <b>research</b>, <b>analyzing</b> texts, and <b>evaluating</b> evidence.</p> | <p>3. Students will demonstrate familiarity with literary history, able to compare and contrast the work of writers from different periods, and comprehend the <b>content</b> and continuities that shape the <b>literary tradition</b>.</p> <p>4. Students will recognize and articulate how historical, cultural, biographical, theoretical, or interdisciplinary <b>contexts</b> frame the work and shape its meaning.</p> <p>5. Students will comprehend the characteristics of different <b>genres</b> and the ways in which a given work can uphold or undermine those conventions.</p> <p>6. Students will identify and analyze literary devices, figurative language, syntactic strategies, and narrative <b>techniques</b> in order to understand why a writer employs such techniques and what effects they create.</p> | <p>7. Students will write correct, clear, comprehensible, persuasive, and engaging prose. This includes mastering the basics of <b>grammar</b>, style, and mechanics.</p> <p>8. Students will move skillfully among various <b>modes</b> of writing—<b>especially explication, argument, and research essays</b>—with awareness of their strategies and purposes.</p> <p>9. Students will incorporate the voices of others into their writing by accessing scholarly material with online bibliographic tools, smoothly weaving <b>quotations</b> within their own prose, and appropriately <b>documenting</b> their contributions in MLA style format.</p> |
| <b>Where are the Learning Outcomes met?</b><br><br><b>I</b> introduced<br><b>D</b> developed<br><b>M</b> mastered | <b>I</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90<br><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses<br><b>M:</b> ENG 195, 117, 151, 152  | <b>I</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90<br><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses<br><b>M:</b> ENG 195, 117, 151, 152   | <b>I:</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90<br><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses<br><b>M:</b> ENG 104, 195, 117, 151, 152   |
| <b>How are they assessed?</b>   | Senior essays  | Pre- and post-tests in survey class<br><br>Senior essays  | Senior essays   |
| <b>Benchmark</b>  |  | All students score 50% or above on post-test and 5% or more score above 85%   |   |
| <b>Link to the learning standards</b>   | Christian orientation, diversity, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, active societal and intellectual engagement, written and oral communication.  | diversity, active societal and intellectual engagement, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, written and oral communication.  | research and technology, written and oral communication   |



### C. Notable Findings

Some of the more notable findings to be gleaned from this program review report are the following:

- 1) The English Department faculty is fully staffed for now, with eight full-time tenure-track professors, and balanced in gender, with four males and four females. In recent hirings we have made small incremental gains in ethnic diversity in the faculty, though achieving diversity has been and will continue to be a very slow process. Prof. Cook has announced his impending retirement in August, 2012, thus raising the prospect of another national search in the near future.
- 2) Compared with peer institutions, we have a high proportion of full-time tenure-track faculty to contingent faculty and thus a higher degree of involvement of our full-time faculty in teaching GE courses such as Composition and Studies in Literature. We have been able to attract highly qualified visiting professors for temporary full-time assignments, and would urge the college to consider creating a designation of "Teaching Fellow" to continue to draw visiting professors of the highest caliber.
- 3) During the period under review we have made substantial strides in program review by
  - writing a mission statement
  - converting an unwieldy list of 21 "Goals for our Majors" into a table of three major goals accompanied by nine student learning outcomes,
  - aligning the outcomes with our curriculum,
  - creating a schedule for assessing the outcomes,
  - undertaking significant assessment activities as a department according to our plan, including a collective grading of bibliographic research papers and pre- and post-testing in our Survey of British Literature courses,
  - altering parts of our major curriculum to include more world literature.

We have been somewhat behind schedule in undertaking assessment activities and completing our six-year program review, due to a transition in department administration in 2007, preoccupation with four national searches over the past five years, the devastating impacts of the Tea Fire on two of our faculty, and difficulty accommodating the nomenclature, methods, and structure of program review and assessment to our department's prevailing ethos. We have found our bearings in that process, yet we continue to strive to assess student learning in ways that focus and enhance rather than supplant our passions for teaching literature and writing.

- 4) The English major remains consistently among the three most popular majors on campus, with diversity among our majors marginally exceeding the rates in the general student population, though with a gender disproportion of more than 2:1 favoring female students. Our majors continue to achieve at a consistently high level and continue to hold the major and their professors in high esteem, as indicated by the results of two recent alumni surveys. We have

- seen a gratifyingly high rate of post-baccalaureate work among our 2004-2009 graduates, with 38 out of 74 respondents in a recent survey reporting that they have either completed or entered graduate programs. Our graduates go on not only into the fields of literary study but also into editing, law, medicine, dentistry, the life sciences, education, communications, art history, counseling psychology, public health, rhetoric and composition, and social work.
- 5) Student interest remains strong in our England Semester program, though it will continue to be a challenge for us as a department to staff the program every two years. While our British and American literature courses remain popular fixtures in the major, students have shown growing interest in the areas of world literature, medieval literature, film, creative writing, and journalism. We have encouraged student interest in the areas of world literature and medieval by hiring new professors with specializations in those areas, but we are insufficiently equipped to handle all of student demand particularly in the area of creative writing.
  - 6) We periodically teach courses called “Ethnicity and Race in American Literature,” “Jewish-American Literature” and “Irish Literature,” but we have not offered courses focused on the rich tradition of African-American literature or literatures of the various ethnic groups most often represented among our students, especially Asian and Hispanic. Apart from any “draw” such courses might have, we need to consider their possible impact on the literary horizons of all our majors and the impact of such courses on their understanding of literary theory. To offer more such courses, however, will probably make demands on our hiring of both full-time and part-time professors and may call for trade-offs between new courses and courses currently taught.”

#### **D. Next Steps**

The largest goal for our department in the foreseeable future is to review and revise a curriculum that has remained quite consistently the same for 35 years. To accomplish that goal will require the perspectives and counsel of a respected outside reviewer. That reviewer needs yet to be chosen, and will need to study this program review report and pay our faculty and students the necessary visits. Prior to hiring an outside reviewer, however, we as a department need to read and respond collectively to this report in a series of department conversations. To the extent possible, this process should be completed by the time we find it necessary to replace Prof. Cook upon his retirement in August 2012.

The English Department has not recently compared its program with that of any of its peer institutions, apart from the fact that in Spring 2010 the current chair received a close inside look at Biola University’s Department for which he served as outside reviewer in their five-year self-study. Making such a



comparison with several peer institutions would be a logical way of following through on this six-year review.

Early in the current academic year, the department needs to study the results of its two recent alumni surveys and discuss their possible implications for teaching, learning, curriculum design, off-campus programs, assessment, and co-curricular programs. Many student comments on the recent alumni surveys have a bearing on SLO #1, concerning Christian orientation. This is a learning outcome that could not be well assessed by our pre-tests and post-tests in the survey courses or by our collective grading of students' bibliographic research papers.

We have not talked formally of late about the way co-curricular activities help to achieve our student learning outcomes, nor have we consciously used our student learning outcomes to critique our department's co-curricular offerings and to propose changes. It may be helpful to us to recognize such an opportunity or need on our Multi-Year Assessment Plan [see Appendix, Table 8: "Multi-Year Assessment Plan"]

Our department's collective evaluations of students' bibliographic research papers has given us a favorable impression of our students' achievement of the three outcomes listed under the heading "Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity" and our research outcome under the heading "Thinking Critically." However, we will have to look for other instruments—perhaps instruments such as holistic critiques of sample papers, classroom observations, portfolios, or special tests—to assess how well our students are achieving outcomes other than #7 and #9. What those instruments might be, whether we want to use them, and whether our SLOs as currently stated are fully usable for assessment purposes are subjects requiring further discussion in the department.

## **2. THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT'S MISSION AND ROLE**

The College states its broad mission as follows:

*The mission of Westmont College is to provide a high quality undergraduate liberal arts program in a residential campus community that assists college men and women toward a balance of rigorous intellectual competence, healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitment.*

([http://www.westmont.edu/\\_offices/institutional\\_portfolio/FoundationalDocuments.html](http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/institutional_portfolio/FoundationalDocuments.html)).

### ***How We Relate to the Mission of the College***

The English Department helps the College fulfill its stated mission primarily by confronting students with rigorous courses in the GE program and in the English major, courses in the history, theory, and critical analysis of literature in the English language, as well as courses in many modes and forms of writing. As specialists in undergraduate education, we stress excellence in teaching and learning. Excellence in teaching requires that we passionately and thoroughly ground ourselves in our subject matter so that we

can give authoritative guidance to our students. We also try to adapt to the developmental phases of students as they mature, recognize the students' various "frames of mind" or multiple intelligences (to borrow language from Howard Gardner), and equip students to meet high learning standards that we set for them. Increasingly, excellence in teaching has come to mean defining the desired learning outcomes for our students and studying their performance for indications of their success in learning. As contributors to a liberal arts education, we engage in give and take with many other fields of study. We deliberately have limited the number of units in our major to encourage students to double major in English and other subjects. We borrow information, ideas, and questions freely from other disciplines; at the same time, we show students how literary imagination, literary analytical skills, literary research skills, and writing skills can enrich their other studies, their lives, and their professional careers. We promote the residential character of a Westmont education by engaging our students outside the classroom as well as in it: on field trips, in co-curricular activities, and in extended off-campus programs, which give students an opportunity to live in close, spiritually rich, and intellectually stimulating community.

For the sake of intellectual rigor we try to set a standard for academic excellence in English study, a standard surpassing that of community colleges, many state universities, and many of our peer institutions. We aspire in our composition courses to assure that every student is competent in methods of academic research and able to enter actively and successfully into academic discourse. That requires specific attention to the logic of argument and the devices of persuasion; it requires mastery of scholarly documentation; it requires discipline in both close and wide reading; it requires serious colloquy both in and outside of the classroom; and it requires a great deal of writing followed by cycles of feedback and revision, judged against the standards of publication and favorable critical acceptance. Every year we hope to see and do see some of our most distinguished majors going on to law schools, medical schools, and English graduate programs, often at such highly respected schools as UC Irvine, Oxford, Notre Dame, Stanford, Yale, U of Washington, Emory University, U. of Chicago, and others.

For the sake of healthy personal development in students, members of the department take part as mentors and participants in a variety of interactions with students beyond the classroom, including clubs and honor societies, student publications, academic advising, chapel services, discussion panels, missions trips, public readings, and field trips to music, art, dramatic productions, or lectures. Among ourselves we try to model relationships marked by integrity, mutual respect, and commitment to one another as colleagues, and we allow students in appropriate ways to enter into our personal and family lives. In the classroom itself, we treat literature and writing as activities that not only challenge the mind but also test students' deeply rooted notions, shape their values, cultivate their virtues, and strengthen their communities.

And for the sake of strong Christian commitment we evaluate our teaching in terms of its impact on the students' growth in faith and learning synthesis, making that a standard question on all student course evaluations. In our classes, though we're not often given to biblical "proof-texting," we tend to keep

the Scriptures in view, both to guide and to challenge our understanding, as we use literary studies to engage students in exploration of complex moral issues. We approach literature respectfully *sub specie aeternitatis* (“under the view of heaven”), as an art form that has a bearing on our and our students’ faith and our grasp of ultimate meaning. One of our models in this respect is former Professor and department chair Dr. Arthur Lynip, for whom we have named the department’s most generous and coveted award for majors in English. We want to see students go on after Westmont to a life of continued lively interest in literature and lives of growth in an intellectually engaged faith.

### ***How We Contribute to the General Education Program***

The English Department plays a vital role in the General Education Program by providing students with popular options under several of the Program’s main headings: Common Skills, Common Inquiries, and Competent and Compassionate Action. Here is a listing of the English department offerings under their various headings in the outline of the GE program:

#### **Common Inquiries:**

##### II.A. Reading Imaginative Literature

ENG-006, Studies in Literature

ENG-044, Studies in World Literature

ENG-045, Studies in Classic Literature: Dante

ENG-134 Race and Ethnicity in American Literature

##### II.E. Performing and Interpreting the Arts

ENG-174 (England Semester), Major Author

ENG-123 (Europe Semester), Narrative and the Arts of Europe

##### II.F. Thinking Globally

ENG-044, Studies in World Literature

ENG-165, Topics in World Literature

#### **Common Skills**

##### III.A.1: Writing for the Liberal Arts

ENG-002, Composition

##### III.A.2,3 Writing or Speech-Intensive Courses

All English courses except ENG-044, -046, -047, -105, -106, -168, -169, and -191SS,

#### **Competent and Compassionate Action:**

##### IV.A.1 Productions and Presentations

ENG-141, Creative Writing

ENG-142, Workshop in Creative Writing

#### IV.A.3 Integrating the Major Discipline,

ENG-195, Senior Seminar

ENG-0197 Comprehensive Examination

#### IV.B.1 Serving Society and Enacting Justice

ENG-134, Ethnicity and Race in American Literature

ENG-136, Jewish-American Literature

ENG-191SS, Reading in the Community

ENG-196 (EngSem), Communicating Cross-Culturally;

The greatest service our department provides for all students is teaching ENG-002, Composition, a composition course designed especially for first-year students from any major or of no declared major. In the course, we strive to bring every student up at least to college-level competence in expository writing. Students who pass this rigorous course are able to craft forms and express themselves clearly in a variety of nonfiction modes and genres; they understand the phases of the writing process and use it to advantage; they know the importance of revising their own work and know the value of consulting with others to get fresh perspectives on their work; they know the elements of solid critical reasoning and argument; they know how to employ responsible college-level research methods using both library and on-line sources of information; they know the perils of plagiarism, the responsibilities of fair attribution, and the value of originality in their own work; and they know how to document their use of other sources by using one or both of the major documentation styles favored in the humanities, either MLA or APA. Though students in Composition are not taught grammar in systematic fashion, they are refreshed in their grammatical knowledge through close critiques of their work by the instructor, often in private conference, and through exercise in the crafting of sentences, paragraphs, and longer passages of writing.

The College has committed itself to a high standard of instruction in writing by requiring not only foundational instruction at the first-year level but continuing growth in writing through writing-intensive courses at the upper levels both inside and outside of the student's major. The English Department makes all but a handful of its courses writing-intensive, and numerous of its courses are available without prerequisites, so that students outside of the major may feel welcome to register for them and thus combine their intensive writing experience with experience in close reading and lively class discussion. For students at any level and from any major, the English Department offers the Writers' Corner, a peer tutoring center staffed by accomplished writers, almost all English majors, who are trained and supervised by a member of our Department. Among current department faculty, VanderMey, Larsen-Hoeckley, and currently Skripsky have all supervised the Writers' Corner. The Writers' Corner is available about seven hours a night, five nights a week, in the Library. Tutors advise students on matters ranging from grammar and mechanics to research, from critical reasoning to style and voice, without "fixing" their papers for them.

As for the English Department offerings that satisfy "Common Inquiries" requirements, when the

GE program was created earlier this decade we had to choose whether to press to be included among the “Common Contexts” offerings, along with history, philosophy, and religious studies “content” courses, or whether to count ourselves among the “ways of knowing” courses we would henceforth call “Common Inquiries.” We chose the latter, to avoid being pressured toward thinking of literature as a fixed body of knowledge that all students would be mandated to learn. Instead, we wanted to introduce students who had elected such courses as “Studies in Literature” or “Studies in World (or Classic) Literature” or “Race and Ethnicity in Literature” to encounter literature as a unique way of exercising the imagination at the intersection of art, language, history, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and potentially any other possible subjects.

We have grown in the past 6-8 years by citing World Literature as an area in which to expand our offerings, not only for our majors but also for students in GE classes. We have added such classes as ENG-044, Studies in World Literature, and ENG-165, Topics in World Literature, to the GE “Common Inquiries” category, “Thinking Globally.” We have offered those courses more frequently; we have steered GE students toward them in our academic advising; and we have stressed world Anglophone literature in two hiring searches (in 2005-6 and 2007-8), one of which resulted in the hiring of Dr. Artuso, a specialist in world, post-colonial, and Anglophone literature, who now every semester offers courses meeting “Thinking Globally” requirements. Members of the department—Delaney, Larsen-Hoeckley, Hess, and VanderMey—have also taken advantage of the unique advantages of the England and Europe semesters to craft courses in literature and literary theory that satisfy GE requirements under the heading of “Performing and Interpreting the Arts.”

As for “Competent and Compassionate Action,” we have steadily offered ENG-141, Creative Writing,” as an option under IV.A.1 “Productions and Presentations,” but at Dr. Willis’s initiative, we have lately increased our options in this area by adding ENG-142, “Workshop in Creative Writing,” where students can concentrate on a specific genre such as poetry or fiction for a whole semester. To satisfy the IV.A.3 “Integrating the Major Discipline” option under the heading of “Competent and Compassionate Action” we offer senior-level seminars every semester as well as an opportunity for especially motivated graduate school-bound students to take a Comprehensive Examination by organizing personal study with each member of the department. Three courses commonly taught on the England Semester also satisfy the “IMD” requirements. Finally, we offer several ways for majors to meet requirements for IV.B.1 “Serving Society and Enacting Justice.” In addition to a couple of courses—ENG-134, Race and Ethnicity in Literature and ENG-136, Jewish-American Literature—we have, for about six years offered a 0-unit practicum in the community called Eng-191SS, Reading in the Community, in which students read literary works to clients in local retirement communities and nursing homes, or record their readings of literature for the local non-profit organization Reading for the Blind and Dyslexic. Students may also meet the IV.B.2 option, Communicating Cross-Culturally, by taking ENG-196 and -191, specially designed by Profs. Paul Delaney and Jodi AllenRandolph for this year’s England Semester.

### ***How We Provide Support for Other Programs***

Besides the Writers' Corner, which serves all departments, all majors, and all students and faculty, as described above, our professors and students give support to other programs in a host of ways. We coordinate our curriculum with the Education Department to assure that English majors who wish to go into secondary-level teaching are broadly and well prepared in their discipline. The Education Track and four-year "fast track" for English majors is carefully spelled out in our department's section of the college catalog. Prof. VanderMey has served for more than five years on the Education Program Advisory Committee, which counsels the Education Department on questions of programs and policies. Our professors have designed such courses as ENG-045, Classical Mythology, ENG-087, Journalism, ENG-101, Film Studies, and ENG-101, Modern Grammar and Advanced Composition so that they have wide appeal to students from other majors, particularly to students from the Communications Studies Department. As mentioned above, we keep our general major small in terms of credit units (minimum 36) so that students are more apt to double major in English and some other subject.

Profs. Willis, VanderMey and Cook have, in the past six years, served as Faculty Advisors to two major student publications: the arts magazine, *The Phoenix*, and the student newspaper, *The Horizon*. In that capacity, the publications advisers have served as resources for any students interested in growing as journalists, sometimes offering free and open-invitation workshops in journalistic writing, as well as participating in leadership seminars with gatherings of all student leaders. English professors and student majors commonly serve as references for other faculty and students on campus with questions on grammar, usage, English etymology, documentation conventions, literary sources, critical theory, and so on. Professors Skripsky, Larsen-Hoeckley, and VanderMey have, over the past six years, co-lead an Ireland Mayterm with a Communications Studies professor, overseen the co-curricular discussion program on campus called "Tuesdays With Morals," and co-lead the Europe Semester three times with professors from Art History, Physics, and Computer Science. English professors have sponsored discussions for the "Reel Talk" series of on-campus film screenings or invited other classes into their classes to see screenings of films or visits by writers or scholars. Especially due to the relatively large size of the department, various English professors have routinely been in demand to serve on major faculty committees such as the Faculty Council, the Faculty Executive Senate, the Academic Review Committee, the Personnel Committee, the Admissions Committee, the Communications Board, the Program Review Committee, the GE Committee, the Long-Range Planning Committee, administrative search committees and more. They have served as respondents to Phi Kappa Phi speakers and visiting lecturers. Prof. VanderMey served from 2007-2009 as chair of the Campus Diversity Committee and last year as a drafter of the statement for the President's Task Force on the Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diversity; he has also served for over six years on the Board of Directors for the Lit Moon Theater Company, a 20-year-old theater company led by Prof. John Blondell of the Theater Arts Department with outreach both into the student body, into the community,

and into Europe. Prof. Larsen Hoeckley has served as Baccalaureate speaker. Prof. Willis has annually led a several-day alumni gathering in Ashland, OR, at the Ashland Shakespeare Festival.

Over and above such numerous ways in which English faculty have joined in, collaborated, and served their college, they have served with a sense of self-awareness as consciences of the college, speaking out publically and privately in behalf of civil communication, moral argument, sensitivity to the nuances of the spoken and written word, wariness of cliché, cant, and bureaucratese, and appreciation for the spiritual, psychological, and social complexities of interactions in our world and throughout history. Our department has taken its role seriously as voice for the humanities, promoting the sorts of intellectual and Christian virtues, sympathies, affections, and social commitments that are so strikingly set forth in our college document, “What We Want for Our Graduates” (see [http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional\\_portfolio/documents/Whatdowewantforourgraduates.pdf](http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional_portfolio/documents/Whatdowewantforourgraduates.pdf)).

### **3. STATISTICAL INFORMATION: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Significant Recent Changes in the Department***

The six years covered by this report have been marked by a substantial change in department personnel and leadership. The effort to fill vacated positions has led, in turn, to significant changes in the mix and balance of teaching emphases among our faculty.

After the 2005-2006 school year, Prof. Heather Speirs retired after 20 years of service to the department. She was someone who had frequently led the England Semester, taught Women Writers, World Literature, Race and Ethnicity and a variety of other literature and writing courses, and in her later years at the college, played an administrative role as the director of Off-Campus Programs. Speirs was especially active in the areas of assessment, diversity, and off-campus programming; her loss was keenly felt. Two years later, in 2007-2008, both Dr. John Sider and Dr. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre retired, Sider after 36 years of service and McEntyre after 10. Both had served as Vice Chair of the Faculty. Sider had received the honor of being named Distinguished Professor because of his length of service, the breadth and depth of his scholarship in Renaissance era and biblical studies, and his success in a traditional style of teaching. In his last years he had taught a landmark seminar on Robert Browning in addition to carrying a heavy load of teaching British literature survey courses. McEntyre had received Teacher of the Year Honors in 1999 and 2006 and had shared the department chair duties with Dr. Paul Delaney in 2003. McEntyre was a strong advocate for the department and a goad to the faculty in matters of social conscience, the uses and abuses of language, quality of communal life and discourse, quality of writing, and the importance of contemplative reading. She also served as a link between our department and the pre-med program. Major pillars of the department were thus removed.

Speirs and McEntyre had been teaching less than full loads in their final years here; their departures, combined with Sider's and a couple of open adjunct slots, combined to give the English department the equivalent of three full-time positions to fill. The four-year process of filling those positions gave the department a chance to reexamine its priorities. In department meetings in Spring 2006, and in response to campus discussions on diversity, we reached consensus that in order to pursue our department's and the college's goals for diversifying the faculty, we should start by diversifying our course offerings. Subsequently, in Fall 2006, we conducted two national searches for positions in literature, one in post-colonial literature and another in world Anglophone literature. This was a significant shift in the development of our major curriculum; it added a world literature dimension to our offerings that we had not had before. By spring 2007 we had filled one of the two positions and were joined in Fall 2007 by Dr. Kathryn Stelmach (now Artuso), a specialist in 20<sup>th</sup>-century transatlantic literary relationships, including Irish Renaissance literature, Caribbean literature, Southern Renaissance literature, and Harlem Renaissance literature. With Dr. Artuso's help we were able to provide new courses in world and American literature.

Having filled only one of our three full-time openings, however, we were able to conduct two national searches the following year. This time, however, in spring 2007, we decided to devote one of the two searches to a composition specialist who would also be able to teach some literature. In that way we wanted to absorb some of the pressure on the rest of the faculty to teach composition courses without relying too heavily on temporary adjuncts. The other position went still further than before in the search for a world literature specialist who might bring greater ethnic diversity to the department. The composition search resulted in our hiring of Sarah Yoder (now Skripsky), who came to us in Fall 2008. The other search resulted in our making an offer to a Malaysian scholar in world Anglophone literature, who finally turned down the offer. Having a remaining position to fill, and having noted the rise of interest in medieval literature that we had seen under Prof. Sider, we collectively decided in spring 2008 not to continue to pursue the costly, risky, and in some sense luxurious path of hiring a second world Anglophone specialist; instead, we bought some time by offering a two-year full-time visiting assistant professor position to Dr. Candace Hull Taylor, a medieval literature scholar and Westmont alumna with a degree from UC Davis. In spring 2009, we agreed to conduct our fourth national search, this time for a tenure-track medieval scholar who could help us fill the crater left by the departure of Sider. In spring 2010 we completed that search by hiring Dr. Jamie Friedman, a medieval literature scholar from Cornell. Dr. Friedman joins us in Fall 2010.

The story of our last six years in the department, told against the background of retirements, sabbatical leaves, semester-long off-campus program leadership by Speirs, Larsen-Hoeckley, Delaney, and VanderMey, and a change of department chair from Delaney to VanderMey in summer 2007, is one of purposeful re-crafting of the curriculum and re-balancing of our faculty. For the time being, we have a full complement of eight full-time tenure-track faculty, four female and four male, and we are recharged at the assistant professor level, with added strengths in the composition, medieval literature, and world literature areas. We have been advised by Professor Cook that he will retire not later than August 2012. His departure



will leave a sizable gap in the areas of American literature, film studies, and racially and ethnically diverse literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will have to respond to these losses as well as to growing interest from students in areas such as film studies, creative writing, and journalism; we anticipate a more thorough review of our curriculum after we have processed this review.

One other major development needs to be recognized: in November, 2008, the now-famous Tea Fire leveled a couple of our department faculty members' homes along with other campus buildings and much vegetation. The shock and dishevelment caused by that event, as well as by the "Jesusita" fire five months later, did not stand in the way of our hiring process, but it has shoved collegial concerns to the foreground to an unusual degree and to some extent slowed down the march of our program review. Were it not for the fire's direct impact, this review might otherwise have been completed, as originally scheduled, a year ago.

### ***Research, Teaching, Serving the Community, and Administrative Service***

The past six years have been a time of varied and voluminous professional activity by members of the English Department, activity that is particularly notable because it is accomplished on top of the heavily writing-saturated teaching that members of the department offer to both GE students and a large number of majors. During this time we have seen an impressive number and quality of publications, professional presentations, service to the college in administrative and advisory roles, and interaction with the community. The highlights of our department members' output have been the three books and seven essays published by Marilyn McEntyre, including the book *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), which drew together into one volume her presentations in the prestigious Stone Lecture series at Princeton University. Before her retirement from the department in 2009, McEntyre was engaged in a spate of publishing ventures, public speaking engagements, and community teaching arrangements that brought special honor to the department. Another highlight has been the continual outpouring of effort and recognition received by Paul Willis, for his work in poetry and essay writing, and for his many public presentations.

### ***Research***

Here is a tally of the most important accomplishments in research, publishing, and professional presentations by full-time tenured or temporary members of the department. Publication details are more fully spelled out in Appendix 9.

BOOKS (authored, edited, or co-edited scholarly or creative):

**Allen Randolph** (1 authored "companion" to an Irish poet), **Jacobsen** (1 authored collection of informal essays), **Larsen Hoeckley** (1 edited collection of articles), **McEntyre** (3 authored, including 2 collections of poetry and 1 bound volume of essays), **Skripsky** (2 co-edited volumes), **VanderMey** (1 co-edited second and third editions, 1 authored book of

poems), **Willis** (3 authored books of poems, 1 authored book of essays, and 1 set of “alpine novels” forthcoming, 1 co-edited collection of poems)

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES, CHAPTERS, ARTICLES IN VOLUMES, CREATIVE PRODUCTIONS, AND REVIEWS:

**Artuso** (3 articles, 2 reviews and 1 forthcoming review, 1 essay in an edited collection), **Delaney** (1 article in edited collection), **Larsen Hoeckley** (2 articles in edited collections, 4 reviews and 1 review forthcoming), **VanderMey** (1 article in edited volume), **Willis** (74 published poems and 8 forthcoming, 8 essays and 1 forthcoming, 4 reviews, 1 scholarly article forthcoming,

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

**Artuso** (6 professional conference presentations), **Larsen Hoeckley** (5 professional conference presentations), **Skripsky** (4 professional conference presentations), **VanderMey** (1 keynote address, 3 professional workshops), **Willis** (2 scholarly presentations, 35 readings, 3 invited addresses, 12 workshops, panels or other public appearances).

*Administrative Service*

English Department members are routinely chosen to serve on faculty committees, task forces, and other administrative bodies. Their tendencies to have good critical thinking skills, as well as strong writing abilities, sensitivity to emotional nuance, social awareness, and clear oral communication, make them sought-after as both participants and representatives of the humanities in faculty deliberations. Here are some individual highlights of department members’ service to the college since 2004:

**Artuso:** Campus Diversity Committee, 2009-2010, Theatre Arts Search Committee, 2008, Erasmus Lecture Coordinator, 2008-2009, Budget and Salary Committee; **Delaney:** Personnel Committee, Faculty Senate, Department Chair (3 years), Personnel Committee, Faculty Secretary, Sponsor of Sigma Tau Delta (STD) honors society, London Theatre Mayterm, 2005, 2007, England Semester, 2008, 2010; **Larsen Hoeckley:** Faculty Council, Sponsor of STD; Europe Semester, 2007, 2009, England Semester, 2006; **McEntyre:** [recent CV unavailable]; **Sider:** Vice-Chair of the Faculty, **Speirs:** Off-Campus Programs Coordinator, Diversity Committee; **VanderMey:** Diversity Committee Chair (3 years), Communications Board (6 years), Department Chair (3 years), Task Force on Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diversity; Faculty Senate (3 years) and Executive Senate (1 year), Europe Semester Co-Leader, 2008; outside reviewer for Biola University Department of English Five-Year Self-Study; **Skripsky:** Writer’s Corner Supervisor (2008— ); **Willis:** Personnel Committee, 2006-07; English Department Search Committee, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2009-2010, Diversity Committee, 2004-05, Philosophy Department Search Committee,

2004-06, Convocation Committee, 2003-06; Interim Chair, Fall 2008;

### ***Community Service***

Professors Delaney, Larsen Hoeckley, McEntyre, Speirs, VanderMey, and Willis have been particularly active in the community in the past six years. McEntyre was much sought after as a speaker, group leader, panelist, public lecturer, and adult education program teacher in connection with her poetry and her interests in the interface between literature and medicine, in contemplative reading, in theology, in American literature, in the creative process, and in various progressive causes. Larsen Hoeckley has been active in the Cesar Chavez Charter School and in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. McEntyre, VanderMey, and Willis have served multiple times on the judging panel for the Santa Barbara Foundation's Pillsbury Creative Writing Award. VanderMey has been active as an elder, greeter, usher, and small-group leader through Hope Community Church; he has co-led a poetry group through Hospice of Santa Barbara, given poetry readings in the community, and contributed to numerous philanthropic appeals for college, community, and world causes. He has served for the past six years on both the Board of Directors for the Lit Moon Theater and the Western District Executive Board of the Missionary Church. Willis has been a leader in the Santa Barbara poetry community, contributing to Book and Author Festivals, giving numerous public readings, and helping to organize, publicize, and put on many public poetry events. Willis has maintained an active interest in Sierra Treks, a wilderness expedition and advocacy group led by his brother Dave. He has sponsored several events in the Los Padres Forest, honoring the work of poet William Stafford, and he has continued to work at public trail maintenance. Willis has also helped lead an annual excursion for college alumni to the Shakespeare Festival at Ashland, OR, at which he lectures on the backgrounds of the plays.

### ***Teaching***

Ten teaching highlights for the department in the past six years have been

- 1) the appointment of Dr. John Sider to Distinguished Professor rank in 2006,
- 2) the enthusiastic response of our students to teaching in our departments—of particular note would be the success of Prof. McEntyre in awakening students to the subtleties of language; Prof. Larsen Hoeckley in impacting the faith, values, and reasoning of her students, on campus as well as on England and Europe Semester off-campus programs; Prof. Delaney for the liveliness of his engagement with live drama on the South and Central Coast and in England and the power of his seminars, especially freshman honors seminars and his seminar on William Faulkner, as well as his championing of Irish literature; Prof. Willis for expanding the creative writing offerings to include creative nonfiction, including students in oral readings of their original work, and devising a successful service-learning practicum, "Reading in the Community"; Prof. Cook for his creativity in teaching film, Jewish-American literature, and Race and Ethnicity in American Literature; Prof. VanderMey for his courses in "classic" world literature such as Dante

and Classical Mythology and his growth into the field of journalism; Prof. Artuso for her innovations in world Anglophone literature; Prof. Taylor for her effective teaching of Chaucer and of literature and writing courses at every level; Prof. AllenRandolph for her outstanding teaching of advanced composition, poetry, and world literature, and her influence on the careers of several graduate-school-bound students; and Prof. Skripsky for her emphasis on composition and the fresh rhetorical thinking she has brought to the teaching of writing, her strengthening of the Writer's Corner, and her co-leadership of the Ireland Mayterm;

- 3) the success of the three-course screenwriting sequence taught by Writer-in-Residence John Wilder,
- 4) the popularity and sustained quality of the England Semester, thanks especially to the academic and administrative leadership of Delaney and Larsen Hoeckley, and for fall 2010, also Jodi AllenRandolph,
- 5) curricular innovations by Larsen Hoeckley and VanderMey in co-leading their respective Europe Semesters,
- 6) Delaney's industry in building literature classes around field trips to a variety of regional venues to see live drama,
- 7) the high quality of student work in Honors Studies in Literature,
- 8) Sider's seminar on Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* and the historical substance of lectures in the two British survey courses,
- 9) the expansion of the Department's offerings in world literature, thanks especially to Artuso's course creation at both the lower and upper levels, as well as to the introduction of a more diverse literature in GE and writing courses, taught by several other professors in the Department, and
- 10) the service dimension added to the major curriculum by ENG-191SS: Reading in the Community, the response to which has exceeded expectations.

In light of the above, it would seem fair to characterize the English Department faculty as professionally sound, active, and notably strong in all the major areas evaluated by the college for promotion and tenure, with a respected stature in the college that has been sustained through several retirements and hirings. Members of the department have an impact that is visible and profound in the community and among constituents.

The department members have periodically encouraged each other in acts of community service. There has been little or no focused, open discussion, however, on how all members of the department could serve their community more effectively or concertedly. There has been little discussion on how we might connect with high schools or churches in the area, how we might interact with sister colleges and universities, or how we might participate in community improvement events. There have been only sporadic mutual encouragements to collaborate in research and publishing projects. There has been little discussion of ways to supervise service-learning projects beyond the GE-sanctioned "Reading in the

Community.” There has been little explicit effort on the part of the department to encourage its members to secure grant funding, apart from grant sources in our own Provost’s Office.

When we have discussed teaching, research, or service in the department, they topics have often mirrored larger discussions in the faculty: how to find a healthy balance between teaching, research, and service; how to find more time for reading and writing; how to create or use existing forums to showcase student and faculty work. All would probably agree that it would be good for us, across the board, to be more active in professional organizations such as MLA, CCCC, or CCL, or professional organizations with more specialized interests. The more recently hired members of the department—Kathryn Artuso, Sarah Skripsky, Candace Hull Taylor, and Jamie Friedman—set a good example to be emulated, and longer-serving professors, especially Larsen Hoeckley and Delaney, set a good example of participation at the leadership level in such organizations as CCL. We have sponsored two CCL Western District conferences at Westmont College in the past 20 years. Perhaps especially with new campus buildings to accommodate visitors in style, it is time for us to begin planning once again to host a conference on our campus. Based on feedback from the department members to the chair concerning department meetings, the department would welcome a more generous allocation of time to the sharing of our own professional interests and works in progress. Such comments often occur in the context of expressed reservations about the amount of time devoted to program review and assessment tasks.

***Faculty Load [See Appendix A, Chart 1B, Full-time Faculty]***

Faculty load in the English Department is decided through an amicable process of negotiation between the Provost, the Department Chair, and the faculty member, matching department needs with the needs, professional development schedules, and preferences of the faculty members. The normal load is three four-unit courses per semester. On rare occasions faculty members request to teach one-course overloads, but overloads are not routine and are never coerced. Faculty members traditionally have agreed to our standing policy that each member of the department will teach first-year composition, if asked, for at least one semester per year. Composition is regarded as one of the most taxing courses we teach, because of the paper grading and the amount of student contact time required, especially in training students to write documented research papers. The sharing of composition instruction by all, even including the more senior professors, has kept any one professor from carrying a crushing load of writing classes and has assured that upper-level literature classes are likewise evenly distributed. As a result, we have not had to rely on a large cadre of adjunct instructors to carry the composition load, as one would see at peer institutions such as Azusa Pacific and Biola, where two-thirds of the staff may be part-time adjuncts and many full-time professors teach no composition at all.

There might be several reasons for lightening a faculty member’s teaching load. Newly hired professors are given a one-course professional development release in their first year. Faculty members may compete for grants from the Provost’s Office supporting one-course professional development leaves.

Sabbaticals leaves equivalent to a normal one-semester load are granted fairly routinely on a seven-year schedule. In the past six years, five professors have enjoyed either full or partial sabbaticals. Other situations affecting faculty load are leadership of student organizations or practica or chairing the department. A professor is given one course credit for supervising either the Writer's Corner or the student newspaper over the course of a year. The chair is given one course release per year for chairing the department.

Faculty loads can effectively increase when the professor voluntarily agrees to supervise independent studies, tutorials, or major honors projects. The chair oversees such arrangements and officially discourages anyone from conducting more than two such projects in a semester, three in a year. Not all faculty members agree as readily as others to such arrangements. In the past six years, Profs. Willis and McEntyre have taken on the most such extra assignments.

The distribution of faculty load in the department has not been a point of contention in the department or a chronic concern of individual professors. Load issues, if they involve general principles, are decided by consensus reached through conversation in department meetings, within the parameters stated in the Faculty Handbook and with the advice and consent of the Provost. Load issues involving leaves of absence, professional development, or discipline for cause are decided by the Provost, perhaps in consultation with the chair. All other, more minor, load issues and adjustments are decided between the faculty member and the chair through one-on-one discussion, especially in the spring semester when the chair submits a load report to Bill Wright and considers faculty members' personal requests for course assignments. The current system is flexible enough to accommodate faculty members' and the department's needs; the individual faculty members have seemed reasonably content with their loads from year to year. There has not appeared a compelling need to change the system. Increases in faculty service load tend to reflect years of service, willingness to "say yes," strength of a given faculty member's reputation among other faculty, and the faculty member's own interests. The department until recently has been top-heavy with full and associate professors; the heavier work load some of them have assumed accords with their years of networking and experience. The faculty as a whole has been wrestling for almost a decade with the sense that too much work is loaded on too few. That complaint is common to many organizations, and the English Department, while probably not being taxed more heavily than other departments, shares the kind of work load that has been the subject of such chronic complaints. The department itself is a small institution that mirrors the larger one in that some routinely carry more of a service load than others. The hope of a solution probably resides in the success of the faculty's and administration's general grapplings with this problem. The faculty's restructuring of the Academic Senate in 2009-2010, turning it into a smaller body and dissolving the Executive Senate, are steps in a promising direction. The routinizing of assessment, program review, and General Education procedures under the supervision of a new Dean for assessment and curriculum development is another promising step from which the busiest ones in the department of English may expect to benefit.

***Part-time Faculty [see Appendix, Chart 2A, Part-Time Faculty]***

The ratio of full-time to part-time faculty in an average year between 2004 and 2010 has been 8/5. The exception was the year 2009-2010, when the ratio was frozen at 8/2 because of a freeze in hiring in response to the previous year's severe economic downturn and subsequent low student enrollment. If it is desirable by the standards of the profession [cf. a position paper on this subject published by the AAUP, available at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/contingent/contingentfacts.htm>] not to rely unduly on the services of contingent faculty, then we have a desirable ratio, especially relative to peer institutions such as Biola and Azusa Pacific University, where the ratio is closer to 1/2.5. Our full-time tenure-track faculty members bear almost the entire load of advising and most of the load of teaching Composition (ENG-002) and Studies in Literature (ENG-006 and ENG-044). In other words, our professors who are most thoroughly vetted and evaluated, most experienced, and most devoted to the spiritual and academic mission of the college are the ones most heavily involved in the lives of our students at both the lower and upper levels. The result is a qualitative enhancement of the culture in our department—closer faculty/student relationships, more engagement of full-time faculty in the whole program of the department, more continuity in the department's thinking and conduct of its business.

The contingent faculty profiled in Charts 2A and 2B have not all served on equal terms. Some are specialists; some serve in Off-Campus programs; some are on contingent status only because their teaching time is shared with service in the administration; and some are fill in as needed in the Common Skills and Common Inquiries courses in our GE program. More specifically, Alvord and Andrews-Jaffe have served on the England Semester and Urban Program, respectively. McGarry, an import from Santa Barbara City College, has served in a standing capacity, teaching one course a year in Language Acquisition, especially for the benefit of those enrolled in Education Preparation tracks. Speirs cut back from a full-time appointment to part-time so that she could fulfill obligations as an Assistant Dean in the area of Off-Campus Programs administration. Wilder has served as effectively as, in effect, a "Writer in Residence," uniquely qualified to teach a three-course sequence of screenwriting courses of his own devising. AllenRandolph climbed from lower-level and part-time status to entirely upper-level and virtually full-time status over a period of five years in the department, before vying for a full-time tenure-track position which she did not receive. The others—Hess, Jacobsen, Pagès, Perez, and McEntyre—have filled in one or two courses per semester as needed. Collier, a Professor of French, taught one class in literature in 2009-2010 for reasons having more to do with enrollments in French than with specific needs in our department. Six-to-eight years ago the faculty took special note of the ethical responsibility of the college not to come to rely on an under-paid, over-worked cadre of part-time instructors serving indefinitely long terms without hope of securing promotion or permanence on the faculty. Since then, our department has avoided that trap.

The adjunct corps, while balanced in gender, could potentially bring greater ethnic diversity to the department. However, until Fall 2010, only Perez, a young Latina scholar then pursuing her doctoral work at

UCLA, has been other than “White.” A conscious goal of the department in the future could be to use necessary adjunct appointments more purposefully as ways of adding cultural and ethnic diversity to the department—not instead of ethnically more diverse tenure-track hires but in addition to them. The hiring of an Arab-American adjunct, Gregory Orfalea, to teach composition in the current academic year, is a healthy step in this direction but hardly more than a token of intent. Some discussion is floating about now, remaining to be taken up by faculty and administration leadership, concerning the possibility of creating a visiting “Teaching Fellow” position to bring greater diversity and experience to the “fill-in” roles. We have yet to engage in that discussion as a department.

The quality of teaching we have received from our adjunct instructors has been quite satisfactory, and in several cases extremely high, as shown by class evaluations for several—including Hess and AllenRandolph—that equal the very best evaluations among the full-time professors. Nevertheless, we need to be continually resistant to pressures toward over-reliance on adjuncts, since those who have taught GE sections are often not finished with their graduate degree programs. We advertise Westmont as a college where students are more likely than at other schools to have personal contacts with full-time faculty. We act at odds with what we profess if we give them the equivalent of Graduate TAs as professors.

***Diversity: Among Faculty [see Appendix, Charts 1A and 2A]***

For the past six years and more, the English Department has joined the faculty’s general effort to increase its gender and ethnic diversity. We have made the most progress toward achieving gender balance.

From 2004-2005 to 2007-2008 to 2010-2011, the ratio of females to males among full-time tenure-track faculty has gone from 2/5 to 3/4 to, at present, 4/4. Among part-time faculty, the ratio of females to males on staff has shifted every semester, following no clear trajectory. However, the ratio of semesters taught by women to semesters taught by men over the past six years was 19/18. Comparing by total credit units taught, female part-time faculty members have taught 136 credit units compared to 82 for men. Since the gender ratio among full-time professors has balanced out for the time being, the next hire, whether of a male or a female, can only decrease our gender diversity slightly. What matters more may be our stratification by age and rank. All five of the men who have taught full-time in our department over the past six years have been full professors over that whole span; no current full-time male professor is under 53 years of age. Among the female full-time professors, only Prof. McEntyre, until her resignation, was a full professor. At present we have no female full professors, though Prof. Larsen Hoeckley becomes eligible for promotion to full professor this coming year. At the assistant professor rank, all three of our current faculty are women. Thus we have all men at the most senior ranks of our faculty and all women at the most junior ranks. Given such an imbalance, gender parity will be hard to maintain in the course of future hirings, as the several men in the senior tier reach the age of retirement.

The department has tried in numerous ways to increase the exposure of our students to ethnic diversity in their educational experience, as recorded in our annual diversity reports. However, all our full-



time professors during the past six years were white. Our lack of ethnic diversity in staffing has not for lack of effort over the years. We have had a “Diversity Recruitment Specialist” over that time span, working with the group of similar specialists from other departments under Associate Dean Ray Rosentrater to expand our contacts with possible candidates from underrepresented ethnic groups. Speirs, Willis, VanderMey, and, currently, Artuso have all served on the Campus Diversity Committee, VanderMey as Chair for the past three years. VanderMey attended the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) in San Francisco in May, 2007, and others have used national conferences such as MLA or regional conferences such as CCL to build networking relationships and take in workshops on diversity-related issues. We also hired Marisol Perez, a Latina scholar with specializations in feminist theory and Spanish literature, to teach composition in our department in Fall 2006. We decided as a department, prior to our search in fall 2006, to diversify our faculty by starting with the curriculum. We added ENG-044, Studies in World Literature, to our GE “Reading Imaginative Literature” offerings, and increased the number of sections of the course over time. We have added readings in world literature to other courses of longer standing. When we sought to fill the void in our faculty left by the departure of Profs. Speirs and McEntyre, and by then-impending retirement of Prof. Sider, we decided to conduct two national searches, one in Post-Colonial English Literature and another in World Anglophone Literature. After a strenuous national search and on-campus interviews, we filled the first position by hiring Dr. Kathryn Stelmach, now Artuso. The other position was suspended by a decision of the Acting Provost, Prof. Warren Rogers, who argued that there had not been a sufficiently clear differentiation between the two positions in the first place.

In Fall 2007, we requested and received permission to fill two full-time tenure-track positions, one in Composition and one in World Anglophone Literature. Our plan was to consolidate some of the chronic demand for adjuncts into one of the two positions and to hire for the first time a specialist in Composition, both to bring leadership to the department in that area and to lighten the composition teaching load on the rest of the department faculty. For the World Anglophone position, we decided to look with more determination for a specialist in World Anglophone literature, hoping to find a professor with international life-experience and scholarly emphasis, possibly one who would also bring some racial or ethnic diversification to our department. We interviewed a dozen candidates at MLA, including strong scholars from Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, Russia, and Malaysia. We brought three candidates to campus and made an offer to a female candidate from Malaysia. The candidate turned down our offer. We were not certain of the fitness of the next-highest ranking candidates to teach effectively, so we allowed the search to fail. After the retirement of Prof. Sider, we thus had one more position yet to fill.

Recognizing an upsurge of interest in medieval literature, we decided not to try a third time for a World Anglophone specialist but rather to search for a medievalist. We did not immediately begin a search; instead, we brought in a Visiting Assistant Professor, Dr. Candace Hull Taylor, for two years to teach medieval literature, Chaucer, and an array of other courses. Toward the end of Prof. Taylor’s stay, in Fall, 2009, we conducted a new search to fill a tenure-track assistant professor position for which ethnic

diversity was welcomed and encouraged, though not essential to the position. We succeeded in that search by hiring Prof. Jamie Friedman, who began in Fall 2010. Friedman was the winner of a Diversity Scholarship at Cornell University, having been the first in her family to have graduated from college and having succeeded academically against a background of economic need. Though ethnic identity was not a leading factor in the search, Friedman does contribute singularly to the ethnic diversity of the department in that her father is Native American, of the Cherokee tribe. More importantly for us, she brings a specialization in literary discourse relating to racial and religious “others,” a specialization that positions her to make an especially useful contribution to campus conversations on diversity. One further step we’ve taken to increase the ethnic–and religious–diversity our students will encounter in our classrooms has been to hire Mr. Gregory Orfalea to teach composition in fall 2010. Mr. Orfalea is a writer of Lebanese-Syrian descent who has written a history of Arab-Americans and essays on life in Arabic enclaves of L.A., as well as poetry, short stories, and other essays. Orfalea is, in addition, a practicing Roman Catholic.

The effort to diversify our ranks continues, in a process that seems sometimes to drag. It is a process that the department has embraced but has refused to follow in an impulsive way, knowing that a hastily made choice could hurt as easily as it might help the institution. The next foreseeable retirement is that of Prof. Cook, who has announced that he will retire in August 2012. Conversations need to begin now to explore how the expected opening might be filled and to decide how our interests in greater diversity might mesh with other needs and interests. With Prof. Delaney in England during the Fall 2010 semester and Profs. Delaney and Larsen Hoeckley on sabbatical in Spring 2011, we face a challenge in holding a conversation to which all full-time professors are party.

### ***Diversity: Among Majors [see Appendix, Chart 3]***

The “Profile of Graduating Seniors in English” in Chart 3 shows us that the number of female students has remained quite steady from year to year, whereas the number of male students has bounced around, twice in that span dropping to at least half of the previous year’s number. The ratio of female-to-male students has likewise jumped about, ranging from roughly 5/1 to 2.3/1, though it has steadied in the last three years at about 3.1/1. The ratio has always remained in a range between 20 and 30 percent male. The percentage of males among our majors thus falls consistently below the typical roughly 35 per cent rate of males in the student body, a rate which in turn is well below the 51/49 ratio in the general population.

An obvious conclusion is that our major has consistently appealed somewhat more to female students than to male students overall. This is not news to the department, nor is it unusual for a major in humanities in either large universities or small liberal arts colleges. Larger sociological forces in the country and in the profession are manifested in our department, too. In our English Department, a course such as “Women Writers” is consistently popular among female students, while it typically enrolls one or two male students; such a course may strengthen recruitment and retention of female students. There is no equivalent “magnet” course for men. English and American literary history and traditional literary canons

are usually characterized as male-dominated; there is no evidence, however, that male students are drawn to the major for that reason. Male domination of traditional literary canons and patriarchal values imbedded in literature are defined in much of contemporary literary theory as manifestations of long-standing and deeply rooted gender bias; the pull toward political and moral rectification of that grievance over the past several decades has been toward recovering and celebrating the work of women. Many male scholars have been active in that project, but, again, few male students appear to be drawn to the major for that reason.

Over the past six years the English Department has not defined the imbalance between men and women students among its majors as a problem in diversity. Whether it should be seen in that light is a topic open for discussion. In any case, the relative under-representation of males in the major obviously leaves room for growth. Recruitment of a greater number of students, male and female, to the major remains the department's higher priority.

The data on ethnicity among English majors (Chart 3) shows that at least 20 percent of English majors in a "low" year and as many as almost 40 percent in a "high" year such as 2005-2006 identify themselves with underrepresented ethnic groups. In the past three years, the rate has remained in the 20 percent range. The higher rates are well above the average rates for the student body as a whole. Among our under-represented graduating seniors over the past six years, Asian and Hispanic/Latino students have been the most numerous. We have seen 27 Asian students graduate as English majors and 18 Hispanic/Latino students. The number of American/Alaskan Native (3), Black (2), and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1) graduates has been strikingly small. We have not kept statistics on students of Arabic or Slavic, nor have we tracked the numbers of majors who are "missionary" or "third-culture kids."

The statistics we have kept give our department an additional cause to examine the possible future shape and tenor of our major curriculum. We periodically teach courses called "Ethnicity and Race in American Literature," "Jewish-American Literature" and "Irish Literature," but we have not offered courses focused on literature of the various ethnic groups most often represented among our students. Apart from any "draw" such courses might have, we need to consider their possible impact on the literary horizons of all our majors and the impact of such courses on their understanding of literary theory. To offer more such courses, however, will probably make demands on our hiring of both full-time and part-time professors and may call for trade-offs between new courses and courses currently taught.

### ***Advising Load and Quality***

The advising of English majors and undeclared students is done by all full-time, tenure-track members in the department, except those on leave or those who are in their first year of employment. Adjunct instructors and visiting professors do not carry an official advising load, and each year we have seen at least one or two semester-long absences among the more senior faculty for leading off-campus programs or pursuing sabbatical projects. Thus the advising loads have been constantly in flux. We have

handled the flux by having the department secretary re-assign advisees temporarily when the adviser is absent. Michele Hardley, Director of Advising and Disability Services, has also exercised oversight of the advising assignments, distributing new transfers and undeclared advisees evenly among our advising faculty. The result has been a flexible and equitable spread. Complaints about the advising load are seldom voiced, and when the advising load for a professor grows beyond the average, the growth often reflects the adviser's special interest, aptitude, or popularity among the students. We have averaged around 90 majors annually for the past six years and have divided them typically among 6 or 7 active advisers. We have tried to insure that no adviser has more than 25 advisees in a semester, including the usually 5-8 undeclared students who are assigned to each professor at the beginning of the year. In comparison to departments such as Communications Studies, Biology, and Economics and Business, which sometimes have larger numbers of majors than English but traditionally have had a smaller number of faculty, we have a moderate advising load, though the advising load still feels substantial to members of the department. We do not recommend changes in load or the assignment routine.

Concerning the quality of advising, the key questions are whether new students are properly introduced to the GE program and the major, to off-campus programs, to honors options, and to co-curricular possibilities, and whether majors are ushered successfully through the major and GE program, being properly made aware of course options, concentrations, off-campus programs, internships and practica, honors options, and requirements for graduation. Most of the members of the department have been at this for a long time and grown as advisers as the college has raised its advising standards. On August 13, 2010, the Registrar and two associates who have been working with our majors' Applications for Degrees for the past six years were queried about the quality of English faculty member's academic advising. The Registrar professed not to be aware of any problems. A handful of times transfer students with a lot of units have had to be monitored more closely to be sure they had enough units in the major, but, according to Wendy Wright, "the quality of advising is very high." Wright said: "I can't think of any persistent problems. The department has a good track record of getting students through the major." The deeper challenges before us are the perennial ones of supporting some students through social and spiritual struggles, preemptively recognizing academic pitfalls, helping students to connect with their professors and fellow students, challenging students to higher levels of confidence and achievement, helping students to discover career paths, and improving retention rates.

### ***Trends among Majors***

We as a department have not had a focused discussion in recent memory reflecting on the number and quality of declared majors and graduates over the past six years, though these questions crop up frequently and serve as the subtext for many of our other departmental discussions. A high water mark for the number of graduating seniors (49) came six years ago. The next highest number of graduating majors (46) was four years ago. We have witnessed a fall-off, thereafter, followed by gradual recovery, from 33 to 41

over the latest three-year span. The low number of graduating seniors (33) is roughly 2/3 of the high number (49). When the number of graduating majors fluctuates, as it has, the number of faculty members and upper-level courses offered does not change at a matching rate. Hence, dips in the number of majors results in lower class enrollments and, consequently, higher per-student costs to the college. At the same time, the teacher/student ratio in many courses “improves.” The number of GE students we serve in ENG-006 and ENG-002 and the number of adjuncts we hire to help meet GE demand are not directly correlated with the number of majors.

The quality of declared majors and graduates is hard to gauge. As a department we are not outstanding keepers or interpreters of statistics. However, data gleaned from the results of a recent online alumni survey give stunning evidence that our students are moving on to an impressive array of high-quality graduate programs in an impressive variety of fields. [The results of the survey can be viewed at: [http://forms.westmont.edu/forms/academics/english/alumni\\_survey](http://forms.westmont.edu/forms/academics/english/alumni_survey).] Here are the graduate programs entered or complete by our students, as reported by 40 of the 74 alumni English majors between 2003 and 2010 who responded to the survey:

### **Graduate Programs Entered or Completed**

by Westmont College English Major Alumni, 2003-2010

Albany Medical College (M.D.)  
 California State University, East Bay (M.A. in Social Work)  
 Chapman University (M.A. in Teaching)  
 [Counseling psychology] (M.A.)  
 Emory University (M.A. in English Literature, Ph.D.)  
 [English literature] (M.A.)  
 [Film Production] (M.F.A.)  
 Fordham University (M.A. in American and English Literature)  
 Fresno Pacific University (Secondary Teaching Credential)  
 Hastings College of Law (J.D.)  
 Harvard School of Public Health (M.P.H.)  
 Indiana University (M.F.A.)  
 Iowa State University (Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology)  
 Laguna College of Art and Design  
 Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine (D.M.D.)  
 North Park Seminary (Chicago) (M.Div.)  
 New York University (M.A. in Art History, Ph.D.)

New York University School of Law (J.D.)  
 Oklahoma State University (M.S. in Environmental Science)  
 Regent College  
 Texas Christian University (M.A. in Rhetoric and Composition)  
 Trinity International University (M.A. in Communication and Culture)  
 Union Theological Seminary (M.Div.)  
 University of California, Davis (Ph.D. in Comparative Literature)  
 University of California, Irvine (M.A. in Teaching)  
 University of California, San Diego (M.D.)  
 University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (M.A. in Secondary Education)  
 University of Colorado, Denver (M.D.)  
 University of Colorado, Denver (English Teaching Credential)  
 University of Michigan Law School  
 University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law (J.D.)  
 University of Southern California (M.A. in Communication Management)  
 University of Wisconsin-Madison (M.A. in English Literature, Ph.D.)  
 Vanguard University (Multi-Subject Credential)  
 Wheaton College (M.A. in Religious History)  
 Wake Forest University (M.A. in English)  
 Westmont (5<sup>th</sup>-year Teaching Credential)  
 Yale Divinity School

Data such as these, of course, do not tell the whole story. If we look at the number and quality of candidates for our department's highest awards, the Lynip and OED Awards, we find great reason for pride in our majors. In Spring 2009, while sticking to the customary minimum GPA of 3.50 and tending to choose only those in the "summa cum laude" range (GPA 3.90+) and looking as always for actively participating academic leaders and exemplary models of Christian character, we found it necessary and best to hand out 12 Arthur W. Lynip Awards. For the first time ever, we also gave out two OED Awards to the very highest performers academically. At the 2010 graduation, English major Levi Bagdanov was singled out from the entire student body to receive the Kenneth Monroe Award for superior academic performance and leadership. For each of the past six summers, between one and three students have worked hand in hand with professors as research assistants on the professors' research projects. Aside from those who responded to our alumni survey, we know of two other students who have gone on to pursue graduate degrees in Medieval Literature at Oxford University.

We have tended to gauge our success in teaching and the quality of our majors by the performance of our highest achieving students. However, we have not steadily monitored the quality and career

directions of our “average” majors. Since the majority of our majors fall within this latter category, we would do well in the future to identify qualitative markers that are able to be tracked and to make year-to-year comparisons, tracking samplings of all majors, including “average” and lower-achieving ones, against reasonable benchmarks. In our assessment work, as described in the next section, we have tracked some qualitative markers, such as performance on pre- and post-tests in English survey courses or evaluation against a rubric in bibliographically detailed research papers in our Shakespeare courses. Other qualitative indicators might be evaluation of essay answers on exams in major author courses, ratings on writing samples, or responses by randomly sampled students to survey questions. Our goal would have to be raising the average quality of our majors without reducing our enrollments.

In mid-summer, 2010, Prof. Skripsky sent out a questionnaire to recent alumni at the department’s request, inquiring into the lasting impacts of studying English at Westmont. She received a half-dozen thoughtful and extensive responses. She and the Chair collaborated in August, 2010, on an electronic survey sent out to all English major alumni, inquiring into scores on standard tests, lifelong habits of reading and study, career paths, and more. Over 74 alumni responded in short order. The results of those surveys when tabulated will still need to be digested during the Fall semester, 2010.

We see our majors double majoring in fields such as Economics and Business, Communications Studies, Art History, Theater Arts, Religious Studies, History, Music, and Biology, and we see some of our majors excelling in preparation for careers in education. We have seen a healthy increase of interest in medieval literature over the past six years, an increase that was reflected first in our hiring of Prof. Candace Hull Taylor for a two-year visiting assistant professorship and then by the hiring of Prof. Friedman for a full-time tenure-track position, both with emphasis in medieval literature. In addition to two major honors projects in medieval literature and healthy enrollments for the Chaucer course taught by Prof. Taylor, we have seen strong demand for the course on the medieval Italian poet Dante.

Thanks to the efforts of Profs. Cook and Wilder, we have seen growing interest in film studies; presently, our one Film Studies course cannot meet all the demand from students and the typically about 10-12 students per semester take specialized training from Wilder in a sequence of screenwriting courses. We have seen about one student per year attending the LA Film Center off-campus program. Though we have not yet designated a film concentration, track, minor, or major in our catalog, students who avail themselves of all our film offerings achieve something tantamount to a film minor or film emphasis in English studies. As a department we have recently been looking at options for defining a minor or concentration in film, options including working with other departments to create an interdisciplinary film minor. A concentration will be easy to designate in the next college catalog; like our current “writing concentration” or “guidelines for graduate preparation” or “guidelines for teacher preparation” it will be simply advisory for a student’s course selection within the general requirements for the major. Whether we might offer an official track, with requirements that must be met for graduation, apart from the general

requirements of the major, remains to be worked out. Such a decision might well have hiring implications at the tenure-track level.

We have also seen a healthy sustained or growing interest in creative writing. Prof. Willis has expanded course offerings over the past three years to include creative non-fiction, and has introduced a creative writing workshop to focus on single genres such as poetry or fiction. He has taught several creative writing tutorials per year over the years under review, as well as occasional Mayterms in creative writing. English majors have responded in healthy numbers to all these offerings and line up on waitlists to get into ENG-141, Creative Writing. We have seen English majors thrive as editors of the literary magazine, the Phoenix, and serve as catalysts in a thriving co-curricular arts culture on campus. We can hardly ask more of Prof. Willis as a leader in all of these areas. However, even with guest writers such as Prof. David Jacobsen pinch hitting for a year, we have not found ways to serve all of our students' interests in creative writing. Prof. VanderMey, who has taught Creative Writing in the past, has been unavailable for that duty in the past six years as he has taken on the teaching of journalism in addition to administrative duties.

In journalism, likewise, we see waitlists for the one journalism course, ENG-087, Introduction to Journalism—*when* the class is not scheduled for 8:00 am. As in film studies, journalism courses see strong crossover from the Communications Studies department, where the course serves as one option in the major. In the range of 15-24 students per semester enroll in APP-168 or ENG-168, the 1-4-unit practicum for writing, page editing, copy editing, or photographic journalism in the student newspaper. As in film and creative writing, there appears to be more interest among students than we can accommodate with our single introductory courses, and the interest is consistently cross-disciplinary. We do not have guidelines, a concentration, a track, or a minor spelled out in our catalog for students interested in journalism. The study of journalism is in some schools treated as a pre-professional career track. Our challenge in the years ahead will be to accommodate growing interest in the multi-disciplinary field of journalism while maintaining a full humanities perspective on it and bringing to it the broadening and deepening perspectives of literary criticism, literary theory, and written rhetoric.

We as a department are not faced with a crisis in the quality of our students, nor have we experienced any sudden changes or lasting reversals in the gender or ethnic composition of our major group, nor have we perceived any significant falling off in the quality of our majors. We can, undoubtedly, raise the average quality of our major by continuing to attract Monroe Scholars, honors students, pre-med students, and other high achievers, as well as by demanding more of and giving more to our lower achievers. The trends we've witnessed have been trends in the academic interests of our majors. We may find ways of catering to those interests in our future curriculum designing and hiring, though we must acknowledge that some swings in students' interests are responses to the quality and effectiveness of the teaching the students are offered. If in our next search we were to hire an African-American or a Hispanic literature professor to teach one or more courses in the literature of a minority group, we could well anticipate a swing in student interests in that direction. In short, our hiring decisions must rest on our



principled convictions about the content of a curriculum that will serve our department's mission, not entirely on our responses to student preferences. Those convictions will need to be revisited and reformulated more clearly in the year or two ahead.

#### **4. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

##### **A. Student Learning Outcomes**

Over the past six years, our statement of student learning outcomes has evolved from an inspiring but unwieldy list of 21 "Goals for Our Majors" to a succinct statement of nine outcomes organized under three general goals: Thinking Critically, Reading Closely, and Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity. The outcomes as we defined at the end of the 2008-2009 school year are presented in the table below, which shows 1) the SLOs arrayed under the appropriate goals, 2) the courses in which the desired outcomes are introduced, developed, and mastered, 3) the means of assessment, 4) any benchmarks used in assessment, and 5) links to the college's "learning standards":

TABLE 4A: Three Goals and Nine Outcomes\*

| Goals  | Thinking Critically   | Reading Closely   | Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b>   | <p>1. Students will take their own cultural and theological framework into account as they read literary texts, and articulate how this synergy between faith and art influences their angle of vision and expands their <b>affections</b> and sympathies.</p> <p>2. Students will demonstrate intellectual curiosity by examining their own assumptions, entertaining new ideas, engaging in <b>research, analyzing</b> texts, and <b>evaluating</b> evidence.</p> | <p>3. Students will demonstrate familiarity with literary history, able to compare and contrast the work of writers from different periods, and comprehend the <b>content</b> and continuities that shape the <b>literary tradition</b>.</p> <p>4. Students will recognize and articulate how historical, cultural, biographical, theoretical, or interdisciplinary <b>contexts</b> frame the work and shape its meaning.</p> <p>5. Students will comprehend the characteristics of different <b>genres</b> and the ways in which a given work can uphold or undermine those conventions.</p> <p>6. Students will identify and analyze literary devices, figurative language, syntactic strategies, and narrative <b>techniques</b> in order to understand why a writer employs such techniques and what effects they create.</p> | <p>7. Students will write correct, clear, comprehensible, persuasive, and engaging prose. This includes mastering the basics of <b>grammar</b>, style, and mechanics.</p> <p>8. Students will move skillfully among various <b>modes</b> of writing—<b>especially explication, argument, and research essays</b>—with awareness of their strategies and purposes.</p> <p>9. Students will incorporate the voices of others into their writing by accessing scholarly material with online bibliographic tools, smoothly weaving <b>quotations</b> within their own prose, and appropriately <b>documenting</b> their contributions in MLA style format.</p> |
| <b>Where are the Learning Outcomes met?</b><br><br>I introduced<br>D developed<br>M mastered | <p><b>I</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses</p> <p><b>M:</b> ENG 195, 117, 151, 152</p>  | <p><b>I</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses</p> <p><b>M:</b> ENG 195, 117, 151, 152</p>  | <p><b>I:</b> ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p><b>D:</b> Upper-division courses</p> <p><b>M:</b> ENG 104, 195, 117, 151, 152</p>  |
| <b>How are they assessed?</b>  | Senior essays   | Pre- and post-tests in survey class<br><br>Senior essays  | Senior essays   |
| <b>Benchmark</b>   |   | For Post-Test in Survey: 1) all students over 50% correct ; 2) 5% over 85%.   |   |
| <b>Link to the learning standards</b>  | Christian orientation, diversity, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, active societal and intellectual engagement, written and oral communication.   | diversity, active societal and intellectual engagement, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, written and oral communication.  | research and technology, written and oral communication   |

\*The outcomes stated in the table above are mapped onto our major curriculum in Chart 4: Departmental Outcomes [See Appendix A, Chart 4].

### ***Comparison with National Standards and Standards of Peer Institutions***

In developing its table of outcomes, the English Department has started from its own collective wisdom, rather than deriving them from more detailed national standards such as the College Board's standards for "English Language Arts"—see [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/about/association/academic/english-language-arts\\_cbscs.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/about/association/academic/english-language-arts_cbscs.pdf). [A summary of the College Board standards is found in Appendix B.] Most of our outcomes can be found in or inferred from the College Board's stated standards. However, the College Board's standards are both wider and narrower than our stated outcomes. For example, the College Board offers standards not only for Reading and Writing, as we do, but also for Speaking, Listening, and Media Literacy. It does not name standards for Critical Thinking as we do.

In the future, it would be useful for our department to consider whether to articulate SLOs in the areas of Speaking, Listening, and Media Literacy, since we historically have emphasized at least speaking and listening in our teaching. However, the full range of "language arts" outcomes are covered at our college by the English Department in addition to the Modern Languages Department and the Communications Studies Department. Perhaps in the future the college should group its program reviews by general topic areas such as "Language Arts," when the topic is cross-disciplinary, and have various departments contribute to the reviews, rather than organizing program review by department as we do at present. Doing so would acknowledge the interdisciplinary nature of a liberal arts education, encourage more dialogue and collaboration between departments, possibly streamline the program review process, and keep the college better focused on primary learning goals that apply across the curriculum.

The English Department has not recently compared its program with that of any of its peer institutions, apart from the fact that in Spring 2010 the current chair served as outside reviewer for the five-year self-study of Biola University's Department of English. Making such a comparison would be a logical next step as a way of following through on this six-year review. We are certainly satisfied with our department's emphasis on critical thinking. Like the rest of the college in its statements of goals for its graduates, however, we have not been clear about the value of creative thinking, the role creative thinking plays in critical thinking, and the role of creativity in undergraduate scholarship. It would be helpful to compare ourselves with peer institutions in that regard as well.

### ***Co-Curricular Activities and SLOs***

A quick survey of co-curricular activities involving English majors would include student publications, the honor society Sigma Tau Delta, student-initiated literary clubs or reading circles, guest lectures, public poetry or fiction readings for student writers, department chapels, workshops on graduate school and career preparation, student research seminars, marathon novel readings,

off-campus conferences, student research assistantships, Tuesdays with Morals, and more. Publications such as *The Horizon*, *Citadel*, or *Phoenix* contribute in certain ways to our goals pertaining to writing; public readings and guest lectures and Tuesdays with Morals contribute to outcomes regarding critical thinking and listening; literary clubs and conferences and department chapels and research assistantships can contribute to reading outcomes. However, we have not consciously talked together as a department about the way co-curricular activities help to achieve our student learning outcomes, nor have we consciously used our student learning outcomes to critique our department's co-curricular offerings and to propose changes. It may be helpful to us to recognize such an opportunity or need on our Multi-Year Assessment Plan [see Appendix, Table 8: "Multi-Year Assessment Plan"]

### **B. Assessment of the Outcomes**

Our department's efforts in the area of assessment have accelerated during the past two years, though not all of our plans have been realized. By the end of the academic year 2008-2009, we had created the map shown in the table above. We had also refined rubrics to use when our department evaluates bibliographic essays written by students in our major authors courses; in the rubrics we distinguish between levels labeled "Mastery," "Proficiency," "Competency," and "Unsatisfactory." Further, we organized assessment documents such as student papers and department documents and placed them online in a department Share folder. Further, Prof. Larsen Hoeckley conducted pre- and post-tests in ENG 47 and wrote an assessment report describing the test, the goals, the results, and the significance of the results [see Appendix 11]. We also revised our department's Mission Statement to bring it into closer conformity with our desired learning outcomes. Finally, we had our department's Program Review project critiqued at a discipline-specific workshop on program review sponsored by WASC in Long Beach, February, 2009. At the workshop, Profs. Artuso and VanderMey met with WASC representatives and representatives of peer institutions and measured our program review process against rubrics supplied by WASC.

In our last annual report, we stated several goals for program review and assessment as we approached the 2009-2010 academic year:

- 1) Discuss and synthesize two versions of the Mission Statement
- 2) Meet as a department, in a retreat or series of meetings, to read bibliographic essays for grade-norming and assessment of the remaining five outcomes under the goals of "Thinking Critically" and "Writing Closely"
- 3) Study and discuss the implications of the Assessment Report on the pre- and post-tests in ENG-047.
- 4) Set benchmarks and target dates for the remaining five outcomes listed under the goals of "Thinking Critically" and "Writing Closely".

- 5) Meet as a department to read and evaluate five essays posted on the server from classes taught by Profs. Elizabeth Hess and Paul Willis.
- 6) Meet as department to read senior papers written in ENG-195 (Seminar) and assess in terms of selected outcomes.

Our increased emphasis on assessment activities such as these came in part in response to an evaluation of our 2008-2009 annual report by Prof. John Blondell, a representative on the Program Review Committee, who had found the department behind the curve in the area of assessment at that time.

In 2009-2010 the department accomplished the following:

- 1) The department discussed the Mission Statement and reached consensus on the version of the statement presented above in the Executive Summary;
- 2) On December 1, 2009, the department discussed our writing-related learning outcomes in light of the WPA (Writing Program Administrators) Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition
- 3) On March 23 and March 30, 2010, the department discussed statistical information provided by Bill Wright's office about our program and filled in the chart aligning showing the alignment of the English curriculum with our stated learning outcomes;
- 4) On April 20, 2010, we collectively assessed three student essays to calibrate our grading relative to one another's, using a rubric;
- 5) On April 27, 2010, we assessed two bibliographic essays per person, for a total of 12 essays, using the calibrations from the week before, then evaluated and summarized our observations.
- 6) In the Spring semester, Prof. Candace Taylor administered both a pre-test and a post-test to all the students in ENG-046, Survey of English Literature Before 1800. [See Appendix I]

### ***Grading calibration exercise***

On April 20, 2010, six members of the department— Rater 1, Rater 2, Rater 3, Rater 4, Rater 5 and Rater 6 met over a noon hour to tabulate and compare their individual ratings of bibliographic essays written by three student writers in Rater 5's Shakespeare class: Student writer 1, student writer 2, and student writer 3. Each rater was asked to assign a holistic letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) to each essay and to assign a letter grade on each of the following criteria, each linked to several of our student learning outcomes, as follows:

1. Research of Literary Content, Context, or Genres (Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5, 8)
2. Analysis and Argument (Outcomes 2, 6)

3. Prose Style and Grammar (Outcome 7)
4. Integration of Quotations, Use of Textual Evidence (Outcomes 2, 7, 9)
5. Documentation (Outcome 9)
6. Bibliographic Form (Outcome 9)

The rating form is displayed in Appendix E.

**General results of the grading calibration exercise.** The raters showed unanimous agreement in their assessment of the “A” paper by student writer 2 and, in fact, showed almost complete unanimity in rating each one of the criteria. The raters showed a fair degree of consistency in grading the other two, with four out of six raters issuing a “C” grade for student writer 1 and four out of six issuing either a B or B+ for student writer 3. Raters 3 and 6, readily conceded that they needed to come down in their evaluation of the essay by student writer 1. Rater 6 conceded, as well, to being harsher than necessary in his assessment of student writer 3’s paper.

In subsequent discussion of differences and consistencies in our ratings we decided:

1. Ratings are dependent on the rater’s understanding of the assignment; e.g., is the assignment part of a sequence? Does the assignment presume mastery of certain skills that were taught earlier in the class? Does the assignment highlight certain skills that need to be demonstrated? Is the assignment seen as a stage in a longer process? When raters perceive that an assignment is introductory or exploratory, they appear to grade more leniently. When they perceive that an assignment assumes prior mastery of certain fundamental skills, they tend to grade more harshly.
2. All agreed on the importance of the student’s ability to integrate quotations into the flow of the argument. Integrating quotations well indicates good overall comprehension, good comprehension of the source’s intent, good mastery of the conventions of borrowing and citing, and successful logical synthesis of source materials into the framework of one’s own thought.
3. All agreed that the weighting of different criteria has a significant impact on the overall grade assigned. If an instructor treats one criterion as a *sine qua non* while another bases the rating on holistic impressions, the two instructors’ ratings will likely be different.
4. It appeared to matter which paper out of three was read last by the rater. The best papers read by the rater tends to establish a baseline for excellence; if the best paper is read last, then the first papers to be read may be judged more leniently.
5. Though we discovered differences in our ratings, the ratings were quite consistent overall. Only in the case of student writer 3’s paper were any summary ratings more than one grade away from the average for the six raters; in student writer 3’s case,

where the average summary rating was a high B- (8.43 on a 12-point grading scale), rater 2's rating summary rating was a B+ and rater 6's a C-.

***Discussion of the calibration exercise.*** Obviously, it is a matter of interest and possible concern when two experienced teachers, responding to the same assignment and grading by the same criteria as codified on an evaluation form, or "rubric," can issue grades as widely divergent as a B+ and a C-. The discrepancy compels us to take a closer look at the ratings by different raters on specific individual criteria, should there appear any patterns that would possibly indicate unspoken assumptions, expectations, or generous allowances on the part of any of the raters.

In the ratings shown in the tables in Appendix I, for both student writer 1 and 3's papers, raters 2 and 6 are the farthest apart. However, neither is consistently harsher than the other. Rater 2 rates student writer 1 a C and rater 6 rates the paper a B-; however, for student writer 3's paper, rater 2 is the highest grader, at B+ and rater 6 the lowest at C-. Looking more closely at ratings for individual criteria for clues to the discrepancy, the greatest discrepancy appears in ratings for student writer 1, Criterion #5, "Documentation," where rater 2 issues a D and rater 6 an A-. A still closer look at the actual rating sheets reveals that rater 2 checks off "some material requires more documentation" and "parenthetic citation incorrectly appears after the period instead of before"; rater 6 does not check either of these but instead checks "impeccably documents specific page numbers" and writes "no" in the space in front of "all parenthetic citations are to works that appear in the list of Works Cited," noting an important flaw in the paper but apparently not according much weight to that observation, as he rates student writer 1's "Documentation" an A-. More discussion would be needed for the department members to decide whether such discrepancies come from carelessness, bias, differences in understandings of the assignment, or principled differences in the weighting of specific criteria.

In the raters' responses to student writer 3 paper, the greatest discrepancies appear in the ratings for criteria #2, "Analysis and Argument" and #3, "Prose Style and Grammar," where the high grades are B and the low grades are D. A closer look at the actual rating sheets shows some indecision on the part of the low raters for criterion #2. Rater 3 scratches out C- and writes in D; rater 6 scratches out B-, writes C-, then scratches that out and writes D. Apparently, some weakness in the paper appeared less and less forgivable for these two raters as they dwelled longer on their ratings. For criterion #3, raters 3 and 6 check off two of the same sub-points ("cumbersome phrasing . . ." and ". . . has commas splices or incorrect semi-colons"), but rater 6 issued a D and rater 3 issued a C+ for criterion #3, "Prose Style and Grammar." Since both raters recognize the same weaknesses in the prose style of paper, mere recognition of the weakness appears not to influence the rating as much as the rater's weighting of the weakness. Such discrepancies might be eliminated if the rating sheet would indicate an intended weighting of the specific criterion relative

to other criteria.

***Summative assessments of sample bibliographic research papers [See Appendix M]***

On April 27, 2010, one week after the grading calibration exercise, the department met to share summative assessments of a sampling of student papers from rater 5's 2009 Shakespeare class. Each of six professors– raters 1-6 brought two student papers that they had graded using the same rating sheet as the one used in the calibration exercise the week before. Each professor presented the two papers, proposed a grade for each, and commented on the reasons for their ratings. The department then discussed the results.

The table of results for these summative assessments appears in Appendix I. The twelve grades shown in the table should be added to the average results for the three papers graded in the calibration exercise the week before to get the largest possible sampling of papers from the class. It is clear from the tables that, if an A grade represents “mastery” of student learning outcomes #2-9, as they are linked to the criteria on the rating sheet, then 33% (5/15) of the sampled papers demonstrated mastery. If a grade of B or above demonstrates “proficiency” in the outcomes, then 87% (13/15), or all but two, of the students sampled achieved at least proficiency. If a grade of C represents at least “competency,” then only two students from among the sampled group registered as no higher than “competent,” and no students scored lower than “competent.” These results are in line with our hopes and reasonable expectations for our majors. They provide useful benchmarks for the years ahead, as we continue to evaluate our students' performances on these key measures of learning outcomes.

***Measuring specific student learning outcomes***

Summative assessments (or, overall grades) alone do not show conclusively whether the students in the sample have achieved the specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) 2-8, referred to on the rating sheet. The third criterion, “Prose Style and Grammar,” does relate directly to SLO #7 (“Students will write correct, clear, comprehensible, persuasive, and engaging prose. This includes mastering the basics of grammar, style, and mechanics.”). The 5<sup>th</sup> criterion, “Documentation,” and the 6<sup>th</sup>, “Bibliographic Form,” do relate directly to SLO #9 (“Students will incorporate the voices of others into their writing by accessing scholarly material with online bibliographic tools, smoothly weaving quotations within their own prose, and appropriately documenting their contributions in MLA style format.”). However, the raters' responses are not uniform or complete. At best, we can draw the general impression that our students appear to be achieving outcomes #7 and #9 in ways consistent with their profile in the overall grading. For several reasons, proofs for SLOs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 will be harder to tease apart. First, the SLOs, as stated, are already multifaceted statements (for example, the statement for SLO #3 contains numerous operative terms: “Students will



**demonstrate familiarity** with literary **history**, able to **compare** and **contrast** the work of writers from **different periods**, and **comprehend the content** and **continuities** that shape the **literary tradition**.”). Second, criteria #1, #2, and #4 on the rating sheet are each identified with anywhere from 2 to 5 different outcomes in a loosely associative manner. And third, the raters markings do not specify which outcome has most certainly been achieved.

Following the April 27 session, the department discussed the assessment exercise and noted several points:

- 1) We sometimes found it hard to weigh criteria properly or consistently. When we grade papers we tend to compensate for ambiguities in weighting by writing extensive comments at the end of the paper.
- 2) The process of writing a research paper includes many steps; failure at any step may have a marked impact on the overall success of the paper.
- 3) Some steps, such as devising an original thesis, are the hardest for the student and have the greatest impact on a paper’s overall success.
- 4) We often observe that students struggle to weigh the relative worth of their sources. The assignment does not spell out exactly how to do that, so professors need to model discernment for them. One teacher of the survey course chooses articles for students to use as source materials and asks students to sequence them.

Measuring specific student learning outcomes using the Bibliographic Paper Evaluation is difficult because the data for most of our outcomes is “baked into” the ratings. The evaluations give us a favorable impression of our students’ achievement of the three outcomes listed under the heading “Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity” and our research outcome under the heading “Thinking Critically.” However, we will have to look for other instruments—perhaps instruments such as holistic critiques of sample papers, classroom observations, portfolios, or special tests—to assess how well our students are achieving outcomes other than #7 and #9. What those instruments might be, whether we want to use them, and whether our SLOs as currently stated are fully usable for assessment purposes are subjects requiring further discussion in the department.

#### ***Pre- and post-tests in British Literature Survey***

Starting in Fall 2006 the Department began to use pre-and post-testing in the required sophomore-level class, ENG-046, “Survey of British Literature to 1800,” to assess progress in students’ understanding of the cultural, biographical and historical contexts of literature of the 17th Century, Restoration, and 18th Century. The test also assessed students’ emerging mastery of literary terms, techniques, and genres. During Spring 2009 Prof. Larsen Hoeckley carried out similar pre-and post-testing in ENG-047, “Survey of British Literature 1800 to the Present.” In Fall 2009, Prof. Taylor used pre- and post-testing once again in ENG-046.

**Benchmarks for assessment.** Pre- and post-tests in ENG-046 and -047 are intentionally designed to test a broader array of contextual information than any one student is expected to know at the beginning of a semester or to learn in the course of it. Our expectation in 2006 was that in the course of a semester students would master at least 60% of the historical, cultural, biographical and literary contexts covered in each section of the exam.

**Results of ENG-046 pre- and post-tests in Fall 2006.** In Fall 2006 ENG-046 students showed the following improvements from pre-test to post-test in their mastery of historical, cultural, biographical, and literary contexts in the three areas of the exam:

| <u>AREA</u>                             | <u>PRE-TEST AVERAGE</u> | <u>POST-TEST AVERAGE</u> |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17th Century literature:                | 29%                     | 59%                      |
| Restoration and 18th Century literature | 42%                     | 69%                      |
| Literary terms, techniques, and genres  | 40%                     | 48%                      |
| CUMULATIVE AVERAGE SCORE:               | 37%                     | 62%                      |

**Interpretation of the results.** Although the pre-test in ENG 46 was administered at midterm prior to any formal instruction on 17th or 18th Century literature, a number of the questions inevitably addressed topics that had already been alluded to in prior lectures on medieval or 16th Century literature. As a result, some of the post-test results somewhat understate the gains students made in the course as a whole. While students attained the benchmark regarding Restoration and 18th Century literature (as well as on the post-exam as a whole), they just missed it regarding 17th Century literature. The relatively modest gain in student mastery of literary terms pointed to the need for additional instruction in that area as well as to the need to reword some of the questions for greater clarity.

**Next Steps.** Our experience in Fall 2006 underlined the fact that pre-testing needs to take place on the first day of class in ENG-046 and -047. Accordingly, in Spring 2007 a pre-test was administered on the first day of class in ENG-047, Survey of British Literature 1800-Present. In discussing the results of the ENG 46 post-exam we realized that several faculty in the department held critical presuppositions that would have led them to give different responses than the expected “correct” answer. The differences were not based on disagreements regarding the

historical, cultural or biographical contexts of 17th or 18th Century literature, but we differed from one another in our sense of how to understand the “I” in a lyric poem. Thus our students may have absorbed differing critical approaches from differing faculty; their “errors” might not have reflected simply their failure to learn. This discovery provided a helpful context in which to place our students’ otherwise disappointing results regarding terminology. We have realized the need for more in-depth conversation among ourselves regarding our literary presuppositions.

*ENG-047 pre- and post-tests in Spring 2009*

In Spring 2009, rater 2 administered a pre- and post-test for the first time to students in ENG-047, making adjustments based on the discussion of the Fall 2006 pre- and post-tests. The test [available on the department server and below in Appendix H] consisted of 80 multiple-choice questions. To establish a baseline for student learning, 29 students took the test on the first day of class, before they received any instruction and before they could even go over the syllabus. On the final day of class, before a review of the final exam, 25 students took the same 80-question exam. Two students had dropped the class over the course of the semester (and two more did not attend class the day of the post-test). ENG-047, “British Literature from 1790 to the Present,” is a required course for our majors, though some students fulfill this requirement with a period-specific upper-division literature course. ENG-047 is a course in literary history, providing a framework for further study of Romantic, Victorian, Modern or Contemporary British literature. The emphasis is on recognizing traditionally canonical authors, literary movements, motifs and genres, with frequent consideration of canon formation and how the canon had varied over time, or within a given period. Because a significant percentage of our majors take this course in their first or second year, it provides an opportunity to measure how well they are progressing toward some of our goals for “Reading Closely” at a mid-point in their major. Specifically, it helps us measure SLOs #3, #4, #5, and #6:

3. Students will demonstrate familiarity with literary history, able to compare and contrast the work of writers from different periods, and comprehend the **content** and continuities that shape the **literary tradition**.
4. Students will recognize and articulate how historical, cultural, biographical, theoretical, or interdisciplinary **contexts** frame the work and shape its meaning.
5. Students will comprehend the characteristics of different **genres** and the ways in which a given work can uphold or undermine those conventions.
6. Students will identify and analyze literary devices, figurative language, syntactic strategies, and narrative **techniques** in order to understand why a writer employs such techniques and what effects they create.

***The design of the test.*** Rater 2 adapted her test from one given by Prof. John Sider in previous years. Sider had taken his 80 test questions from his four course exams, each focused on a different literary period, but he viewed as a “major flaw“ in his design the difficulty of selecting a sufficiently representative set of questions from the pre-test to measure student learning consistently over the midterms. He reported that his results had not shown any consistent learning pattern. Rater 2 modified the pre- and post-test procedure by administering a test to all students on the first day of class with 80 questions covering the literature of the Romantic, Victorian, Modern and Contemporary periods, as well as author biographies, social context of the periods, and some questions on canon formation. [See test in Appendix H] Over the course of the semester, some questions similar to the ones on the pre-test appeared on the three midterms and on the final exam, but each of the midterms also tested students on material not covered in the pre-test. On the last day of class, as part of the course review for the semester, students took a test with exactly the same 80 questions.

According to Rater 2, the 80 questions gave students ample opportunity to display their success in meeting departmental goals for reading closely. Several questions (e.g. 1, 20, 23, 29, 31, 53, 72) address their mastery of “historical, cultural, biographical, theoretical or literary contexts,” and others (e.g. 13, 32, 35, 46, 50) require that they demonstrate their comprehension of “different genres and the ways a work can uphold or undermine those genre.” Several questions (e.g. 32, 41, 51, 59) also require that students ‘Identify and analyze literary devices, figurative language, syntactic strategies, and narrative techniques,’ with other questions (e.g. 11, 12, 17, 23, 28, 42, 45) requiring that they display their “familiarity with literary history” or “compare and contrast the work of writers from different periods, and comprehend the content and continuities that shape the literary tradition.”

***Benchmarks for assessment.*** The goals for student learning claimed by rater 2 in her report on the testing process [see Appendix H] were:

- 1) that every student would improve over the course of the semester, and
- 2) that on the post-test all students would score at least 50% and at least 5% would score at 85% or above.

***Summary of the results.*** Student scores exceeded the benchmarks. All students improved. The median score rose from 31.25% to 63.75%—nearly doubling over the course of the semester. The mean jumped from 32.50% to 63.95%, reflecting the same level of improvement.

Twenty-five of 27 students took the post-test. Of those 25 students six had missed reading the final page of the exam and thus had completed only 68 of the 80 questions, undoubtedly lowering the overall average of student performance. After the post-test it was discovered that all

scores on both tests were one point off because of an error in the key. Nevertheless, 23 students improved on the post-test. Data for two students was additionally inconclusive because of recording or scanning errors that made it impossible to identify their pre-test with a specific post-test.

Of the 23 scores, all but 3 students met the goal of scoring at least 50% on the post-test (with no correction for the six truncated tests). Those three students all showed significant student learning, with two more than doubling the number of correct answers from the pre- to the post-test. The goal that 5% would score at 85% was not achieved (though it might have been if the six students had completed the full test). The highest score on the post-test was 83.75 (achieved by two students), with two other students scoring above 80%. Nearly 17% of students came within 5 percentage points (or four correct answers) of the goal even with six incomplete tests.

**Interpretation of the results.** In her report on the pre- and post-tests [see Appendix H], rater 2 offered her reflections on the contribution the testing had made to student learning:

“Students in Eng-047 clearly, and significantly, progressed toward our four departmental goals in reading closely. There is evidence here that this system of testing with identical pre- and post-tests can be reliable and verifiable, and will provide useful information about student learning in the future. . . . Moreover, that information will be useful not only in designing ENG-047 more effectively, but also in reflecting as a department on how best to design and track student progress through the curriculum.

“Moreover, and important to our ethos as a department engaged in meaningful student assessment, this evaluative tool can promote learning by giving students a concrete exercise at the beginning of the semester to help them gauge specific course goals for their learning. Initially I was reluctant to take the class time in a very full semester to give two exams that students would not be graded on. As I prepared the test, though, I realized that seeing this overview of the material on the first day and actively testing their own level of knowledge about British literature of the last two centuries gave students a very concrete sense of what the course would cover, as well as a glimpse of what kinds of strategies they might need to develop to succeed in studying for the course. Similarly, the post-test gave many of them a satisfying sense of what they had learned over the course of the semester without the anxiety that comes with evaluation for a grade, and it also gave them a sense of what areas they still needed to study to succeed on the exam.

“. . . I have already begun to revise the test to make it more accurately match the material covered over the course of the semester. I will also make revisions in the course to more directly address these four departmental learning goals (focusing more questions on genre and on author biography, for instance.) . . .

“One complication with assessment through these means that I have not ironed out yet is that students take the post-test before they have studied for the final exam. As a result, they have not finished their learning for the course, and it’s quite likely that they know more about the last two centuries of British literature at the end of the semester than post-test scores account for.”

***Pre- and post-tests for ENG-046 in Fall 2009***

In Fall 2009 Prof. Candace Taylor administered a 50-question pre-test at the beginning of the semester and the same test at the end of the semester to her students in ENG-046, “Survey of British Literature Before 1800.” Although she submitted a basic analysis of data to the department, she was not able to write a report on the testing procedure and results, and the department has not yet scrutinized the data. Thirty students took the pre-test and the same number took the post-test. The actual test sheets for all students are kept in a folder in the office of the Department Chair; the tabulations of wrong answers, by question, with a calculation of the average number of wrong answers, are available online on the department server.

***Benchmarks for assessment.*** As a default assumption, we once again, as in Spring 2009, expected to see that

- 1) every student will improve over the course of the semester, and
- 2) on the post-test all students will score at least 50% (in this case, 15 out of 30 students) and at least 5% (in this case, 1.5 students) will score 85% or above.

***Results.*** A glance at the grade report reveals several points of interest:

- 1) Of the 30 students who took the pre-test, 18 failed to sign their tests, so, unfortunately, only a trained graphologist would be able to ascertain the number of students who improved their scores.
- 2) From the pre-test to the post-test, the number of students who scored at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or better, answering 25 or more of the 50 questions correctly, increased from 5 to 29, or from 17% to 97%.
- 3) From the pre-test to the post-test, the number who scored at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, answering 42 or more of the questions correctly, increased from 0 to 4, or from 0% to 13%.
- 4) Curiously, on four questions (#8, 26, 29, and 50) the students collectively either scored no better or scored worse on the post-test than on the pre-test.

With reference to the benchmarks, the class fell one short of meeting the first expectation, that all students would score at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on the post-test. The class far exceeded

the second expectation, that at least 5% of the class would score at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above. In addition to the four who scored 42 or better, two other students scored 40 out of 50.

The pre- and post-tests administered by Prof. Taylor in Fall 2009 need yet to be compared and contrasted with the 2006 and Spring 2009 pre- and post-tests. Such comparisons are not simple, since each test has been adapted and modified from its predecessor and since each has been beset by different problems in procedure and execution, making benchmark comparisons shaky. Despite the reservations, however, pre- and post-tests have helped us measure the four “Reading Closely” outcomes. The testing practice should continue, since it allows us to make reasonably well grounded inferences about how our students are grasping literary historical content and contexts, literary genres, and techniques of literary criticism. The test results, together with bibliographic paper evaluations and other assessment results, should be examined together to find out where, specifically, our students are weakest in their performances and may need more or better instruction. In the Fall 2009 post-test, for example, questions #3, 26, 41, and 45 are marked wrongly by over 20 of the 30 students. These questions include two that focus on technical questions in poetics and two that deal with historical identification of early British historical figures. Over half of the 30 students on the same test mark wrongly the answers to questions #1, 3, 8, 15, 22, 26, 29, 41, and 45. Six out of nine of these questions deal with early- to late-medieval matters, and six out of nine (some overlapping with the former six) of the others focus on technical poetic, genre, or theory questions. What is this pattern of wrong answers telling us? Here are some hypotheses worth testing:

1. Instructors spend insufficient time on medieval, technical poetic, genre, and theory matters.
2. Wrong answers reflect the inevitably hit-or-miss aspect of teaching and learning.
3. Students toward the end of the course need special review of the early literary history they’ve learned toward the beginning of the course.
4. Students resist absorbing abstract concepts and information about literary matters remote from them in time.
5. Questions on the test are ambiguously constructed or worded.

### ***Senior interviews***

Neither the department’s bibliographic paper evaluation or its pre- and post-test regimens in ENG-046 and ENG-047 very directly address Student Learning Outcome #1: “Students will take their own cultural and theological framework into account as they read literary texts, and articulate how this synergy between faith and art influences their angle of vision and expands their **affections** and sympathies.” Synergies between students’ faith and their literary scholarship or the vectors of their affection and sympathy are often only deeply implied in students’ scholarly writing.

Sometimes we learn more directly about outcomes under the heading of “Critical Thinking” from students’ own self-descriptions as they look back on their college careers.

To capture students’ self-descriptions, members of the department have often conducted “exit interviews” with selected graduating seniors. The strategy of using senior interviews to assess student learning outcomes was proposed on p. 10 of the 2003 Institutional Proposal to WASC [See Appendix N]:

. . . the college will initiate in spring 2004 a program in which each faculty member conducts a one-hour interview with a graduating senior regarding the six learning outcomes of the college. Such interviews will complement results from the ongoing senior survey and become part of the ongoing campus-wide dialogue that will be formative for the institution as it continues to modify its program in order to more fully achieve student learning outcomes. . . . The Program Review Committee and the General Education Committee will work with each department to ensure that data gathered from the campus-wide tools of assessment and from the systematic interviews with graduating seniors serve as a basis for an ongoing dialogue regarding student learning and provide a means of assessing our performance.

[see

[http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional\\_portfolio/documents/wasc\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional_portfolio/documents/wasc_proposal.pdf)]

The ambition of the college has been partially realized in our department, though not with the consistency that was envisioned. We have on numerous occasions used “Senior Response Forms” combined with “Faculty Interview Record Forms” to record the comments of senior English majors in their end-of-year interviews with faculty members. The “Senior Response Form” asks them to use a 10-point scale to record where they were at entrance to the college and where they see themselves at graduation with respect to each of Six Westmont Learning Standards (1) Christian Orientation, 2) Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking, 3) Diversity, 4) Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement, 5) Written and Oral Communication, and 6) Research and Technology).

The English Department’s student learning outcomes can be assessed to an extent from these interview forms. However, we are challenged in several ways: 1) not all professors have conducted the interviews, 2) we have not conducted the interviews every year, 3) we have not always filed the interview results in a central place, 4) we have not often discussed the interview results in more than desultory fashion as the school years have come to a close, 5) the students’ self-assessments are strongly subjective, 6) the reviewers of the interview results must rely on inference and surmise to grasp the possible connections between results for one standard and another, and 7) the “Six Westmont Learning Standards” do not neatly square with the nine departmental SLOs. The Department might do well to create a senior interview form of its own, not



to substitute for the College's structured inquiry but to draw out responses more directly aligned with the Department's Nine Student Learning Outcomes. Nevertheless, from the combination of responses to senior interview questions A ("Christian Orientation") and B ("Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking") we may infer something about the student's learning outcome with respect to our SLO #1.

**Recent Interviews.** In May 2010 members of the department conducted interviews with the four graduating seniors, as follows:

| <u>Faculty Interviewer</u> | <u>Student Interviewee</u> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Rater 1                    | Student Interviewee 1      |
| Rater 5                    | Student Interviewee 2      |
| Rater 4                    | Student Interviewee 3      |
| Rater 6                    | Student Interviewee 4      |

The Department has not yet discussed the results of these surveys. That discussion remains an agenda item for Fall 2010. Here are excerpts from the interviewers' notes on those surveys, from which we may derive more nuanced insights about the interaction between faith and critical thinking about literature:

- (Rater 1) "When I asked Student Interviewee 1 to discuss the departmental and institutional Christian Orientation outcomes, she stated that the Common Contexts courses were helpful in this regard, but even more so were the "care and conversations" she experienced with English professors. When I asked her how literature may have expanded her sympathies for others, she cited Tennyson's "In Memoriam" as a good example of a piece of literature which led her into a deeper understanding of the grieving process and how humans recover from the loss of loved ones."
- (Rater 4) "Somewhat surprisingly, student interviewer 3 attributes her growth in Christian orientation (Learning Standard A) not only to chapel, Vespers, and Religious Studies classes, but also to poetry classes such as "Verse and Verity" (England Semester 2008). She is drawn to religious poetry, including hymns, and has also developed a love of poetic form during her time at Westmont."
- (Student interviewer 3, in her own words) "Marilyn McEntyre's American literature courses were really helpful in becoming aware of how American Christians have approached theological issues—Hawthorne responding to Puritanism and Melville's approach to Calvinism. Dr. McEntyre admonished us to forgive what needs to be forgiven in order to "get the gift" that writers offer. The Faulkner course was helpful in

approaching an entirely different culture. The Faulkner seminar helped me respond with charity and empathy and to be able to look for sparks of Christian value without feeling like I had to force the issue and proselytize the literature. . . . Being an English major has given me a greater attention to words, and that has been worshipful for me to be able to reflect on paradoxes and images and to see poetry within them, or, alternatively, to see worship cropping up in the middle of class—to see there are these creative works that are glorifying God. My worship has become less narrow and I've been able to see worship in different time periods, and in different locations and coming from the minds of people I would not have expected it to come from. My sense of worship has shifted to allow a wider variety of forms. Doctrinally, I'm not sure that I can tell you all the points of doctrine that have shifted. More than anything, Westmont has been a process of coming to believe with my heart more fully that which I had already accepted. I already believed that we were saved by grace rather than by our own works. But to be able to come into contact with all this knowledge and to realize that our ability to understand God is so small—that has humbled me. My doctrine has become more God-centered. Westmont has made me realize that faith has to be resting on God and not on our understanding of Him or our ability to grasp religions. My doctrine has come to be based more on trust in a personal God of love and less on theological abstractions or the reasonableness of a doctrinal proposition. . . . My Christian orientation has not shifted at Westmont; it has deepened and widened. . . . Westmont has taught me how to ask questions. I have been given information as well! But my experience freshman year in Life Science with Beth Horvath, and History with Chapman, and Literature with McEntyre, taught me that a lot of what an undergraduate education is about is learning how to ask the proper questions. My professors really facilitated the asking of good questions, which I think does teach you charity with one another because especially in our first year we were dealing with such a diversity of people that trying to understand one another in the classroom and outside the classroom is really important. British Novel with rater 2 this semester is an excellent example of bringing in other disciplinary thinking from other fields—history or art criticism. Every literature class at Westmont has always brought in faith in some way. We have always been asking how things press up against our Christian values or how they echo Christian values. Every English class has woven together our faith and our literary study.

- (Rater 6) “student interviewer 4 rated herself relatively high [6/10] on the Christian Orientation standard as an incoming student and only a little higher [8/10] as an outgoing senior. In her small Christian high school, students, she said, were rewarded for good behavior and closed mental sets, though they were offered excellent “Bible” classes.

She rates herself low as in-coming on the “Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking” [3/10] but credits herself with quite a striking shift on this scale by the time she graduated [7/10]. She writes: “Chapels, RS classes, retreats, and general college relationships all increased my overall Christian practices and knowledge” and “[I] came in unable to define my own assumptions and with a narrow range of disciplines, left with a much higher understanding of critical thinking.” She says that the change in college was gradual, a product of a group of friends challenging each other, living off-campus; Europe Semester had a big influence on her critical-interdisciplinary thinking. The “Reading in the Community” course (ENG-191SS) was very influential on her service orientation. This and Europe Semester are major factors in her wish to go to Africa for an indefinitely long stay starting this October [2010].”

### *Alumni Surveys*

Another agenda item for the Fall 2010 school year will be to discuss the results of two surveys conducted during the summer of 2010. The first, initiated by Rater 4 and completed with the help of her student research assistant, KB, queried high-profile graduates from the past decade by email [the survey results are available on the department server at [smb://myfiles/program\\_review/english](smb://myfiles/program_review/english)]. Each former student was asked—and seven responded generously—to the following 15 prompts:

1. When did you graduate from Westmont?
2. Did you complete any other majors or minors?
3. In general, how have your experiences with the English department at Westmont influenced your post-college life vocationally, socially, spiritually?
4. Please describe your educational and career path after graduating from Westmont.
5. How else have you been involved, besides vocationally, in your local community (volunteering with a church, raising a family, participating in the arts or sports, etc)?  
What else do you like to do in your spare time?
6. What was the most formative English class you ever took at Westmont, and why?
7. Who was your most influential English professor, and why?
8. How do you think the skills, sensitivity, and awareness you acquired in Westmont English classes made you better prepared for classes in other areas of the liberal arts, whether at Westmont or in grad school?
9. What books are you currently reading?
10. Have you published any books, won any fellowships or other awards, been elected to public office, etc.?

11. Did you ever work at Writers' Corner? If so, how did that experience prepare you for future opportunities in writing, teaching, etc.?
12. Did you participate in England Semester? If so, how did that experience impact you?
13. What advice would you give to a first-year student at Westmont who's trying to decide whether not to major in English?
14. What advice would you give to a senior who's graduating with an English degree?
15. Describe one experience at Westmont (paper, test, demanding professor, etc) which was unpleasant or frustrating at the time, but actually influenced you for the better.

The information gathered through such a survey is probably not properly called "data" but rather "feedback" and "reflection." Though the ideas expressed in it are loose and highly commingled, they will mean something different to every reader and do much to challenge and encourage professors in their work. From the results we can extract gems such as the following which hint at the way many of our learning outcomes may be being achieved:

- "I learned in my English classes to appreciate the power of story, and that has shaped the way I think about many other academic areas, such as ethics, theology, history, and politics. I found that developing confidence and skill in discussing texts extensively in class prepared me very well for graduate school, and it actually helped me to stand out among highly qualified classmates who hadn't had as much experience in small seminars at the undergraduate institutions."
- "EngSem was one of the first times in my life when I felt in my deepest heart that I had to take responsibility for my own faith—and that centuries of church history could help me get my bearings in that effort. . . . My career as an English professor is forever shaped by that semester. But most of all, I learned how to enjoy living through my day and to see the world new at every turn."
- "No other major will teach you to think as deeply or widely. The skills you'll learn as an English major—how to write, how to think, how to enter another's world, how to examine assumptions, how to hold ideas in tension—are what you need to succeed in any field and in life."
- "[Dr. Cook] . . . forced me to think harder than anyone had before but he also helped up literature as a form of epistemology [sic] and theology in a very non-sectarian way that I still find shapes my own critical work."
- "I was (and continue to be) a big fan of Dr. Cook: his acerbic wit, deep knowledge and understanding of literature, and cock-eyed way of looking at the world showed me to look farther, harder, and underneath a topic to understand how it was put together and what was at stake."

- “England Semester was hands down the best thing I ever did in school. The density of information, the rich context for reading, and the root-level experience of another nation’s culture is nearly impossible to find anywhere else.”
- “My closest friends were all English majors. We were drawn together by a sense that college was about discovering truth, goodness, and beauty. Our English professors made that discovery exciting. Many of us were growing skeptical of the faith traditions we had been raised in, so we didn’t naturally gravitate to theology or biblical studies. . . . What we encountered in English classes . . . was the sense that there was this intellectual conversation and quest out there that was so much deeper and continuous than the cultural and spiritual zits that annoyed me about evangelicalism. And this conversation had always been deeply invested in Christian thought and worship—even when it was most inimical to Christianity, as in high Modernism. So English (and American) literature gave me a place to hang out and grow intellectually and spiritually—like a secret shed in the woods behind the church where you can go with the other cool kids and smoke cigarettes while you wait for your parents to finish their boring conversations. But that shed also had its own guardian angels, the professors who would nudge us away from our annoyances with our parents and into the most important conversations of our lives. Now that I’ve grown up a bit, I realize that those conversations were also the ones my parents were having, just in a different way. Literature eventually led me to theology, which led me back into the church building. I don’t hate evangelicals anymore—some of my best friends are evangelicals, so to speak—and I’m not sure that would be the case if I hadn’t had professors to show me what really matters. . . . Last Thanksgiving, eight of us got together for a ten-year reunion, and one of the main things we planned—the most important thing all of us thought to do to commemorate our friendship—was to call up our Westmont English professors and tell them what a difference they had made in our lives.”

Comments such as these could not be made by every graduating English major, but they hint at the quality of a conversation between teacher and student, between discipline and discipline, and between us and our predecessors that has always stood at the core of the English Department’s mission and cannot be adequately expressed in mission statements, lists of student learning outcomes, or program reviews. We insist on the significance of this conversation not to disregard the benefits that can be derived from engineering and quality control efforts in our professional work, but to declare that our sense of the best outcomes in our students are ultimately beyond measure.

*English major survey, Sept. 2010.* A second survey went out on September 1, 2010, to the

entire list of English majors from 2003-2010 in the Alumni Office data banks. The survey was designed by the Chair; rater 4 walked it through with Greg Smith in Westmont IT so that the form could be accessed on a college-built website and taken interactively. Alumni were enticed into responding by an offer of Dr. Marilyn McEntyre's book *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* to the first 15 who responded. The form for the survey can be viewed at:

[http://forms.westmont.edu/forms/academics/english/alumni\\_survey](http://forms.westmont.edu/forms/academics/english/alumni_survey)

The survey asks for basic contact information, followed by GRE information, followed by information about a variety of matters relating to life after graduation and the impacts of the study of literature and writing on life. In that third category, the survey offers space for personal comment following each of the nine questions.

The response to the survey was quick and strong: to date, 74 surveys have been returned. The results can be viewed online at the following URL: <http://spreadsheets.google.com/a/westmont.edu/cc?key=tvOGbjMSYjCGJyA64Lrrhbg#gid=0>. The Excel spreadsheet containing the data has not yet been seen and analyzed by the whole department. That business remains for the department to tackle later in the Fall 2010 semester. However, some information pertains to the performance of our majors on standard graduate school entrance exams, such as the GRE, can be readily gleaned from the table. At a glance we can also see how impressively many of our recent graduates have gone on to graduate school and how varied are the fields of their study. Their comments are a rich trove of insight into the value of a major in English at Westmont and into literature as a preparation for life. Such information as this reassures us that, for a healthy number of our majors in the past six years, the desired student learning outcomes #3, 4, 5, and 6 under the heading "Reading Closely" have been achieved. As the Department looks more closely at the gathered data, however, it would benefit from consulting with someone from outside the department who has expertise in interpreting tabulated data.

***GRE scores by recent alumni.*** One measure of a student's prowess in using the language, understanding literature in historical context, understanding technical aspects of poetics and criticism, and writing is the GRE scores. Students who responded to the Alumni Survey provided the following information. Out of 74 respondents, 14 reported Verbal and Quantitative GRE scores; some also reported analytical test scores and subject test scores. Broken down by year, the scores were as follows:

**GRE SCORES Reported by 2003-2009 Westmont College English major graduates**

| <b>Verbal</b> | <b>Quantitative</b> | <b>Analytical</b> | <b>Subject</b> |     |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----|
| 2003          | 700                 | 740               | 770            |     |
|               | 720                 | 640               | 5.5            |     |
|               | 680                 | 620               | 590            |     |
|               | 760                 | 680               | 4              |     |
|               | 760                 | 760               | 6              |     |
|               | 720                 | 730               | 790            |     |
| 2004          | 540                 | 680               | 6              |     |
| 2006          | 800                 | 650               | 5.5            | 660 |
| 2007          | 700                 | 700               | 4.5            |     |
| 2008          | 590                 | 640               | 5              |     |
|               | 700                 | 700               | 6              |     |
|               | 730                 | 660               |                | 680 |
|               | 590                 | 630               | 5              |     |
| 2009          | 680                 | 750               | 6              |     |
| Ave:          | 690.7               | 684.28            |                |     |

Several observations can be drawn from this table: 1) the average verbal and quantitative scores of a Westmont English major are approximately equal; 2) six of the 14 students report quantitative scores that are higher than their verbal scores; 3) five of our former students here report both verbal and quantitative scores in the 700-range, and 4) in 2003 and 2008, we either had a bumper crop of graduate-school bound seniors or we had bumper crops of students who respond to surveys!

The performance of Westmont students is especially impressive when compared against national averages: Verbal—462, Quantitative—584, and Writing—4.0. More significantly, our students stand up very well when compared against the average GRE scores for admission to some of the most prestigious public and private graduate universities, as reported on about.com ([http://testprep.about.com/od/thegretest/f/GRE\\_FAQ\\_Score.htm](http://testprep.about.com/od/thegretest/f/GRE_FAQ_Score.htm)). Here is a sampling of such averages:

| <b>SCHOOL</b> | <b>Verbal Ave.</b> | <b>Quant. Ave.</b> | <b>Writing Ave.</b> |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Berkeley      | 500-550            | 750-800            | 4.5                 |
| UCLA          | 534                | 766                | 5.0                 |
| U of VA       | 650                | 690                | 4.5                 |
| U of Mich     | 600                | 750-800            | 5.0                 |
| UC San Diego  | 640                | 680                | 5.5                 |

|                |      |      |     |
|----------------|------|------|-----|
| U of Wisconsin | 658  | 731  | 4.5 |
| Notre Dame     | 680  | 763  | 5.3 |
| Stanford       | 590  | 780  | 4.8 |
| Duke           | 600+ | 600+ | 4.5 |

Our students' average of 690 Verbal will exceed the average for every one of these schools. Our students' average of 684 Quantitative will be competitive at only three of the schools, but the Westmont student with Verbal and Quantitative scores of 760 and 760 would be strongly competitive at any of the schools.

### C. Conclusion

Students come to the English major from many different cultural perspectives, with many different interests, and with many different goals. The English major prepares them best by stretching their abilities as critical thinkers and multi-modal learners, enriching their knowledge of human history with perspectives drawn from deep inside culture and conveyed in powerful language, and deepening their sympathies with the lives of others through the alchemy of reading and writing. Our best students succeed admirably in this and are able to launch from Westmont with no apologies into all sorts of careers, including careers as professional educators in English.

From an assessment standpoint, the experience of English majors who are not winning prizes and topping the grading scale is a little more terra incognita, though they constitute the majority. In the future, it will be incumbent on us to be just as concerned about raising students from "competency" to "proficiency" as about raising some from "proficiency" to "mastery." Our pre-testing and post-testing has been enough of a success so far that we should continue it. Already it has caused the instructor in a survey course to rethink some of the test questions and teaching methods used in the course. Moreover, it has demonstrated how assessment tools can sometimes be integrated into the process of teaching and learning in ways that enhance the process rather than hijacking the enterprise. If we could align our senior interview process more carefully with our student learning outcomes and conduct the interviews more widely and more regularly—perhaps not only with our best and most articulate students—we might learn more about the impacts of our teaching on our students' growth.

The ethnic diversity of our majors, relative to the diversity of the student body, is admirable, but the male-female disproportion is a continuing fact of life which some more than others would view as a problem. The ethnic homogeneity of the faculty is by the standards of the college and the profession a problem, though a problem resistant to easy solutions. One challenge for the future will be to keep questions of the ethnic and gender diversity of the faculty linked to



the review and revision of the curriculum and to define what for the sake of our students' educational experience will be desirable gains and acceptable losses.

The Fall of 2010 is a time for processing this review, revising it as necessary, and deciding on ways to concentrate and integrate our methods of assessment, building on the strengths we have built over the past ten years. It is a time for framing and aiming the department's future discussions of our students' learning, the design of our major curriculum, our approach to general education, and our priorities for hiring. We cannot go too far, too fast in this discussion with a senior member, rater 5, out of the country. Though both he and rater 2 are scheduled to be on sabbatical in the spring, both have voiced their willingness to be part of the conversation even when on leave. Thus Spring 2011 will be a good opportunity for all voices to be heard on questions such as: Who should choose to be an outside reviewer? How should we prepare for an outside review? What should the department try to accomplish while the review is pending?

#### **D. Future Directions**

The first step in assessment after the completion of this report will be for the members of the department to digest and discuss the contents of the two alumni surveys that were completed at the end of Summer 2010. The surveys give us a picture of our students' preparedness for life and careers beyond college. More particularly, they give us evidence of the impact of English study on the lifelong challenge of integrating faith and learning, as referred to in our SLO #1.

Meanwhile, we should be digesting, discussing, and where necessary, revising this report, extracting from it, where possible, clues to our future directions in curriculum design, co-curricular design, faculty hiring, and learning assessment.

If possible, we would like to have a department member attend the WASC Level II Assessment Retreat in Anaheim, CA, on October 21-23.

We have had enough experience now with pre-testing and post-testing in survey courses to take two steps forward: 1) refine the test itself based on past experience using it, and 2) consider how we might use a similar tool for assessing the learning of our students in GE classes such as ENG-002, Composition, and ENG-006, Studies in Literature.

#### **5. GE AND SERVICE COURSES**

In a typical semester such as the one we would project for Spring 2011, we expect to teach 21 4-unit courses. Of these, 8, or 38%, are lower-level GE courses in either Composition, Studies in Literature, or Masterpieces of World Literature. Five out of 21, or 29%, are Composition, a course which meets a GE Common Skills requirement but which does not count toward the English major.

If we consider the enrollment caps placed on the courses and thus calculate the potential number of student seats in those classes, we find seats for 208 GE students in those eight courses

compared with 555 seats overall, or 37% GE. However, GE classes such as Composition are typically filled to the brim, whereas upper-division classes in the major often have enrollments that are 20-66% of capacity. Thus the percentage of GE students as a proportion of our overall actual teaching load is significantly understated here.

Our emphasis in assessment over the past six years has been almost entirely focused on assessment of SLOs as they pertain to students and courses in the English major. These are the focus of our pre- and post-testing, the focus of our Bibliographic Essay Evaluation, and the focus of our surveys. The GE courses have been crafted over a long period of time, have standardized templates and learning objectives, and are subject to the scrutiny of the whole college. We have gotten along in recent years with a satisfied sense of “mission accomplished.” But the specter of George W. Bush’s landing on the aircraft carrier with the banner announcing his triumph is a haunting one. Perhaps it is time for us to turn our attention to assessment of the GE courses. First in line would necessarily be ENG-002, Composition, since that is the more demanding of the two courses to teach and all of our full-time professors and many adjuncts are expected to teach the course. Composition is also an area in which the pedagogy is constantly under revision on a national scale. Since we have recently hired a professor-rater whose professional and teaching emphasis is on rhetoric and composition, the next couple of years would be an opportune time to take a new look at the assessment of our first-year composition course.

We as a department are already scheduled to spend two separate department meetings in Fall 2010 in “Composition Pedagogy Workshops.” On December 1, 2009, in a department meeting we discussed the WPA (Writing Programs Administrators) Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition and on December 8, 2009 we shared our own “best practices” in composition teaching in a stimulating department workshop. These were exercises in program evaluation and professional development, but they were not focused on instated methods or results of assessment, and they were not tied in any specific way to our student learning outcomes or larger educational assessment efforts. Such an effort might perhaps be a reasonably ambitious one to undertake in Spring 2011.

### ***Support for Other Departments***

Our greatest contribution to another department is through our link with the Education Department. We contribute to the preparation of liberal studies majors-candidates for elementary school teaching-by offering one of the Education Program’s required courses, ENG-106, Language Acquisition, taught by adjunct professor Dr. Paul McGarry. Approximately 15 liberal studies majors per year also meet Education Program options by taking ENG-104, Modern Grammar and Advanced Composition, typically in the spring semester.

For prospective high school teachers, we spell out a 54-60 unit “Guideline for Teacher Preparation for Secondary Teachers of English” in the college catalog. Seven out of the 74 students from the past six years who responded to our alumni survey reported that they had enrolled in or finished in teaching credential programs at the graduate level after graduating from Westmont. Many more students in our major classes at any given time are testing the possibility of going into careers of high school teaching. To assist the Education Department, we have supplied a member of the department for all of the past six years to serve on the Education Department Advisory Council with representatives from other departments.

We find our film studies course (ENG-101), advanced composition (ENG-104), and Journalism (ENG-087) to be popular options for majors in Communications Studies. Sometimes as many as half the students in any of these classes are from “Comm.” Students from Theater Arts, as well, frequently take English literature courses, especially because of the emphasis placed on the study of live theater by rater 5. Rater 6 has for over six years served on the Board of Directors of the Lit Moon Theater, the local theater company directed by Professor of Theater Arts John Blondell. And we currently share Prof. Elizabeth Hess with the Theater Arts Department; she teaches 2/3 in T.A. and 1/3 time in English for the 2010-2011 school year. None of these affiliations show signs of abating.

The strong connection we have had with pre-medical and medical science students over the years continues, with numerous students pre-med students declaring English as their major and many science students also using ENG-104 (Modern Grammar) as a convenient way to bone up for their MCAT exams, which focus on their writing abilities. Five of the 74 respondents on our recent six-year alumni survey reported that they had gone on to pursue a medical degree. Two or three English professors per year are asked to write extensive letters of evaluation and recommendation for the portfolios of students who seek the college’s endorsement as candidates for medical school. For the first three years of the past six we had the luxury of having among us Prof. Marilyn McEntyre, one of whose professional specializations was in the area of Medicine and Literature. Pre-med students were particularly drawn to special sections of ENG-002, Composition, and ENG-006, Studies in Literature, that she designed with a special medical emphasis. With her retirement, we no longer have that special contribution to make to the Pre-Med program.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM RESOURCES**

### **A. Financial Resources**

The financial resources of the English Department over the past six years have been adequate to fund the department’s needs. Perhaps a better way to say this is that the English Department has found comfortable ways to live within its limited means.

### ***Staffing***

In 2006, 2007, and 2009, when the department needed to respond to staffing shortfalls due to the retirements of Speirs, Sider, and McEntyre, the Provost's Office approved our requests to conduct national searches and funded the searches that resulted in our filling of tenure-track appointments first of Kathryn Stelmach (now Artuso), then of Sarah Yoder (now Skripsky), followed by a two-year visiting professor appointment of Candace Hull Taylor, and finally, a tenure-track appointment of Jamie Friedman. Our requests for adjuncts to help us teach the GE courses in composition and literature have been met, except in the 2009-2010 academic year, when low enrollments and the unfavorable national economic climate forced the whole faculty to put a freeze on new adjunct hiring. For the 2010-2011 academic year, the adjunct positions have been restored. We currently have eight full-time faculty, with one on off-campus program duty in the fall and two on sabbatical in the spring; in addition, we have a two-thirds time visiting associate professor (Weber) and four adjuncts teaching one course apiece (Hess, McGarry, Orfalea, Wilder). We are pleased with the college's support of the English program in its funding of our staffing needs.

### ***Budget***

Our annual budget has been sufficient to support our current program without undue strain. Here are several proofs of that sufficiency:

1. In the year 2009-2010, when the college froze salaries and adjunct hires, the English Department tightened its own budgetary belt, with no ill consequences, and was able to finish the year with a roughly \$2000 surplus, which was returned to the college's general fund.
2. We have been not needed to reduce the number of annual Lynip Award winners or the average amount of their awards on account of any shortfall in funding from the anonymous donor.
3. The Department has been able to hire 1-3 English majors as research assistants to aid the professional work of department faculty members for each of the past several summers, drawing upon funds in the budget designated for student workers.
4. Due to the benefits of electronic means of transmission such as e-mail, we have stayed well under budget for annual postage and long-distance telephone expenses for the six years here under review.
5. We have been able to hold well-catered annual Senior Breakfasts on the Reynolds Hall lawn, or, in Spring 2009, at the Santa Barbara Mission, at times using department funds to pay for student helpers.

6. We have been able to meet our commitment to each of our newly hired professors to provide the one-course professional development leave during the first year, as well as exemption from advising duties and major committee appointments.
7. We have been able to bring some visiting speakers onto campus and into our classrooms and to provide them with acceptable, though quite modest, stipends.

#### ***Other Financial Resources***

The funds supplied by an anonymous donor provide approximately \$6000-8000 in award monies annually to recipients of the Arthur W. Lynip Awards. In the last couple of years, as the national economy has been in recession, we have not spent all the funds available to us in a given year, so as to cushion ourselves for any potential shortfall in funds in the following year. In addition to the Lynip funds, another potential donor has informed the department of a DAF (donor advised fund) of approximately \$15,000, promising to grow about 15% annually for the next several years, that has been designated for the support of the English Department's programs in a manner to be agreed upon by the department and the donor.

#### ***Funding Concerns***

Our requests for Capital Improvement Program grants have been met or exceeded in the past six years. We have seen new carpeting in Reynolds Hall, new office shelving replacing closet structures in some Reynolds Hall offices, a rebuilt deck and back stairs for Reynolds, as well as a new furnace, new air conditioning unit, new roof, new commode in the downstairs men's room, and new walkway made of paving stones for the circumambulation of Reynolds Hall. During the next six years, it is easy to imagine that the carpeting will need to be replaced once again and that one or more closets in Reynolds Offices might need to be taken out and replaced with shelving.

Our greatest need for additional financial support is for funds to bring in visiting speakers and readers in both the areas of creative writing and the areas of literature. Because our department budget cannot support more than one or two speakers a year who charge fees more than in the \$500-1000 range, not including travel, we tend to bring in speakers of excellent local or regional reputation but not speakers of prominent national stature.

Library acquisitions are also an item in which we find ourselves financially strapped. Each member of the department receives approximately \$350 "allowance" per year to propose purchases for the library collection. However, the backlog is long, and the funds are exhausted long before our requests for even "essential" books in our field are met. This, however, is part of a larger conversation about funding for the library, rather than about the department's own budget.

Our one major concern over the effectiveness of our department expenses is with the costs of photocopying with the excellent new copier we have received. With copies at 6.75 cents per

page, compared with the roughly 2 cents per page that it formerly cost to run the laser printers in the department, our photocopying costs came in at over \$2000 over budget last year. The overall budget was well in the black, but we are not sure at the moment how to diminish that expense; it would appear to be a problem afflicting many departments on campus. We would recommend that the college study the impact of photocopying costs ultimately on student tuition rates, since the costs charged to the department would appear to be higher than the mere costs of maintenance, paper, and overhead.

## **B. Program Resources**

### ***The Library Collection/Database resources***

As in the past, our first-year composition classes continue to hold hour-long workshops each semester with library personnel—typically with our Department’s Library Liaison, Diane Ziliotto—training students in search strategies using the library’s print holdings, special databases, and Web connections. And we continue to train first-year students in research writing in the context of a documented research paper assignment. To those who lead those classes, it appears that students come to them now with a great deal more competency in use of electronic resources than before and get into the process without a great deal of fuss or mystification.

We also see concentrated use of library resources by students in upper-level literature classes such as ENG-117, Shakespeare, or other historical period courses, where an extended documented research paper is required. And we see heavy reliance on library facilities by the one or two students annually who complete major honors projects. We have always been able to tell the difference in quality of papers between those whose authors have gone to the UCSB library to use their resources and those who have stayed on campus to complete their work. Our print collection has remained heavily stocked with titles from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, which some students use in haste even when they are commanded to choose sources published within the last decade. However, the use of electronic databases and sophisticated web browsers has helped to reduce this problem.

The question that is harder to answer is how frequently students make use of library resources in mid-career, when they are writing essays that do not necessarily demand library research. How much have our students made it a habit to enrich their learning and improve their academic performance by using the research skills learned in their first year of college? And to what extent have majors acquired new skills and familiarity with new, specialized sources of information uniquely equipping them for success in their major studies? It is hard to find answers to these questions when students are able to access electronic resources wirelessly from anywhere they happen to roam. A burden falls on individual professors to stay current themselves in new methods

of research and to teach and evaluate students' learning in ways that place a high premium on research. We do not currently monitor the way mid-level elective courses in the major involve library research skills. In our bibliographic essay evaluation exercise described above, we do monitor and evaluate the way students in the Shakespeare class handle research tools available to them through the library.

### *Library staff*

Our library liaison, Diane Ziliotto, has been energetically and always tactfully involved with our department as long as she has been in that position. She has visited our department to discuss issues such as book ordering, interlibrary loan procedures, periodical holdings, and the like. She has shown energy, intelligence, and forethought in the way she has conducted workshops on research methods for first-year students, always gearing her examples and demonstrations to the actual topics students are exploring in their papers, which she has carefully ascertained beforehand.

The ordering of books, of course, is an area fraught with difficulty, since the budget for book buying is so slim and our desire for better and newer publications is so persistent. We are given approximately \$350 annually per professor in the department for each to order books from Choice "cards" and publishers catalogs in areas of that person's expertise. Our selections routinely outrun the library's ability to purchase them, and the back load of requests is long. The staff does a thorough job of checking out the collection to avoid duplication and a very sensitive job of understanding and accommodating our academic needs within the severe financial constraints. We have not yet settled, however, the best methods of vetting the books to recommend for purchase. Traditionally we have used Choice cards. More recently, we have been asked to access the Choice publications online. However, members of our department have shown a preference for using the cards. Though cumbersome, the cards are visible and easy to manipulate and mark on. The online service requires yet more time staring at computer screens in lives that are already too much glued to them. The computer data needs to be searched for; it is not as much "in our faces" as the physical cards, and so it is easier to ignore or resist.

Under the severe financial constraints, we are also prone to avoid ordering books with high price tags, though books with low prices are not necessarily the best. We avoid ordering primary sources in special editions, large specialized reference works, and collections of DVDs. Underlying the unevenness of our collection is always the embarrassingly small budget for purchasing materials, as well as the hit-or-miss aspect of the book ordering process. With new professors in World Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, and Medieval Literature, we have a need and an opportunity to build up our collections in these areas, as well as in areas of growing student interest such as film, journalism, and creative writing. Perhaps only with an outside fund-raising

organization such as a “Friends of the Library” group, yet to be created, will we be able to fund such initiatives.

### ***The Internship Office***

Our relationship with the Internship Office has grown through our healthy relationship with Jennifer Taylor. We have the pieces in place—professors designated as supervisors and liaisons, the Internship Office to cultivate opportunities and instruct students in pre-professional pursuits, and off-campus supervisors in a variety of work settings, such as the Pacific Coast Business Times, regional newspapers, art galleries, etc.

The opportunities for internships are not being fully exploited, however, for several reasons. First, students tend only belatedly in their college careers to recognize the value of internships. Second, professors tend not to keep internship possibilities on their radar screens or to have their own personal connections with internship supervisors out in the community. Third, professors are not remunerated for supervising interns, just as they are not remunerated for taking on extra duties such as leading tutorials, supervising major honors projects, advising student groups, and the like. Supervising interns falls into the category sometimes as “one more thing” in an academic life that is already overtaxed. Fourth, much demand for internships is probably being met by on-campus internships such as writing for credit on the *Horizon*, an option chosen by sometimes as many as 24 students in a semester. Finally, internship supervisors in the community are not always knowledgeable enough about our students to see the opportunity of hiring them as interns. The interface between business enterprises and the academic community can be an awkward one, even a clashing of cultures. And the contribution of service learning to the achieving of our college and department missions has not yet been fully or universally absorbed by the faculty.

Certainly, there is room for greater exploitation of the opportunities available to the college for the benefit of our students in their transition from life in college to life after. The GE program, with its service component, has raised the profile of service learning at the college. However, we could raise the profile further in a number of ways: for example, by creating more of a departmental space for explaining the work of interns, by incorporating more service opportunities into composition courses, or even by adding a service expectation to the major. For such things to happen will probably require the appointment of someone other than the department chair to guide the effort.



### ***The Office of Life Planning***

Our department's interactions with the Office of Life Planning are not frequent or extensive, though that is a comment more on our slowness to take advantage of services offered than on the Office's failure to reach out to us. When we have at least once in the past three years organized a meeting for students approaching graduation, to talk about career, graduate school, and after-college prospects, Dana Alexander has been generous with his time, well informed, and well equipped. Students use the office mostly on their own time, it appears, for personality profiling, aptitude testing, job searching, networking, job skill training, and the like. There is room for the Department to take the concern with Life Planning more actively into the culture of its major program. At our department meeting on September 14, 2010, we heard a presentation from Visiting Professor Carolyn Weber about the possibility for a Literary Society among our students. We have not yet considered whether to create one, but the idea has special merit. Such a society might very profitably draw students as well as faculty into active involvement with career and life planning issues, even as it promotes reading, service learning, creative production and performance, publication, and social rapport among majors.

### ***Off-campus Programs***

The deep investment of our department in the biennial England Semester and the popularity and academic strength of that program are well attested. Not quite as visibly, our professors are also substantially involved in the Europe Semester, with Professors Sider, Larsen Hoeckley, and VanderMey all having co-led the program twice or more in their careers. We also have an affiliate—Prof. Karen Andrews, formerly a professor in the English Department—teaching in the San Francisco Urban Program, teaching courses in writing, film, race and ethnicity in literature, and other literature related courses and internships. The EngSem, EuroSem, and Urban programs all rely on the Off-Campus Programs Office for oversight and assistance in budgeting, planning, recruiting, reservations, risk management, communications, and review. In these operations our department is stably, ably, and energetically served by Bill Wright, Barb Pointer, and others such as Troy Harris in the administration of Off-Campus Programs.

Of these three programs the England Semester has been the least reliant on the Off-Campus Programs Office in such matters as building itineraries, shaping budgets, making reservations, recruiting students, and making travel and lodging arrangements. Prof. Delaney, in particular, calling upon long experience and setting his own high standards, has carried a heavy load in planning, rather than relying on travel agents to do the work. As younger professors step in in future years to assume new leadership in the program, our department will have to confront the knowledge and experience gap. We will have to find ways to pass on the lore, and to a greater

extent than before, perhaps, we will have to rely on the Off-Campus Programs Office for help in planning and communications.

In all these programs, and especially in the selection of students to participate, we have repeatedly found the importance of communication, not just with the Off-Campus Programs Office itself but with RAs, RDs, Student Life, Health Services, Disability Services, and Records Office, and faculty members, in determining the academic, emotional, spiritual and physical fitness of students to take part in these demanding programs. We ask only that the system continue to work as well as it has in the past.

### ***Disability Services***

Michelle Hardley in Disability Services has maintained a professionally discreet and effective service for identifying students with special intellectual or physical challenges to their learning. Most often, faculty members encounter Disability Services when a student approaches a professor with a form filled out attesting to the student's potential difficulty in the classroom due to a variety of possible challenges, including Asberger's Syndrome, ADD, specific learning deficits, or physical disability. Professors are asked to make allowances as necessary in timed writing exercises, note-taking, exam scheduling, seating, and other conditions affecting "access and success."

In some cases, professors find students to be over-accommodated—i.e., not actually requiring the allowances they have been given in order to finish within time limits or understand lectures. In other cases, professors suspect learning disabilities that the student does not report or may even resist discussing and that Disability Services is unable to confirm. Due to many factors, possibly even legal constraints, professors do not often hear from disabled students what exactly it is like to be a student in their classrooms. It might be useful for professors to hear personal accounts of that sort, either in department meetings or in Faculty Forum. And it might also be useful for professors to have practice working through scenarios in which they have to decide how to channel their perceptions that a given student is struggling.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND LONG-TERM VISION**

### **A. Departmental Accomplishments over Six Years**

Over the past six years, the department has

- successfully negotiated the retirements of three long-experienced and highly regarded professors: Profs. Speirs, Sider, and McEntyre

- conducted four national searches resulting in the hiring of three versatile and highly capable tenure-track assistant professors: Profs. Artuso, Skripsky, and Friedman
- shifted the balance in its staffing away from reliance on adjunct professors by expanding its roster of full-time tenure-track professors from seven to eight and achieved gender balance in its faculty roster
- added the dimension of world Anglophone literature and a GE service component (ENG-191SS) to its major curriculum
- brought a new rhetorical focus to the teaching of composition in its hiring of Prof. Skripsky and anchored the study of British literature in medieval language and literature in its hiring of Prof. Friedman
- defined a departmental mission statement, and refined 21 “Goals for our Majors” into a more readily assessable Three Goals and Nine Student Learning Outcomes
- mapped our nine student learning outcomes onto the overall grid of our major
- established standards for Competence, Proficiency, and Mastery for an array of essential features of bibliographic research papers and articulated the standard in a lengthy rubric
- completed assessments covering eight of our nine learning outcomes by 1) holding a grading calibration exercise for bibliographic research paper evaluation, 2) grading 15 upp-class student documented papers from a Shakespeare class, 3) evaluating the grading exercise, 4) conducting pre-testing and post-testing in three sections of British survey, and 5) evaluating the testing procedure.
- held department workshop on composition “best practices”
- completed two alumni surveys and numerous senior “exit” interviews
- strengthened ties with WASC and strengthened our commitment to its aims for us by attending a discipline-specific workshop and translating the instruction there into a our program-review and assessment methods
- maintained the popularity of our major and the academic high standing of students in it.

## **B. Aims for the Six Years Ahead**

Over the next six years, the department aims to

- digest the contents of the two recent alumni surveys, drawing any practical insights from them and implementing them in our program

- process this six-year program review report as a department and decide upon its implications for on-going program review and assessment
- decide upon an approach to review of our curriculum and hire an outside reviewer to review our program in light of this six-year report
- maintain the quality of the England Semester program while reviewing its goals and methods and the prospects for future staffing
- mount a national search for a versatile Americanist, capable of teaching ethnic minority literatures and with other specializations in areas of rising demand, in response to the now-projected retirement of Prof. Cook
- refine assessment tools such as pre- and post-tests, continue to establish meaningful benchmarks for SLOs under all three general goals: Thinking Critically, Reading Closely, and Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity
- assess student learning outcomes in GE courses, ENG-002, ENG-006, and ENG-044
- review the co-curricular culture of our majors, and possibly establish a Literary Society for majors and interested non-majors to achieve a variety of departmental goals
- respond to the outside reviewer's recommendations by revising our major curriculum as well as both expanding and refining our assessments of student learning outcomes,
- take steps to alter our teaching and department culture in response to our analyses of assessment results

### **C. Plan for Achieving the Program's Vision**

The aims spelled out above call for a five-phase process over the next six years, including follow-through on processes already in place. In broad strokes the five phases are:

1. Digestion of data
2. Outside review
3. Curriculum revision
4. National search
5. Continuing assessment and response to assessment

These phases are not strictly sequential but, rather, overlapping. Responding to our assessments is a process already underway; the process includes monitoring and altering our own assessment procedures as well as interpreting and acting upon the results. We need to sharpen our methods of assessment, focus them, simplify them, and work them carefully into our department's modus operandi, so they serve our most deeply held values as professors of literature rather than

competing with them for our time, energy, and passion. Besides continuing to assess SLOs 2-9 in British survey and Shakespeare, we need to devise ways of assessing learning outcomes in our two GE courses, ENG-002 and ENG-006.

Digestion of data will require an initial concentration of activity in the current school year, followed by periodic, ongoing digestion of data as it emerges from our assessment activities. The initial challenge will be to examine two bodies of information: 1) the responses to the two alumni surveys and senior exit interviews completed in the Spring and Summer 2010, and 2) this six-year program review report. More than in the past, we need to respond to reviews and assessments by answering the question, "What therefore shall we *do*?"

The outside review is long overdue. The last outside review, done by Dr. Susan VanZanten Gallagher, took place nearly 20 years ago. During this academic year we need to decide among ourselves whom to invite, then to invite the reviewer and prepare for the visit. This discussion cannot wait, but the scheduling is complicated by the fact that Prof. Delaney is currently in England, that in Spring 2011, both he and Prof. Larsen Hoeckley will be on sabbatical, and that in 2011-2012 Prof. VanderMey may be away on sabbatical leave for either a semester or a year. We will need to invite all voices in the department to contribute as much as possible to the discussion. Preparing for the visit will require digesting, critiquing, and perhaps amending this six-year review report. The process of preparing for review and being reviewed can be expected to take all of the next two years; responding to the review will surely take all of the following four years and beyond.

Revision of our major curriculum must be the centerpiece and chief goal for the next six years' work. It is being prepared for already in our program review and assessment of student learning outcomes; it will be accelerated by an outside review. The focus of a national search would depend on conclusions emerging from our review and revision of the curriculum. Delay in our curriculum review might necessitate delaying a national search and relying on visiting professor and adjunct appointments in the interim.

As we accomplish these major projects, we must also be mindful of the experience our students are having all along the way, and as we gear up for curriculum revision, we must be prompt to enrich our students' co-curricular experience in ways that help us accomplish our department's mission. The idea of a student Literary Society for majors and non-majors alike has surfaced in departmental discussion only during the past couple of weeks. However, it is rich with possibilities for strengthening the culture of the department and shifting the balance from professor-centered teaching to student-centered learning, if the department will collectively embrace that ideal.

### ***Timeline***

A timeline for all of these activities can be at best a wish. The actual pace of activity will be determined by a host of unforeseeable contingencies. Here is a reasonable conjecture:

#### SIX-YEAR TIMELINE

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Semester</b> | <b>Activity</b>   |
|-------------|-----------------|---|
| 2010        | —Fall           | Digest alumni surveys (Department)<br>Digest Six-Year Program Review Report (Department)<br>Refine assessment tools; establish benchmarks<br>England Semester (Delaney)   |
| 2011        | —Spring         | Choose and contract with outside reviewer (Department and Chair)<br>Discuss prospects for revision of curriculum (Department [Delaney and Larsen Hoeckley sabbatical leaves])<br>Develop assessment tools for first-year GE courses (Artuso, Skripsky and Friedman) |
|             | —Fall           | Outside reviewer visit (Outside Reviewer)<br>Assess student learning outcomes in first-year GE courses (Department Faculty)<br>Review Co-Curricular programs (Students and Faculty)<br>Establish Literary Society? (Students and Adviser)                           |
| 2012        | —Spring         | Receive and Review Report of Outside Reviewer (Department)<br>Evaluate assessment results for first-year GE courses (Department)  |
|             | —Fall           | National search (Provost and Search Committee)<br>Study English major curriculum (Task forces: Critical Thinking; Reading; Writing)<br>England Semester (Larsen Hoeckley)   |
| 2013        | —Spring         | Complete national search (Search Committee)<br>Curriculum task forces report to Department<br>Appoint new chair (Provost)   |
|             | —Fall           |   |

|      |         |  |
|------|---------|--|
|      |         | Approve curriculum design (Department)                 |
|      |         | Course development (Individual faculty)                |
|      |         | Assess bibliographic essays (Department)               |
|      |         | Assess pre-and post-tests in Survey (Department)       |
| 2014 |         |  |
|      | —Spring |  |
|      |         | Course proposals (Faculty and Department)              |
|      |         | Review England Semester program                        |
|      | —Fall   |  |
|      |         | Course proposals (Faculty and Department)              |
| 2015 |         |  |
|      | —Spring |  |
|      |         | Assessment of first-year GE courses                    |
|      | —Fall   |  |
|      |         | Evaluate results of assessments of GE courses          |
|      |         | Refinement of assessment tools                         |
| 2016 | —Spring | Preparation for Writing Six-Year Program Review Report |