



**Department of English and Literature**  
**Report of the Assessment Committee**  
**Utah Valley State College**  
**October 2005**

The assessment committee of the English department identified three areas of concentration: assessment of graduating seniors and ongoing majors within the department, assessment of the writing program focused on the required General Education early writing courses, and programs and processes of improving the department's level of instruction. Therefore the subcommittees are as follows:

1. The Senior Assessment Subcommittee
2. The Writing Program Assessment Subcommittee
3. The Implementation Subcommittee

A separate report for each subcommittee follows this introduction.

The Writing Program Assessment and the Implementation subcommittees have a rather straightforward challenge and equally direct methods of completing their tasks as demonstrated in their reports. The Senior Assessment subcommittee, however, has a far more complicated task. Although seeking to acquire data and feedback sooner rather than later, the subcommittee has recognized the need for well thought out and well supported methods of assessment. Their determination is to implement a program that does not only meet the needs of outside assessors, but directly addresses the needs of a particularly diverse group of students and faculty. With nine degrees possible from the English and Literature department, it will take at least two years to set up and apply all methods of assessment. One year has passed and by Spring of 2006 the system will be in place to produce more complete data. The partial data to date is helpful, but the normal cautions applicable to early data merit strong consideration.

# Implementation Subcommittee Progress Report

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## Overview

This branch of the committee disseminates information to faculty about the overarching goal of assessment—the implementation of best practices in service of student learning. It engages contract faculty, instructors, and students in dialogue and an exchange of resources centered upon the department's educational mission. It uses the data gathered from the general writing assessment and from the senior assessment process as foundation for these discussions. It thus invites an exchange of ideas about teaching and opens avenues for productive criticism, reflection, and clarification of standards, strengths, and weaknesses.

## Activities to Date

Last year, the committee hosted a conversation with students about their experience in their writing classes. Students described what had worked well and less well, and addressed in varying ways the extent to which their writing classes were of value to them. In a few cases, students described frustrations and what they felt was missing from their particular classes. Faculty posed open-ended questions, but for the most part simply listened to students talk about their experiences. The conversation ranged from particular assignments to textbooks to teachers' and students' expectations.

The consensus among students and faculty in attendance was that the conversation was riveting, but had barely begun to involve students and faculty in discussion of their shared concerns about the teaching of writing. It was, in other words, a worthwhile beginning and one from which the committee plans to build. The committee has therefore determined to continue student-faculty forums, with the following changes:

- Reduce the size of the student group. Whereas a ten-student panel allowed for diverse opinions, a smaller group would allow for more focused conversation—one in which each student could more readily and profoundly enter into the discussion;
- Pre-select students for greater specificity. Although each member of the last student panel had completed his or her college writing requirement, not all of them had taken both 1010 and either 2010 or 2020 at UVSC. There was also wide variation in the length of time that had elapsed since the students had taken their writing classes. The extent to which we pre-select students will determine the specificity of the conversation, and is something the Committee wants to work toward;
- Include students drawn from classes besides 1010 and 2010/2020 to broaden the conversation to include the department's various emphases (e.g., technical communication, literature, secondary education, etc.);

- Provide student participants with written questions in advance, to better elicit their considered views;
- Follow-up with students and faculty after discussion, using a questionnaire designed to supplement comments with brief written responses.

The fall schedule of student-faculty discussions includes a composition forum on October 27<sup>th</sup> and a forum on the teaching of literature on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Spring meetings are yet to be determined.

In addition to student-faculty teaching forums, the committee has arranged informal occasions for faculty conversation about teaching. As in its other activities, the implementation subcommittee's focus is upon the *how* of teaching rather than upon the *what*. That is, the aim is to allow faculty with different specialties to share strategies and goals that can inform best teaching practices. The first meeting, on October 6<sup>th</sup>, will focus on grading; on November 16<sup>th</sup>, the faculty teaching group will focus on effective writing assignments. Early next semester the focus will be on the results of the writing program assessment.

The implementation subcommittee continues its work of compiling resource notebooks and discussion of longer term objectives (see November 2004 "Assessment Goals and Assessment Methods" report for a complete list). As an additional stated goal, the subcommittee is working aggressively to include adjunct faculty in its activities. Toward that end, the department's writing program coordinators have organized a panel discussion of grading practices for its October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting with adjunct faculty, the results of which will be integrated with findings from the faculty meeting held earlier that day.

On November 10, 2005, all faculty of the English and Literature department were invited to meet and discuss this report. It was thoroughly examined and many suggestions were made. It was determined that we would continue the writing assessment for one more year to develop meaningful levels of statistics, and that we would then examine the assessment procedures to develop more applicable data. The senior assessment subcommittee will continue to develop more useful tools and develop data by the spring of 2006, which will be discussed at that time.

**This completes the 2005 Assessment report of the department of English and Literature of Utah Valley State College.**