

Millikin University College of Arts & Sciences
Assessment of Student Learning in English Writing Major 2008-2009
by Carmella Braniger, Director of the Writing Major
July 1, 2009

Goals and Mission of English Writing Major

Millikin's English writing major program emphasizes experiences in a variety of contexts including: creative writing, journalism, professional writing, academic writing, literary writing, editing, and computer-aided publishing. By learning to shift among these multiple contexts, Millikin's writing majors are prepared for a wide range of professional writing, editing, and publishing opportunities. S

The Learning Story

Table 4: Curriculum Map for Journalism Writing Concentration

Journalism
Writing Course
Options

Journalism Writing Learning Goals

All writing majors complete the English major traditions core for historical breadth of the role of writing and literature in society over time. Within the traditions core, writing majors take a section of section of EN241 Western Classical Traditions, which specifically introduces them to the origins of writing theory, both rhetoric and poetic. All writing majors also complete at least one course on publishing contemporary technology.

Writing majors choose an area of concentration for advanced studies in writing. We offer three areas of concentration: creative writing, journalism, and professional writing. Students must complete three advanced studies courses in the area of concentration and one advanced writing course outside their chosen area of concentration.

Writing majors concentrating in _____ develop advanced creative writing abilities in a variety of methods and genre. All creative writing concentration majors begin with the Introduction to Creative Writing course. They can then take as many Advanced Creative Writing Courses as they like, depending on their interests. Topics for Advanced courses range

teaching of writing. They also apply writing theories to a research project, studying writing as the subject of original research. This advanced theory and practice course is a gateway course for graduate studies in writing and prepares students to discuss their own writing abilities in future job interviews.

The final chapter of the writing major learning story is that all writing majors complete a senior writing portfolio in the fall semester their senior year. Each portfolio is a custom creation, demonstrating the student's ability to write, edit, and design a collection of their best work. The portfolios provide a means of demonstrating the range of professional abilities, and it becomes a place for reflection on the student's abilities and future goals.

Assessment Methods

In the 2009 Spring semester, English faculty on the Writing Major Committee reviewed the Senior Writing Portfolios evaluating the quality of learning demonstrated for each learning goal, using the portfolio review rubric.

- Portfolio Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics
- Portfolio Artifact 2: sample of writing theory research
- Portfolio Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples and/or publication designs
- Concentration Portfolio Artifacts: writing samples and/or publication designs in area of concentration

Assessment Results Data

Assessment data is reported for all English writing majors then broken into the three areas of concentration. Portfolios were evaluated using the rubrics; judges scores are averaged for each student rating and for each artifact.

- 3.00 - 2.50 = green (excellent level of performance)
- 2.49 - 1.50 = yellow (adequate level of performance)
- 1.49 - 1.00 = red (inadequate level of performance)

In the following tables, the number of students rated in each level of performance are reported, along with a "total" composite score for all students. This total score indicates the level of performance of that graduating class of senior English writing majors.

Table 6: 2009 Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Ratings (n=12)

	Green	Yellow	Red	total
Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics (<i>synthesizes classical & contemporary theories</i>)	10 83.3%	1 8.3%	1 8.3%	2.8
Artifact 2: writing theory research				

Assessment of Student Learning in the English Writing Major

Table 11: Creative Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2008	2009
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(awareness of methods and forms of genres successfully implemented in samples)</i>	3.0	2.5
Artifact 2: introductions, essays, annotations on writer's own goals and connections to traditions <i>(contextualize self in contemporary traditions)</i>	2.58	2.6
Artifact 3: publishable or near professional texts <i>(engaging texts in variety of genres with lasting impression on reader)</i>	2.66	2.8

Table 12: Journalism Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2008	2009
Artifact 1: annotated news stories <i>(variety of news stories demonstrate use of story format, sources and journalism techniques)</i>	3.0	2.8
Artifact 2: editing skills sample <i>(demonstrates effective revision and editing of own or other's stories in AP style)</i>	3.0	2.6
Artifact 3: research on role of media in society <i>(research on role of free press in society)</i>	2.5	2.25

Table 13: Professional Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2008	2009
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(variety shows knowledge of conventions, ethical and legal and cultural audience expectations)</i>	2.75	3
Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples <i>(shows</i>		

Portfolio Artifact 3 (annotations of writing samples and/or publication designs) is also assessed within the student's area of concentration. In 2009, students performed at a level of excellence (GREEN) in all three concentrations: Journalism students rating is 2.8 on annotated samples; Professional writing students rating is 3.0 on annotated samples; Creative writing students rating on annotated samples is 2.5. Two of the three concentrations show a slight decrease in performance scores for this area, while staying within the margin of a green rating. Creative writing performance is down 0.5 and Journalism 0.2.

Overall, portfolios lack attention to the development of annotations and to a self-awareness of the writing process that we want our students to engage and demonstrate.

RECOMMENDATION: All writing majors need to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of being able to discuss and reflect on their own work in a professional manner. Faculty of all writing courses need to continue to promote the professional meta-cognitive thinking necessary for future success as professional writers, and the faculty member overseeing the capstone course needs to give special attention to the development of annotations for the portfolio.

How well did students perform on learning goals within each area of concentration?

Creative Writing. Creative Writing seniors are rated as EXCELLENT (GREEN) in their level of performance on all three artifacts: Artifact 1 (annotated writing samples) is rated 2.5; Artifact 2 (writer's own goals and connections to traditions) is rated 2.6; Artifact 2.8 (publishable texts) is rated 2.6. While the rating for annotations dropped significantly, this group shows improvement in theorizing their craft and producing publishable texts. As a group, the Creative Writing seniors are performing at excellent levels, with a clear demonstration of near-professional performance abilities.

Journalism Concentration. English majors with a concentration in Journalism are rated as performing at an EXCELLENT (GREEN) level in two artifacts: Artifact 1 (annotated news stories) is rated 2.8; Artifact 2 (editing skills sample) is rated at 2.6. Two seniors are rated as ADEQUATE (YELLOW) on Artifact 3 (research on the role of media in society). Their total score for Artifact 3 is rated 2.25.

RECOMMENDATION: Although an artifact on the role of media in society is not guaranteed by the current curriculum in the Journalism concentration, two students were capable of demonstrating this research in this year's portfolios. The journalism faculty should continue to consider ways to guarantee an opportunity for research on the role of media in society for each student concentrating on journalism writing, especially as the concentration gains momentum.

Professional Writing. Professional Writing seniors are rated as performing at an EXCELLENT (GREEN) level in Artifact 1 (annotated writing samples) which is rated at 3.0; Artifact 2

Appendix 2: Creative Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples	Senior writing portfolio includes writing samples with critical annotations that show the writer is not only aware of the methods and forms of a variety of genres but successfully carries out formal and structural arrangements of the materials in their writing.	Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of writing samples with discussion that shows some awareness of the methods and forms of a variety of genres. Students attempt to practice and follow-through on formal and structural arrangements of the materials in their writing.	Senior writing portfolio lacks a variety of writing samples. Samples and annotations suggest the
Related goals: CW1			

Appendix 4: Professional Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples Related goals: PW1 & PW2	Senior writing portfolio includes a rich variety of writing samples with critical annotations discussing the writer's knowledge of conventions and ethical, legal and cultural implications of audience expectations.	Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of writing samples with some discussion of the writer's critical thinking and understanding of professional conventions and audience expectations.	Senior writing portfolio lacks a variety of writing samples. Samples and annotations suggest a lack of knowledge of professional writing conventions and audience expectations.
Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples			

Appendix 5: Writing Major Portfolio Ratings 2009

Student Name:

Writing Concentration (circle one): creative writing journalism professional writing

Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Ratings

	Green	Yellow	Red
--	-------	--------	-----