2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: Humanities

Department: English

Program: Creative Writing Option

Assessment liaison: RosaMaria Chacon

1. **Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s) (optional).** Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

The Creative Writing Committee assessed two SLOs this year. On the undergraduate level, the Committee assessed CW Undergraduate SLO #4: "Students will demonstrate advanced creative writing skills by applying contemporary methods in at least one genre in a final portfolio for a capstone class." We also assessed the Common Graduate SLO #3: "Students will produce advanced analyses and/or creative work that take into account current schools of aesthetic, rhetorical, literary, critical, and/or historical methodology and are informed by disciplinary standards appropriate to their option."

For Undergraduate SLO #4, the Committee assessed poetry chapbooks (a collection of 18-20 poems) produced for English 491, the senior capstone course in poetry. For Common Graduate SLO #3, the Committee assessed scholarly papers (18-20 pp each) written for English 622.

All Creative Writing Committee faculty members independently read anonymous student writing samples from the two courses and utilized a rubric in order to assess each sample. The scores for each SLO were then averaged.

2. **Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

During the previous year (2011-2012), our assessment activities and discussions were often conducted with all department faculty during monthly department meetings. Unfortunately, the English Department found this method to be rather unwieldy and unmanageable. This is particularly true since the English Department has five options with an additional graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition. This has resulted in 6 different 5-year plans, which can be confusing and unwieldy for all (whole) department discussions.

Therefore, this year (2012-2013), the English Department tried something different. At the beginning of each semester, the department chair met with each option head and the assessment coordinator (liaison) to discuss assessment plans and tasks. After these meetings, each option head met with their committees and conducted assessment. These 6 committees included 28 different faculty members (out of a total of 32 full time faculty). Thus, almost all English Department faculty were directly involved in assessment. Doing our assessment in this manner enabled us to conduct assessment more effectively in a focused effort.

In addition, the English department did conduct (in October 2012) one all faculty discussion and consensus re the adoption of a new rubric for assessment of Common Undergraduate SLO #3: Students will demonstrate knowledge of creative, literary, linguistic, and/or rhetorical theories. This SLO and rubric are shared by several options.

3. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

   3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

   Creative Writing Undergraduate SLO #4: Students will demonstrate advanced creative writing skills by applying contemporary methods in at least one genre in a final portfolio for a capstone class.

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Written Communication

3c. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

A committee of five Creative Writing faculty members used the following five-point scale designed by the Creative Writing Committee:

1. Not Demonstrated
2. Less Than Satisfactory
3. Satisfactory
4. More Than Satisfactory
5. Excellent

We identified the relevant hallmarks for each point on the scale and used those holistic descriptions of the dimensions to assess each student document. The rubric is below:

CW Undergraduate SLO #4 Rubric

CW Undergraduate SLO #4: Students will demonstrate advanced creative writing skills by applying contemporary methods in at least one genre in a final portfolio for a capstone class.

5: "excellent"	4: "more than satisfactory"	3: "satisfactory"	2: "less than satisfactory"	1: "not demonstrated"
Sample skillfully employs key elements of poetry, narrative, and/or drama; effectively engages in techniques appropriate to professional discourse; ably demonstrates the function, purpose, or logic behind the formal structure or aesthetic strategies of the writing. No unintended mechanical errors.	Sample employs some key elements of poetry, narrative, and/or drama; uses some techniques appropriate to professional discipline; demonstrates the function, purpose or logic behind the formal structure or aesthetic strategies of the writing. Usually, mechanically correct, but a few unintended errors.	Sample is uneven; shows some awareness of key elements and techniques of poetry, narrative, and/or drama as appropriate to professional discipline but unable to employ them effectively; partially demonstrates the function, purpose or logic behind the formal structure or aesthetic strategies of the writing. May be mechanically uneven.	Sample shows vague awareness that poetry, narrative, and/or drama calls for key elements but shows no evidence of knowing how to use them. Lacks displays of technique appropriate to the discipline. Minimal engagement with aesthetic strategies and formal structure. May exhibit frequent mechanical problems.	Sample is not effective; incoherent and incomplete. No employment of any elements of poetry, narrative, and/or drama. Almost no engagement with aesthetic strategies or formal structure. Deep mechanical flaws—unintended basic sentence structure problems, and subject/verb agreements.

For CW Undergrad SLO #4, CW assessed final portfolios (specifically, 10 poetry chapbooks containing 18-20 poems each) from the capstone course English 491: Senior Seminar in Verse Writing.

3d. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The Creative Writing faculty conducted assessment for a single culminating experience.

3e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

Creative Writing faculty assessed 10 randomly selected final portfolios (poetry chapbooks) from the Capstone Creative Writing class English 491: Senior Seminar in Verse Writing. Out of the ten final portfolios (chapbooks), four scored either "More than satisfactory" or "Excellent," three scored "Satisfactory," and three scored "Less than satisfactory." The average score for the assessment was 3.2 ("Satisfactory"). While the numbers suggest that students in the capstone course complete their degree earning "satisfactory" competency, these numbers also point to an ongoing problem in the capstone classes. Students from other genres and disciplines regularly enroll in in capstone courses not appropriate to their elected genre. For example, students in fiction writing may enroll in the poetry writing capstone when the fiction writing capstone reaches capacity. Likewise, poetry writers may enroll in a fiction capstone class if the poetry course is closed or not offered at a convenient time. Students from other disciplines also utilize the Creative Writing capstone to fulfill graduation requirements. We concluded from the assessment that part of the problem lies in not enough sections of English 490: Senior Seminar in Narrative Writing (prose writing capstone), and part of the problem lies in advisement. Notably, we are no longer in charge of advisement of our own students due to funding issues.

3f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

We would like to propose that the English Department offer an additional section of English 490: Senior Seminar in Narrative Writing to accommodate the need for our large number of prose writers in the Creative Writing Option. We would additionally like to add a hard pre-requisite for English 490: Senior Seminar in Narrative Writing, English 491: Senior Seminar in Verse Writing, and English 512: Writing for Performance to confirm that students have taken at least one course in the selected genre prior to enrollment in their capstone class. Finally, we also identified a problem with advisement. Returning advisement to the Department where faculty are better equipped to direct students

toward classes and paths more appropriate for them would be an immediate and effective step toward addressing the crisis. For example, as students are not appropriately sequencing their classes, many end up taking their senior seminar at the same time as their other Creative Writing workshops. Other students take all of their CW classes in their final two semesters, so there is no opportunity for their work to develop over time and in sequence. We can resolve many of these scheduling problems with the return of advisement to the Department. Due to funding and scheduling issues, it may be problematic to implement these solutions despite student needs**.**

Additional SLO:

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

Common Graduate SL0 #3: Students will produce advanced analyses and/or creative work that take into account current schools of aesthetic, rhetorical, literary, critical, and/or historical methodology and are informed by disciplinary standards appropriate to their option.

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking
- Written Communication

3c. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

A committee of five Creative Writing faculty members used the following five-point scale designed by the English Department:

1. Not Demonstrated
2. Less Than Satisfactory
3. Satisfactory
4. More Than Satisfactory
5. Excellent

We identified the relevant hallmarks for each point on the scale and used those holistic descriptions of the dimensions to assess each student document. See following rubric:

CW Common Graduate SLO #3 Rubric

Students will produce advanced analyses and/or creative work that take into account current schools of aesthetic, rhetorical, literary, critical, and/or historical methodology and are informed by disciplinary standards appropriate to their option.

5: Excellent	4:More than satisfactory	3: Satisfactory	2: Less than satisfactory	1: Not demonstrated
Sample effectively and consistently engages with current schools of creative writing methodology and conventions as appropriate to the genre, generating work with aesthetic purpose and innovation.	**Sample mostly engages effectively with current schools of creative writing methodology and conventions as appropriate to the genre, generating work with aesthetic purpose.**	**Sample partially engages with current schools of creative writing methodology and conventions but not always appropriate to the genre, generating aesthetically acceptable work.**	**Sample suggests some familiarity with current schools of creative writing methodology and conventions but does not engage with them effectively, resulting in aesthetically mediocre work.**	**Sample suggests scant familiarity with current schools of creative writing methodology and conventions. Engagement is minimal and unsophisticated, resulting in work lacking in aesthetic merit.**

For Common Graduate SLO #3, Creative Writing assessed nine scholarly papers (18-20 pp each) from the graduate course English 622: Seminar on Aspects of Poetry.

3d. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The Creative Writing faculty conducted assessment of culminating essays from the graduate course English 622: Seminar on Aspects of Poetry.

3e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

CW faculty assessed nine randomly selected final scholarly essays from English 622: Seminar on Aspects of Poetry. Out of the nine essays, six scored either "More than satisfactory" or "Excellent," two scored "Satisfactory," and one scored "Less than satisfactory." The average score for the assessment was 4.0 ("More than satisfactory"). These numbers indicate that our graduate students are well-equipped to produce advanced analyses informed by disciplinary standards appropriate to their option.

3f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

Based on the results of our assessment of Common Graduate SLO #3, no substantive changes in our program or assessment instruments are needed.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.   N/A

5. Changes to SLOs? Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.) N/A

6. Assessment Plan. Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan? Please attach an updated 5 year assessment plan for 2013-2018. (Refer to Five Year Planning Template, plan B or C, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

Assessment work in the English Department is always completely guided and aligned with the 5 year Assessment Plans (all six of them). We begin with the plans and stay with them. The only changes we ever have are in small supplemental tasks, which are not part of the actual assessment work. The changes are generally necessitated by an inability to fully complete a supplemental task due to organizational parameters, and are accounted for in our Annual Assessment Reports.

The English Department has updated or made adjustments in some of the Assessment Plans based on 1) discovery of previous errors in writing the initial 5 year Plans and 2) the overwhelming workload necessitated by six different, comprehensive 5 year Assessment Plans. In completing a self-study, writing six 5 year Assessment Plans, and conducting assessment all in one year (during 2010-2011) in addition to regular teaching, service, research and administrative duties, the English Department was quite swamped by work. Returning to the 5 year plans, on a year by year basis, we discover inadvertent errors and overwhelming assessment workloads. Therefore, we make small adjustments that will either correct our previous errors and/or alleviate some of the workload. During 2012-2013 adjustments were made to the Honors and Graduate option Assessment Plans. The corrected plans were sent to Gregory Mena, Marilynn Filbeck, and Bonnie Paller February 16, 2013.

7. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

NO

8. **Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.**

Creative Writing did not create a new course English 698X: Graduate Project, but instead will steer students to a Creative Writing-specific section of English 698D: Graduate Project. Incoming students will now enter the appropriate English 698D: Graduate Project (CW Section) for their MA

culminating project. Students who entered prior to Creative Writing's shift to the required English 698D: Graduate Project and who have retained their right to write a thesis have been identified on a master list and will complete a thesis with their elected committee.

Due to current graduate student numbers, the English 698D: Graduate Project (CW Section) will be offered for the first time in Spring 2014. English 698D: Graduate Project (CW Section) will require CW students to enroll in a genre-specific workshop to be taken in the same semester. Students enrolled in this course additionally will be required to give a public reading as part of their culminating experience. Discussion of the details and parameters of this experience is still in progress.

Creative Writing reiterates that our undergraduate students routinely take the workshop sequence out of order, sometimes while switching between genres. This proves to be a pedagogical challenge. We stress that one place where modification can be made is in advisement. Advisement needs to be returned to the English Department.

In review of our assessment rubrics, Creative Writing will discuss the inclusion of the term "contemporary" in CW Undergraduate SLO #4 to confirm that it suits our pedagogical goals. We may not need nor want to limit assessment of creative writing skills to recent or current trends in creative writing.

Additionally, in the coming year Professor Rick Mitchell will design a 500-level course in Theories of Performance and Drama to accommodate the growing number of playwriting students. This course has the full support of CW and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Finally, because English 698D (our culminating course for the M.A.) requires a coordinating workshop in the student's selected genre, CW is exploring the possibility of increasing the number of workshops available for credit to four sections.