

Outcomes Assessment Report for the Communications Department 2007

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Background:

The English Composition Program began Fall 2005 to address how faculty filled in forms, as we were still getting tallying problems with either too many options checked for an item, or boxes not checked at all. We felt that the simpler form would work, but it didn't completely.

In addition, UNM-LA lost its Dean of Instruction in Fall 2005 – January 2007, and the Division Heads and Curriculum Coordinators took on Dean responsibilities during this time frame, with no additional course release time. Therefore, the processes of assessment took a back seat.

We also found that starting with Fall 2005, we were experiencing more under-prepared students coming onto campus across the curriculum. It might be interesting to see if success rates or completion rates for that semester on differed from semesters before.

With the workload becoming more than our smaller and smaller set of faculty could handle, in Spring 2007 we chose to do a sampling, rather than to assess all final exams. We note, however, that we have no training in statistics or what represents an appropriate sample, nor could we get any help in this matter. We chose arbitrarily to assess 5 final exams in each section of each course from Engl 100-English 102.

In 2007, we got a new Executive Director on this campus, and we were able to have a Program Coordinator for English Composition to oversee assessment. Mickey Marsee started in that position in Fall 2007. Two faculty also piloted a new English 101, based largely on changes made at UNM-Albuquerque, to introduce other kinds of genres than straight essay writing. Already, the two teachers are aware that our assessment sheet may not fit the new design of the course.

Review of Communications' Outcomes Goals

Program and courses to be assessed: The department is focusing upon its **writing program**, which consists of four composition courses—English 099, 100, 101, and 102. Please note that English 010 is now English 099. Specifically, we are assessing selected learning goals for English 100 and English 102, which serve as the exit courses for the developmental- and college-level components of the program, as well as English 101, our entry-level Freshman composition course, which for students in some associate degrees, is their terminal English class.

Mission of the UNM-LA Writing Program:

We are committed to providing high quality instruction in writing skills for all our students. As appropriate for each level within its integrated four-course sequence, the writing program is dedicated to bringing students to effective college-level writing that reflects critical reading and critical thinking.

Goals for the Writing Program as a Whole: In order to meet our mission, we have the following goals:

- Provide a developmental writing program to get under-prepared students ready for college-level writing;
- Provide courses in our writing program which are transferable to and articulate with four year colleges and universities;
- Continue to improve our program through an ongoing process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of our programs;
- Coordinate with other university service programs to provide services necessary to student success, including advisement, testing, placement, tutoring, and special assistance to disadvantaged students;
- Implement and evaluate use of computer technology in our developmental level program;
- Continue to provide opportunities for faculty development, including funding for conferences, participation on advisory boards, in-house training, courses in new technologies.
- Inform students of the skills we are working on specific to each course through the publication of our Guide to English Composition Student Handbook.

Report on how we are addressing these goals:

1. In Fall 2007, we created a Program Chair for Cornerstone to revitalize our developmental education program in both English and Math. The English developmental program has two developmental level courses, English 099 and English 100, along with co-requisite reading classes ISE 020 and 021. Our A&S 198 course (an academic skills course most students must take) has a tutoring requirement that gets students into our free tutoring center. There are numerous supports for under-prepared students on our campus.
2. In Spring 2008 a new reading class design focusing on math and science vocabulary and problem-solving skills will be piloted as ISE 021. It will be taught jointly by an English teacher and a math teacher. The purpose of this re-designed class is to better prepare students for math and science tracks and their retention in those tracks.
3. In Fall 2007, we are piloting a new course design for English 101 that better matches UNM-A's new Engl 101 content. Our courses match the goals of UNM-A and are fully articulated. Our standards are high, and students get more attention in our smaller classes. **A transfer study through 2006 by our institutional researcher found that our transfer students to UNM-A are very successful. Of students who took an English course at UNM-LA and then took another English course at UNM-A, 75% got A's or B's, and 93% successfully completed the course.**

4. Our department has a renewed commitment to assessment. In response to some of the results of our assessments, indicating a need for someone to better oversee the program, we were able to create a position--a Program Coordinator for English Composition to oversee assessment. Mickey Marsee started in that position in Fall 2007. Assessment has been continuous since 1997-1998, and while assessment reporting was absent for some time, teachers tallying their assessment sheets got immediate feedback regarding how their students were performing. Assessments have been useful with new teachers, especially, in seeing the student learning that occurred and what might be necessary to see improvement. We have tutors aid in some classrooms, tying the tutor center directly to our classes; we are establishing stronger relationships with advisors and other student services personnel. The relationships with
5. Courses are taught in computer labs at least half time. We still have no specific evaluative tool for this.
6. We consistently send faculty to the New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention Conference. Through Title V, we have a new Instructional Technology center that will be providing additional faculty development.
7. A new handbook was created and posted on the web in Fall 2007. Students from our English 219 class created the new, updated handbook as part of their Service Learning and real work experience component of Technical Writing. We consider this quite a success—and it points to another area of our writing program that should be assessed.

Student Learning Goals for the Writing Program as a Whole:

- Students will create writing with meaningful content, clearly discernible focus, organization, development, and coherence;
- Students will develop their ability to read, think, and write critically;
- Students will create writing that demonstrates the conventions of grammar, mechanics, and expression needed to communicate effectively;
- Students will incorporate an effective writing process that includes thinking, planning, drafting, and revising.

Student Learning Goals for English 100:

- Students will increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension capabilities to those of college-level freshmen.
- Students will learn a minimum of seven basic grammatical—mechanical—expression skills that the department has identified as essential for competent writing.
- Students will demonstrate competence in writing a basic essay.
- Students will demonstrate improvement in their ability to draft and revise basic essays.
- Students will develop their ability to read, think, and write critically.
- Students will learn to use basic computer word processing for drafting and revising essays.

Selected Assessment Goals for English 100

- Students will increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension capabilities to those of college-level freshmen.

Assessment Tool: We will be administering the TABE exam as a pre-test at the beginning of the semester and as a post-test at the end of English 100 with the goal that 75 % of all English 100 students pass with scores of 12.9 grade level or higher in both Vocabulary-Comprehension.

- Students will develop their ability to read, think, and write critically.

This ability to think and write critically will be assessed at the essay level. We are focusing on the ability

- to recognize and use rhetorical strategies,
- to establish and maintain logical order throughout the essay, using recognizable essay frameworks,
- to answer the question, support the answer with outside supporting material and specific examples.
- to have clear sentences where the meaning is not in doubt and does not require the reader to backtrack to make sense of the student’s ideas.

Assessment Tool: We have developed a grid (sample attached), which we apply to the final exam at the end of the semester. We now have four categories, rather than three: Mastered skill, Acquired skill, Practicing skill, or Skill not present. Our goal is that 75% of all students taking the exam will demonstrate acquired or mastered skills. We hope that none show “skill not present.” We will also track the weakest and strongest skills in these areas.

English 100 Fall 2005* Assessment Results – only one section made with 10 students being assessed.

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	0%	30%	30%	70%	0%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to	0%	40%	40%	60%	0%

paragraph:					
Using essay framework:	0%	50%	50%	50%	0%
Answers question	0%	40%	40%	60%	0%
Outside support:	0%	50%	50%	50%	0%
Uses specifics:	0%	30%	30%	70%	0%
Sentence clarity:	0%	20%	20%	70%	10%

Spring 2006 results for English 100. Only one section made and 6 students were assessed as follows:

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	0%	33%	33%	67%	0%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:	0%	33%	33%	50%	17%
Using essay framework:	0%	33%	33%	50%	17%
Answers question	0%	0%	0%	17%	67%
Outside support:	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%
Uses specifics:	0%	33%	33%	67%	17%
Sentence clarity:	0%	33%	33%	67%	17%

Results

Five of the students passed in Spring 06, but the assessment data is abysmal. If these results are valid, the one class was a dismal failure. We do not know why—so we must address this in an English dept. meeting.

*One observation is that in both instances only one section made and both semesters were taught by the same teacher. However, we do not use assessment to assess the teacher, but to assess how we are teaching. Nonetheless, a trend needs to be addressed. No assessment was done of English 100 in Spring 2007.

Spring 2007: English 099 and English 100 were not assessed as we began our sampling methods.

Assessment of Learning Goals for English 101- Expository Writing
Student Learning Goals for English 101:

- Students will increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension capabilities to recognize and express nuances.
- Students will demonstrate clarity and correctness in sentence skills.
- Students will demonstrate competence in writing a basic expository essay.
- Students will demonstrate understanding and acquisition of good drafting and revising skills.
- Students will develop their ability to read, think, and write critically.

Assessment Tool: We have developed a grid (sample attached), which we apply to the final exam at the end of the semester. We now have four categories, rather than three: Mastered skill, Acquired skill, Practicing skill, or Skill not present. Our goal is that 75% of all students taking the exam will demonstrate acquired or mastered skills. We hope that none show “skill not present.” We will also track the weakest and strongest skills in these areas.

English 101 Fall 2005 Assessment – based on 31 students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	24%	46%	70%	28%	2%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:	22%	52%	74%	22%	4%
Using essay framework:*	22%	43%	65%	30%	4%
Answers question	22%	39%	61%	37%	2%
Outside support: *	22%	41%	63%	37%	2%
Uses specifics:*	22%	48%	70%	28%	2%
Sentence clarity:	9%	43	52%	48%	0%

Results:

- While better than Spring 2006, Fall 2005 shows slippage of 5-15% in the Mastered/Acquired category where we want 75% across the board.
- We included an offsite class in the tallies, which was a first. And the class offered in Cuba was not given a placement exam (director’s failure, not English dept), and the teacher found most students did not belong in an English 101 class, as they needed remedial work. We do need to start assessing offsite courses, and we may find that our success rates go down as a result. Most of our offsites serve underrepresented and underprepared populations. We have never done a breakdown of performance by ethnic or geographical indicators. Perhaps we should consider this.
- Tallies, however, are better done, which begs the question whether our previous good results were inaccurate.
- **We had started with a new textbook in Fall 2005. Great dissatisfaction with the textbook was discussed, so we started with a new textbook again in Fall 2006.**

English 101 Spring 2006 Assessment – based on 31 students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical	3%	48%	51%	48%	0%

strategies					
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:	0%	48%	48%	45%	6%
Using essay framework:*	6%	58%	64%	29%	9%
Answers question	9%	39%	48%	42%	9%
Outside support: *	6%	45%	51%	42%	0%
Uses specifics:*	6%	52%	58%	39%	3%
Sentence clarity:	3%	42%	45%	52%	3%

Results

- In all areas, our success rates have substantially dropped with no areas reaching our goals. We will be addressing this in November 2007.
- Dissatisfaction with new textbook still existed.

In Spring 2007, we chose to do a sample to assess instead of assessing all students. The selection was a random 5 essays from each section of English 101.

English 101 Spring 2007 Assessment – based on students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	0%	56%	56%	37%	0%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:	18%	38%	56%	44%	0%
Using essay framework:*	13%	50%	63%	38%	0%
Answers question	13%	56%	69%	25%	0%
Outside support: *	13%	56%	69%	25%	0%
Uses specifics:*	13%	63%	76%	25%	0%
Sentence clarity:	16%	50%	66%	44%	0%

Results

- We do not know how sampling may affect our numbers, but they actually show improvement over Spring 2006. Still, only one category now reflects us achieving our goals.
- Clearly the English 101 program has had the earliest failures and continual decline (looking back on other years as well), and so a new course design was needed.
- Although we changed textbooks in Fall 2006, the selection was still very dissatisfying, so in Fall 2007, two faculty members piloted a new textbook and a new concept and design for the course. We will do a careful assessment of this in Fall 2007. Originally, we planned to compare the old textbook classes to the new, but as it turned out, the only sections that made are using the new course design.

Student Learning Goals for English 102—Analytical and Argumentative Writing

- Students will be able to discern, select, differentiate, explain, and respond effectively to the main idea(s) in a reading selection.
- Students’ writing demonstrates critical thinking
- Students will support their ideas and assertions with textual sources that are coherently integrated into their writing—without plagiarizing.
- Students will create well-edited essays that are clearly focused, well organized, fully developed, and coherent.
 - Students demonstrate correctness in grammar and mechanics.

For Fall 2005, only one class was tallied and data reported—this was not planned. It was a failure of time.

English 102 Fall 2005 Assessment – based on 15 students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	33%	60%	93%	7%	0%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:*	33%	40%	73%	27%	0%
Using essay framework:*	27%	40%	67%	33%	0%
Answers question	40%	33%	73%	27%	0%
Outside support:*	33%	53%	86%	13%	0%
Uses specifics:	40%	47%	87%	13%	0%
Sentence clarity:*	20%	47%	67%	33%	0%

In three substantial categories, the results exceed expectations, and two more almost meet standards. Essay framework and sentence clarity do not meet our goals. But there was a slip from Fall 2005 to Spring 2006.

English 102 Spring 2006 Assessment – based on 47 students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	32%	51%	83%	15%	2%
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:*	43%	36%	79%	19%	2%
Using essay framework:*	32%	40%	72%	21%	2%
Answers question	36%	30%	66%	32%	2%
Outside support:*	28%	40%	68%	28%	4%
Uses specifics:	26%	40%	66%	30%	0%
Sentence clarity:*	23%	43%	66%	2%	2%

Results

In English 102, we have improved the number of students in the Mastered column, but there has been some slippage in the overall combined Mastered/Acquired for four categories.

English 102 Spring 2007 Assessment – based on 22 students

Learning Objective	Mastered	Acquired	Totals Combined for Master/Acquire	Practicing	No skill
Use of rhetorical strategies	18%	36%	54%	45%	
logical order within paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph:*	18%	41%	59%	41%	
Using essay framework:*	27%	45%	72%	27%	
Answers question	27%	36%	63%	36%	
Outside support:*	27%	41%	68%	42%	
Uses specifics:	32%	45%	77%	23%	
Sentence clarity:*	23%	32%	55%	41%	4%

Results:

- **Again, this is a sampling of four different classes. We do not know how sampling affects our results, but there is a significant decline overall of achieving our goals of 75% of all students being in the mastered or acquired columns for these assessed skills.**
- **We are working to better delineate definitions for each skill for the 102 level, and we will see if that helps us do a better job of assessment.**
- **We'd gotten rather complacent with our history of success, and while there has been discussion of changing student profiles, lack of work ethic among students, etc., we are slow in responding to how to teach the students who are now dominating our student body.**
- **The observation in Fall 06 that most students were poised to fail both English and Math drove two teachers, Kate Massengale and Kay Willerton, with the support of Student Services, to create Help Days, a now twice-a-semester all day Friday help session for English and Math students to work with teachers and tutors one-on-one. This is often a study hall, with students getting help with homework, but it has been quite a success.**
- **The lag time in processing results because of lack of labor and lack of time means we haven't gotten data to the department in a timely fashion, though we have reported results in 2004 and at an English meeting in 2006—twice as often as the previous department administration, we are not doing yearly or semesterly reporting. This means that we do not respond right away to results.**

Appendices: Sample Forms and Definitions

English 100/101/102 Final Exam/Portfolio Assessment Form

Please do not skip boxes

Skill	Mastered Skill	Acquired Skill	Practicing Skill	Skill not present
Uses rhetorical strategies				
Logical order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph • Uses academic essay framework 				
Supports Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support answers question • Moves from personal to outside support. • Uses specific/concrete examples 				
Sentence Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no errors so severe that a sentence's meaning is not clear. 				

Holistic Grade for Paper:
 Pass _____
 Low Pass _____
 Fail _____

Graded by _____

English 101 DEFINITIONS Final/Portfolio Assessment Form UNM-LA

Skill	Mastered Skill	Acquired Skill	Practicing Skill	Skill not present
Uses rhetorical strategies	Uses multiple strategies. Flexible use	Clear use of expected strategy that question poses	Clear attempt to use necessary strategy but not entirely successful	No use at all
Logical order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph 	Flows smoothly. Logical progression of ideas. Clear transitions. Synthesizes texts, puts text into conversation with other ideas	Logical progression of ideas. Paragraphs may not flow smoothly.	Transitions connecting ideas may not be smooth or missing transitions. Seems to have a plan.	Jumbled ideas. Seems to have no plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses academic essay framework 	Beyond mechanical. Thesis is interpretive or has opinion. Well-developed support and body. Draws conclusions—goes beyond summary.	Demonstrates basic skills well. Has a pattern or uses the “formula”	Has generalized thesis. Sense that paragraphs have a focus but they are isolated or missing a part. Mechanical topic sentences or one missing.	No clear thesis. No topic sentences.
Supports Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support answers question • Moves from personal to outside support. • Uses specific/concrete examples 	Clearly understands question. Detailed response with links back to text and back to thesis. Thorough, consistent explanations and connections. Goes beyond personal—uses outside connections with texts.	Concrete examples. Gives explanations but not always consistent. Attempts use of outside texts. Attempts at conclusions.	Has concrete examples., but may lack explanations Uses personal examples rather than text. May lack conclusions	Examples too generalized with no details or no examples.
Sentence Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no errors so severe that a sentence’s meaning is not clear. 				

Skill	Mastered Skill	Acquired Skill	Practicing Skill	Skill not present
Uses rhetorical strategies				
Logical order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph • Uses academic essay framework 				
Supports Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support answers question • Moves from personal to outside support. • Uses specific/concrete examples 				
Sentence Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no errors so severe that a sentence's meaning is not clear. 				

of students passing exam (A-C) _____ # of students with low pass on exam (C—D) _____ # of students failing exam _____

of students in class _____ # of students taking final exam _____ # students passing class (C or higher) _____

of students failing/repeating class _____