### Program Information:

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<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>English Department Undergraduate Program</th>
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<td>Department</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>College</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
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<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td><strong>20 December 2018</strong></td>
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Note from the Office of Academic Assessment, 12/2018: The English department is participating in a AAC&U/Teagle grant-funded project to review and revise their curriculum. They are focusing heavily on assessment as a part of that process. To that end, their assessment planning process is currently in progress. This document outlines their activities to date and serves as a bridge to their 3-year planning process, which will be implemented when it is approved by department faculty. This process has the full support of the Office of Academic Assessment and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education & Student Success.

In conjunction with current efforts to review and update our curriculum, the Department of English plans to develop a comprehensive assessment plan for the future, which will include significant discussions over the coming year of the ways that assessment can improve our teaching, enhance our students’ learning, and create a more open and supportive environment.

This report will further describe our steps toward curriculum reform, building on first steps discussed initially in last year’s Assessment Report. Specifically, this report will discuss progress that the department made towards curriculum reform, next steps in the coming semester, and the ways that we plan to place assessment at the center of that reform, including the role of both short- and long-term assessment strategies for improving our departmental learning environment in the coming year.

Summary of Curriculum Reform to Date
In considering curriculum reform in the English Department, we have followed the lead established by the Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature. In short, to meet the demands of technology, globalization, and the explosion of disciplinary knowledge, baccalaureate degree programs in English should include the following:

- a coherent program of study
- collaborative teamwork among faculty members
- interdepartmental cooperative teaching
- the adoption of outcome measurements

In Fall 2017, the faculty agreed overwhelmingly at our annual retreat to initiate curriculum reform for the undergraduate major. We also agreed that curriculum reform is not something to rush into, and that assessment needs to play a key role in our short- and long-term discussions around curriculum reform. All along the way, we plan to have extensive and open discussions about our plans and about how we will proceed forward. This also means that the faculty will vote to approve all major steps toward curriculum reform and each of the elements necessary for a comprehensive assessment plan.

In the past year, as part of curriculum report, the department has had significant discussions around three primary topics: Undergraduate Major Goals/Objectives, Faculty Cohorts and Equitable Scheduling, and Undergraduate Major Tracks/Subplans.
Major Goals/Objectives
As a faculty, we understand that any real assessment plan must begin with well-articulated goals and objectives for the major. We also agreed that our previous goals/objectives were not wholly aligned with current standards in the discipline, nor did they offer us measurable opportunities for evaluating the success of our students, the success of our courses, and the success of our major.

Discussions about our Major Goals and Objectives began with the Undergraduate Committee and continued regularly throughout the year in our faculty meetings. After numerous face-to-face discussions in meetings and in small groups, after reviewing all of the emails, and after debating all of the suggestions from faculty for revisions and edits, the Undergraduate Committee finalized our new Undergraduate Major Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will produce informed, rhetorically effective texts both in writing and orally.
2. Students will read, evaluate, and apply textual, digital, and material resources.
3. Students will analyze, synthesize, and apply a range of theories and critical methods.
4. Students will recognize and explain significant themes, aesthetic trends, linguistic features, and generic conventions across the historical range of textual and literary production in English.
5. Students will interrogate complex relationships between race, class, gender, and sexuality in written texts and other media.

These Major Goals and Objectives were approved by a faculty vote on November 16, 2018. In order to establish a coherent program of study for our students and develop well-articulated outcome measurements, our curriculum reform and long-term assessment plans will build out from these Major Goals and Objectives.

Faculty Cohorts and Equitable Scheduling
The Department of English began implementing faculty cohorts to help develop a more equitable scheduling practice, as well as support our teaching in the undergraduate major. Equitable scheduling means that all faculty will participate in the teaching of our undergraduate students, including, especially, the teaching of our required courses. More importantly, equitable scheduling means that faculty have a greater voice in creating a 4-year schedule. This will allow students and faculty to plan their work more effectively because the course offerings and the pathways to graduation will be more clearly delineated. In short, our initial discussions and initial cohort meetings have begun those important conversations around student and teacher success in our major.

Major Tracks/Subplans
Finally, the faculty came to a tentative agreement this semester to pursue an English major comprised of three subplans: Literature, Creative Writing, and Professional Writing. The full details will be finalized over the coming year as part of our curriculum reform. Obviously, these subplans will provide the content for our assessment plans, both within the subplans and for the major as a whole.
Next Steps in Curriculum Reform
Over the coming year, our next steps in curriculum reform will focus our discussions on the following topics:

- **Credit Hours, Required Courses, and Course Distribution**
  This will include an examination of our total credit hours, courses required for all majors in light of our tentative agreement to pursue tracks/subplans within the major, as well as course distribution in the tracks/subplans and the major as a whole.

- **Discussion of Framework and Guiding Questions**
  The goals of these critical discussions (see below for a more complete overview) will be to develop more transparent pathways to graduation for our major, explore more relevant connections between and among courses, and devise/implement strategies for more effective assessment of our overall learning environment. Ideally, this framework and the guiding questions will provide the necessary information and insights for creating an effective curriculum map and assessment plan.

- **Use of Curriculum Mapping to Guide Assessment Design**
  Curriculum Mapping will allow us to develop a visual tool for understanding our undergraduate major in more sophisticated ways. A curriculum map will help us review of our current First-Year Experience course, our Milestone Experience courses, as well as the development of our Culminating Experience course to insure that they align with the required and elective courses within the major. While a curriculum map can certainly demonstrate where program-level student learning outcomes are covered in a curriculum, we also feel a curriculum map can help us evaluate the effectiveness of our credit requirements, the horizontal and vertical structure of required and elective courses, and the transparency between and among in-class projects and learning activities, course outcomes, and the goals/objectives for our major.

Path to 3-Year Assessment Plan and Full Departmental Participation
Our goal is to develop a long-term assessment plan that includes full departmental participation, which means mapping the entire learning environment for our majors. On the one hand, we want to keep in mind the guiding questions established by the Office of Assessment:

- What are the student learning outcomes?
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed?
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

These guiding questions help establish a baseline of expectation, but we also need to determine our specific needs and the ways that our assessment plans will fit university expectations, exceed disciplinary standards, and provide
appropriate evidence that shows the success of our major. More importantly, in constructing our long-term assessment plans, the English department will begin new conversations over the coming year that examine assessment as a support tool for both students and faculty.

To do this, we will begin with our own guiding questions:

- What needs to be measured?
- Why does it need to be measured?
- How should it be measured?
- How can these measurements help our students?
- How can these measurements help our teachers, including established faculty, new faculty, and graduate student instructors?
- How can these measurements improve our departmental learning environment?
- How can our assessments provide evidence/materials for assessing strength/success of the major?

AND, AT THE SAME TIME,

- How can our assessments provide evidence/materials for students taking the next step towards a career after graduation?

Aligned with these guiding questions is our own framework for assessing our work at multiple levels and multiple scales:

Major --> Major Goals /Objectives
     | Course --> Course Outcomes
     | Projects --> Evaluation Criteria
     | Daily Learning Activities

We will use this framework to establish consistency and coherence across the major and for describing the relationships between and among the different levels. This is important in that many students still experience our major course by course. Even though links between and among courses are clearly visible to those of us who know the content, we realize that students often fail to see the connections.

While understanding how the various courses in a major fit together to build a coherent knowledge base will ultimately be a major goal/objective for English, we certainly will want to keep this in mind as a primary goal for developing a long-term assessment plan. This will help us have productive discussions and plan a curriculum designed to provide students with the opportunity to do that integration (including the design of a capstone course). How it is accomplished,
whether some course structures and learning activities are more successful at achieving the goal than others, remains a question that we hope our assessment plan can answer.

In conclusion, over the coming year, the Department of English will be further initiating curriculum reform and determining the ways that assessment can best support our students as they navigate the major and prepare for careers after graduation, our faculty in their short- and long-term pedagogical pursuits, and our learning environment.