TO: All English 102 Instructors

FROM: Kevin Hayes

English 102 Instructors

DATE: September 1, 2011

RE: SLOAT Assessment

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Those of you who taught English 102 last spring will recall that we assessed one student essay in relation to course goal #4 (“Demonstrate effective composition skills through the writing of critical essays about literary elements") and general education goal #1 (“Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing"). Our plan for this semester is to use the exact same rubric that we used last spring to assess two student papers, one around four weeks into the semester and one around nine weeks into the semester.

Results last spring were fairly encouraging. An analysis of student performance in relation to the nine MPOs showed that in everything other than documentation of sources, at least 90% of the students had achieved partial mastery. However, the results also indicated that more students have achieved only partial mastery than we would like.

**Therefore, I am asking that instructors place special emphasis upon MPO 4.3 (The body paragraphs are focused, unified, and relevant to the assignment and the essay's thesis.) and MPO 4.7 (The essay enters into a dialogue with the sources so that the student's voice emerges and exercises control over the argument).**

I chose these two MPOs not only because of the survey results but also because discussions I had in passing with many of you over the last several months have indicated that in your judgment, the primary problem students have in English 102 is moving beyond summary into analysis. It seemed to me that these two MPOs are the ones most directly relevant to that particular problem.

As a strategy for improving student performance in relation to these two MPOs, I would suggest that you try to teach students analytical skills through modeling analysis in the classroom. In order to do this, provide students with a very specific assignment that requires analysis of a literary text and use that assignment to conduct a controlled class discussion in which the issue is thoroughly explored. For example, Kennedy and Gioia define a protagonist as a "principle character who strives." When a character strives, by implication he or she strives to gain objectives. With a story like "Godfather Death" or "A & P," in the classroom help students to identify and discuss protagonist objectives. An antagonist obviously would oppose the protagonist as he or she seeks to gain these objectives. Students can also be encouraged to discuss how antagonists interfere with protagonists as the protagonists seek to gain their objectives in these stories.

Conducting a controlled discussion like the one I have described above will benefit students, I think, in the sense that they will have a model of what they should do. Scaffolding students in this way early in the course hopefully will encourage students to move beyond summary so that analysis begins to happen.

To conclude, I will be releasing assessment rubrics/surveys to you twice this semester. I would anticipate getting the first one to you at some point within the next two weeks. The second will be released slightly before midterm. I strongly encourage you to participate in this assessment effort. As many of you are aware, we have a fair amount of assessment work to do during the coming year in order to satisfy Middle States, and it is vital for you to provide us with the help we need in order to do this work successfully.

Thanks very much for your attention. Please see me if you have any questions.

xc: Paulette Longmore

Chair Humanities