

**English Department**  
**Summary of Assessment Accomplishments**  
**2006-2007 Academic Year**

<b>Submitted by: Kristine Blair, Chair</b>
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<b>Date: June 15, 2007</b>
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**Learning Outcomes:**

**New Assessment Initiatives**

As the following report indicates, the Department of English has diverse assessment processes, with a University program such as ESL and a joint degree in Integrated Language Arts, in addition to five undergraduate and/or graduate programs, most with separate learning outcomes, assessment measures, and assessment successes. As a result, the Department concluded at its Spring 2007 Retreat to develop a range of new assessment initiatives as well as to better monitor existing ones:

1. To constitute a department-wide assessment committee, particularly as a way to make our assessment initiatives more consistent in level if not form, and to provide a mechanism to process the growing amount of quantitative data that we are gathering as a result of the NCATE process (see the Integrated Language Arts Section in #1). This effort is consistent with national discussions about the importance of assessment, notably a recent discussion on the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) listproc about the need for such a committee at the unit level. POD is the leading national organization in faculty development. Part of the charge of this committee will also include strategies for using the Epsilon system in undergraduate literature and ILA courses.
2. To rely on focus groups and other forms of student feedback and involvement beyond student evaluations. For instance, in April 2007, we held an undergraduate focus group for students and faculty across all five programs. Students expressed concerns about staffing and scheduling of courses, and about professional development, particularly preparation for graduate school. This process reminded us that fostering student success occurs not only within the classroom but also through other departmental forums, spaces, and resources.
3. To address concerns about Academic Advising, including student accountability in the process. For that reason, the Department is

developing both a unit-specific advising FAQ for new and continuing advisors and an advising open house in Fall 2007 for advisees and advisors in order to connect with students who are less inclined to utilize the advising system, despite faculty efforts to make contact.

This remainder of the annual report includes updates on both undergraduate and in most cases graduate programs and is organized by program.

## **Annual Report**

### **1. Learning (or Service) Outcomes assessed this year:**

#### **Integrated Language Arts**

Last year, the Department reported that the Chair had convened an ILA Core Committee. This core committee has reviewed the Praxis II exam for Secondary School teachers, determining the extent to which content covered in the exam is actually addressed in English courses. While the Department does feel there is a solid match in the general exam areas of traditional British and American literature, Rhetoric and Composition, and to a lesser extent language and linguistics, we continue to be concerned that the exam has lesser emphasis on women and authors of color, something the English curriculum foregrounds quite heavily.

To address concerns about students' success on the Praxis II, required for state licensure, the ILA Core Committee has developed a series of evening study sessions (six to date) conducted by English Department faculty in literature, linguistics, and rhetoric and composition, as well as the ILA liaison. These sessions have been attended by both ILA and Middle child students for the past two years, and because of the need to vary approach, the committee has worked to provide an overall overview to the exam, with sample test taking strategies, in our fall sessions, with our spring sessions devoted to specific topics where students are having difficulties: American literature, British literature, along with other areas as needed. We will continue to deliver these sessions despite limited data. We do not have access to test scores and the extent to which students are less successful in various areas of exam, though this should be part of the College of Education AYA/ILA Report. However, the feedback from student evaluations of sessions has helped us consider the format and focus of the study sessions as well as the need to address curricular gaps in courses and to consider staffing and class scheduling constraints as factors impacting student performance.

In collaboration with the College of Education, the Department of English has begun the exhaustive process of National Council of Accreditation of Teacher

Education accreditation data collection for Integrated Language Arts Majors, in preparation for a site visit in 2008. While the outcomes of that collection are described in more detail in the AYA College of Education Reports and are not repeated here, the data collection process has included the following:

A meeting with cohort faculty for the following courses:

English 201, Introduction to Literary Genres  
 English 261 & 262, World Literature  
 English 264, British Literature Survey  
 English 268, American Literature Survey  
 English 380, Linguistics for English Teachers  
 English 381, Grammar and Writing  
 English 484, Foundations of Teaching Writing

At these meetings—in some cases more than one—the Department Chair oversaw dialogue about the need for courses to be more consistent in the ways in which students were assessed for purposes of NCATE reporting, without being pedagogically prescriptive for individual faculty. During this time, cohort faculty reviewed rubrics developed by the College of Education liaison and approved by the chair. Each rubric listed NCATE/NCATE outcomes relevant to that particular course, with an average of two to three outcomes for course, though the rubric for English 380/381 was much more extensive, with a larger number of outcomes that could have been addressed in either or both courses. Outcomes (approximately 20) addressed skills and dispositions, content knowledge, and applications to teaching.

For each outcome, the faculty identified one or at the most two assessment measures (final examination, course project, presentation) and determined, based on the grade for that measure, whether students were 1) Target, 2) Acceptable, and 3) Unacceptable. The Department has engaged in this data reporting process for two semesters, and has since added English 343, Literature for Adolescents. Currently, data for Spring 2007 has not been processed but has been collected and was submitted to the College of Education on May 31. The Department reviewed the general data from Fall 2006 at a February department meeting on assessment and was pleased to see that most students were in the acceptable and target range. A continuing concern for the unit is the extent to which NCATE measurements, in their emphasis on teaching application in the target category, are valid measures for core courses in literature. While these courses address appropriate content and skills-level outcomes, such courses are not specifically designed to meet this outcome in as detailed way as courses in the College of Education.

To further facilitate collaboration between the Department of English and the College of Education, the Chair attended the 2007 NCATE Assessment Conference in April as part of a six-member BGSU team. More details about the ILA program are contained within the Adolescent/Young Adult AYA Report.

## **Creative Writing**

### Undergraduate

Upon completion of the baccalaureate degree, students in creative writing are expected to:

1. Use writing effectively – including current modes and evolving techniques and technologies – to explore subject matter and to communicate.
2. Develop understanding of subject matter in relation to larger historical and/or cultural contexts, including multicultural contexts
3. Make connections between theory and practice. Students apply theory to understand texts, solve problems and teach effectively. Students generalize from experiences with texts, communication situations and teaching situations
4. Develop skills of creative and/or critical thinking.

Each semester the program requires that students taking Eng 209 and wishing to continue as Creative Writing majors provide a sample of work and a five-page, typed, double-spaced self-assessment of their work and goals for the program. Each academic year this process results in about 20-25 new majors in the program. A program committee examines these portfolios and self-assessments for evidence of all learning outcomes.

In addition, graduating B.F.A. majors produce a B.F.A. thesis with a minimum five-page, typed, double-spaced introduction, in which they reflect on their work before entering the BFA Program and discuss their challenges and successes during the Program.

### Graduate

1. Develop their own writing style as fully as possible under the direction of competent and experienced instructors.
2. Produce a book-length thesis comparable in quality to the published work of serious contemporary professional poets and fiction writers.
3. Develop an understanding of their work's place within the context of contemporary literature.
4. Gain first hand editorial and production experience in literary publishing.

5. Develop pedagogical skills sufficiently to design and teach courses at the college level.

All M.F.A. students in 2006-007 passed a comprehensive oral exam. This oral exam tested the students' knowledge of their place within the context of contemporary literature, and is a key aspect of assessing our graduates. In addition, all students produced a book-length thesis.

While both activities above connect to outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above, the overall quality of the graduating class can be seen through the work produced at Bowling Green State University that has been published or accepted for publication.

Especially notable: Beth Kaufka's short story, "The Subject of Their Absence," won an Associated Writing Programs Intro Award, and will be published in *Colorado Review*, while her story "Under So Much Rain" is forthcoming in *Portland Review*, and her paper, "Evaluating Creativity: Power and Difference in the Creative Writing Classroom," will be published in the *2007 AWP Pedagogy Papers*; Jennifer Bryan's stories "Wonder Twins" and "Super 8" were published in *Madison Review* and *Flyway: A Literary Review* respectively; Kate Lane's story "Red Winter" won *Third Coast's* \$1000 literary prize; Gary McDowell's poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Ninth Letter*, *Copper Nickel*, *In Posse Review*, *Bateau*, *The Southeast Review*, and *The Yalobusha Review*, while his critical essay, "Cycles of Imagery in the Prose Poem: The Present Future of a Misaligned Poetic Form," will be out in *LUNA*; Julie Platt's poems have been published or are forthcoming in *RHINO*, *Harpur Palette*, and *Bellingham Review*, while her pedagogy paper, "Developing the Presence of a Reader in the work of Beginning Creative Writers," was accepted to the 2007 AWP Pedagogy Forum and selected for *Best of the AWP Pedagogy Papers 2007*; Ashley Rutter's story (untitled) is forthcoming in *Hayden's Ferry Review*; and Brent van Horne's story "Omaha, Nebraska" was published in *Fugue*.

All M.F.A. students worked for *Mid-American Review* at least one semester, gaining first hand experience in literary publishing (Outcome #4). Notable are several students who currently have held the position of Managing Editor, Assistant Fiction Editor, Assistant Poetry Editor, and Assistant Prose Editor.

In addition, all M.F.A. students have taught in the GSW program, and also have taught one section of Creative Writing (Outcome #). As a group, the evaluations they received from their Creative Writing students were on target, though the Creative Writing pedagogy course, ENG 637, is being updated to include Discussions about grade inflation issues that have recently occurred in at least two 200-level courses taught by graduate students.

## English as a Second Language

1. Undergraduate ESL students will have sufficient grammar and writing support prior to admission into the General Studies Writing (GSW) program.
2. Undergraduate ESL students will have the oral and aural proficiency to understand and be understood by classmates and teachers in formal presentations, classroom discussions, and daily interactions.
3. Graduate ESL students will have the writing, research, and documentation skills needed to complete capstone writing pieces (such as theses and dissertations).
4. Graduate ESL students will have the oral and aural proficiency needed to understand and be understood by classmates and professors in formal presentations, classroom discussions, and daily interactions.
5. International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) will have the phonological, pedagogical, and cultural skills and information necessary to be successful in their teaching duties (as per our compliance with the Pringle Law).

## Literature

### Undergraduate

Four questions on the undergraduate student evaluation form provide students in each undergraduate literature course with the chance to assess the degree to which the course helped them achieve the Department's four overall learning outcomes.

These questions are worded as statements, to which the students are encouraged to give the appropriate degree of assent or dissent :

17. This course helped you use writing effectively – including current modes and evolving techniques and technologies – to explore subject matter and communicate.
18. This course helped you develop understanding of subject matter in relation to larger historical and/or cultural contexts, including multicultural contexts.
19. This course helped you make connections between theory and practice and apply theory to understand texts, solve problems, and/or teach effectively.
20. This course helped you develop skills of creative and/or critical thinking.

### Graduate

Currently, the Literature MA program relies on the same outcomes as the undergraduate program. The program continues to focus on enhancing outcome 2 (#18) by enhanced cooperation with the American Culture Studies and the Women's Studies programs, involving more faculty in crosslisted courses and advertising offerings where appropriate among such programs as ACS, WS, Ethnic Studies, and Theatre & Film.

### **Rhetoric and Writing (Graduate Program)**

Overall Program Goal. The implicit central goal of the R&W PhD Program (the goal toward which the program learning outcomes point) is to prepare students for faculty careers in rhetoric and composition. The program assesses this goal annually, in light of the job searches of students as they near completion of the program. In 2006-2007, the two ABD students actively pursuing positions located tenure-track assistant professorships early in the job-seeking year, and they both successfully defended their dissertations by mid May. This pattern of successful job searches is typical for the program; in 2005-2006, for example, all

active ABD job-seekers located assistant professorships or (in the case of two students) open-ended positions teaching in a nationally-known writing program developed so as to provide its faculty with good teaching loads and strong research support.

Program goals are built around the following specific learning outcomes of the Rhetoric & Writing PhD Program:

1. Graduates are prepared to teach a range of rhetoric and composition courses. (Besides first-year writing classes, graduates have experience with at least one of these areas: intermediate writing, literature, writing administration, writing across the curriculum, technical writing, writing center teaching and leadership, and teacher-training in writing).
2. Graduates are prepared theoretically and practically to work in computer environments.
3. Graduates understand and can discuss the rhetorical tradition and significant disciplinary texts and authors/theorists that shape the field of composition.
4. Graduates understand the impact of rhetorical history on contemporary rhetorical theory and composition practice.
5. Graduates understand and can discuss major competing theories and contested issues within rhetoric and composition.
6. Graduates are familiar with research in a variety of methodological systems.
7. Graduates are oriented to the place of scholarship in faculty work and rewards, and they have begun to work in professional contexts by developing ideas for submission to editors and conference chairs and by giving conference papers.

Early in 2006, Rhetoric and Writing began work to make such teacher assessment more explicit, and to combine individual faculty assessments of learning outcomes into a cumulative record from which the program can make judgments about Program success with student achievement of learning outcomes as well as note patterns of individual achievement. In 2006-2007 the program extended the pilot study of teacher ratings to include all courses.

Outcome 4. The offering of both required courses in rhetorical history during 2006-2007 provides a good opportunity to consider what our individual-teacher ratings on course work relevant to learning outcomes (begun as a pilot in 2006-2007) reveal about Outcome 4.

The May 2007 report of teacher ratings of student course work relevant to learning outcomes shows that eight students took both ENG 722 History of Written Discourse and the second required history course, which this year

featured Women's Rhetorical Practices. Another seven students took one of those courses. Of the eight students taking both rhetorical history courses, the instructor indicated that seven students showed Strong Evidence of work relevant to Outcome 4 in both courses, and that one other student showed Some Evidence in the fall course and Strong Evidence in the spring course. Of the seven students taking one of the two rhetorical history courses, the instructor indicated that five students demonstrated Strong Evidence relevant to Outcome 4 and that one student showed Some Evidence.

Additional evidence that students are developing historical contexts on the field appears in the May 2007 report of teacher ratings of student course work relevant to Program learning outcomes. While no course in the Program has as explicit a focus on Outcome 4 as do the two discussed above, other courses do involve some historical background on the subjects on which they focus.

Outcome 2. ENG 728 Computer Mediated Writing: Theory and Practice is a particularly good place for assessing student work relative to the outcome that graduates are prepared theoretically and practically to work in computer environments. The course engages students actively and intellectually in computer-mediated approaches to writing and its teaching. Student web work in the course includes developing individual Portfolios highlighting their interests and accomplishments. For examples of portfolios developed in ENG 728, see the Student page in the R&W PhD Program website (<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/english/rcweb/pages/students.htm>).

As the May 2007 report of teacher ratings of student course work relevant to learning outcomes shows, ten rhetoric students took ENG 728 in 2006-2007. On the basis of their work in ENG 728 this year, the teacher indicated that six students demonstrated Strong Evidence relevant to Outcome 2 and three others showed Some Evidence.

Outcome 7. Given the importance that the promise of scholarly productivity plays in tenure-track hiring decisions, Program faculty encourage students to see seminar papers in the context of possible article submissions, and the Program regularly takes note of (and publicizes in its web-based newsletter) student activities like presentations at significant national meetings, e.g., Conference on College Composition and Communication, Rhetoric Society of America, National Council of Teachers of English, Watson Conference, National Computers and Composition Conference, and Feminisms and Rhetoric Conference. The Fall 2006 issue of *Rhetoric & Writing Notes* (<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/english/rcweb/pages/studentpublications14.htm>) lists 50 conference papers, publications, and editorial positions by 16 different students. Additional evidence of student professional/scholarly

activity is found in portfolios students develop in ENG 728; some of them link from the Student page in our Program website (<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/english/rcweb/pages/students.htm>).

In 2006-2007, the professional and scholarly ability of R&W PhD students was further evidenced by the fact that one R&W PhD student received the Shanklin Award for the outstanding arts and humanities seminar paper, while another was the other finalist in that category. Similarly, in the spring of 2006, R&W PhD students won both the Outstanding Dissertation Award and the Shanklin Award for the arts and humanities.

Still other evidence regarding learning outcome 7 shows in the May 2007 report of teacher ratings of student course work relevant to Program learning outcomes. Faculty in a variety of 2006-2007 courses noted student behaviors and products indicating that students are oriented to the role of scholarship in faculty work and/or that they are beginning to work in professional contexts, for instance by submitting conference proposals and revising seminar papers for submission.

There is another source of evidence about Outcome 7. Students taking Prelims since April 2006--when our new Specialized Portfolio replaced a second written test--have demonstrated the ability to revise seminar papers in the direction of publishable, professional writing. In 2007-2008, the Program plans to extend to Prelims and also Dissertation Proposals a more systematic faculty rating system centered on our learning outcomes.

### **Scientific & Technical Communication**

1. To be able to communicate effectively to multiple audiences
2. To be able to present information to multiple audiences verbally and graphically
3. To be able to present information orally to multiple audiences to be able to understand the culture of business and industry
4. To be prepared to communicate primarily within a single technical discipline of their choice
5. To be sensitive to and to be able to communicate with people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The Scientific and Technical Communication Program is facing a number of challenges. Undergraduate majors are down, and with decreased numbers, several major courses cannot be offered. Thus, the program has less assessment information than in past years. Because graduate admissions have relied in great part on qualified undergraduates, the lack of qualified applicants has led to a suspension of graduate admissions in this program. To address these challenges,

S&TC has actively collaborated with other programs to develop new curricular initiatives, most notably in the College of Technology at the undergraduate level and the Rhetoric and Writing doctoral program at the graduate level. More detail about these improvements occur in Section 4.

## **2. Assessment Methods and Procedures:**

### **Creative Writing**

English 209 instructors assign the self-assessment essay and portfolio to students. Assessment itself is conducted by the English 209 instructors, the program director, and other 200-level instructors. Students are notified by the BFA Advisor if they are invited to continue in the program. The thesis and introduction are read by the faculty committee students have chosen, as well as by the program director.

Assessment for learning outcomes one, two and three is done through the comprehensive oral exam, the M.F.A. thesis, and a survey of students for information on success in publication. Assessment for learning outcome four is done through consultation with the editors of *Mid-American Review*. Assessment for learning outcome five is done through study of student evaluations for the Creative Writing courses taught, as well as information gathered from undergraduate students applying for continuation in the B.F.A. major. Student performance in English 637, the course in the pedagogy of Creative Writing, aids in our evaluation of students' pedagogical skills.

### **English as a Second Language**

To continue to assess progress in regard to our writing-oriented outcomes, information was collected through a variety of means. In addition to the standard departmental end-of-semester student evaluations, the program utilizes course-specific mid-term evaluations and program-specific end-of-term student evaluation forms. The program also gains insights from students through unsolicited feedback offered directly to ESL instructors or to the Program Director. Regular teachers' meetings allow discussion and input from program instructors to supplement what is learned from the students themselves. All ESL writing courses also include a portfolio component. These compilations of student writing allow us to determine if a course and its curriculum indeed seem to be making a substantive difference in a student's overall writing progress.

Interactions with groups such as UASC, GSW, and the ESL Advisory Committee also inform decision-making in regard to how successful the current writing curriculum is. This year, the program also contacted all of the graduate

coordinators of the ten departments with which ESL currently has departmental agreements to verify that the current agreements are serving their students well. In direct response to student feedback, the program also spoke with graduate coordinators from three departments with which ESL has not had departmental agreements in the past to see if drafting such agreements might be beneficial. Departmental agreements include detailed information about which ESL classes students are required take and in what order or timeframe.

All of the full-time members of our program took part in the East Central Writing Center Association Conference (ECWCA) this spring to serve on a panel discussion outlining the specific needs and concerns of ESL writing students. This conference allowed the program to be a seldom-accessed resource for writing center tutors and directors, and it also allowed the program faculty the opportunity to gather additional ideas regarding our own curriculum and methodology.

In terms of assessing our success in preparing ITAs for the classroom, the program collected data through various means, including course- and program-specific student evaluations. In ITA courses themselves (ENG 504 and ENG 505), the students also prepare and present mini-teaching lessons. The instructors of our ITA courses also visit the students in their own classrooms to observe them in action, and the ITAs video-tape themselves for additional self-evaluations. ITAs are also required to observe one another to provide peer feedback to both the ITA and the course instructor. Additional information for this assessment came from contributions from American undergraduate students who assisted us with ITA Placement Testing.

In addition to the assessment means noted above, ESL also spent time discussing specific needs and concerns with the graduate coordinators of those programs with high numbers of ITAs, such as Mathematics and Statistics. ESL also worked closely with Chemistry to discuss the unique needs of their students who, while not teaching their own courses, conduct labs and hold office hours and frequently interact with students.

Finally, the ESL Program Director attended the International TESOL Conference and took part in six separate sessions regarding ITA assessment, preparation, and support. This information was brought back for further discussion and consideration in terms of its potential applicability to the program here at BGSU.

## **Literature**

Below are the average course-by-course results from 2006-07 for each of the four questions in Section 1:

**Fall 2006**

	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19	Question 20
ENG 150	4.18	4.39	4.34	4.36
ENG 200	4.01	4.36	3.99	4.11
ENG 201	4.43	4.33	4.17	4.38
ENG 202	2.53	2.81	2.81	2.76
ENG 261	4.18	4.45	4.18	4.45
ENG 262	3.84	4.11	3.64	3.86
ENG 264	3.98	4.46	3.93	4.05
ENG 265	3.64	4.14	3.95	4.00
ENG 268	4.17	4.51	4.20	4.28
ENG 269	3.76	3.89	3.47	3.84
ENG 301	4.31	4.69	4.31	4.54
ENG 310	3.88	4.12	3.64	3.80
ENG 320	2.93	3.41	3.04	3.56
ENG 323	3.76	4.20	3.88	4.12
ENG 342	4.36	4.57	4.45	4.64
ENG 343	4.39	4.38	4.35	4.62
ENG 400	4.52	4.62	4.62	4.52
ENG 419	4.50	4.75	4.00	4.50
ENG 485	4.88	5.00	4.75	4.89

**Spring 2007**

	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19	Question 20
ENG 150	4.00	4.25	4.16	4.13
ENG 200	4.18	4.53	4.42	4.37
ENG 201	4.30	4.20	4.08	4.29
ENG 202	4.19	4.38	4.48	4.50
ENG 211	3.81	4.24	4.10	4.24
ENG 212	3.45	4.45	3.68	3.73
ENG 261	3.50	4.07	3.14	3.79
ENG 262	3.40	3.85	3.53	3.73
ENG 264	3.91	4.49	3.91	4.09
ENG 265	3.97	4.59	4.44	4.34
ENG 268	4.14	4.58	4.28	4.32
ENG 301	4.33	4.50	3.89	4.50
ENG 306	4.20	4.50	3.93	4.50
ENG 311	4.50	4.71	4.75	4.58

ENG 330	3.22	3.72	3.28	3.67
ENG 333	4.11	4.19	4.15	4.11
ENG 342	4.39	4.43	4.37	4.49
ENG 343	4.45	4.43	4.48	4.67
ENG 434	4.31	4.46	4.38	4.38
ENG 499	4.71	4.64	4.71	4.64

### Averages

	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19	Question 20
<b>Fall 2006</b>	4.01	4.27	3.98	4.17
<b>Spring 2007</b>	4.05	4.36	4.11	4.25
<b>Overall</b>	4.03	4.32	4.05	4.21

### Graduate

Student ratings of graduate lit courses are as follows:

	Fall 2006	Spring 2007
1 (17)	4.35	4.45
2 (18)	4.63	4.71
3 (19)	4.55	4.44
4 (20)	4.60	4.48

These numbers also show a notable increase over the figures reported last year, though there should be more attempts to customize these questions to graduate education in literary studies.

### **Rhetoric and Writing**

The program foregrounds student products and accomplishments, such as development of web pages and online portfolios, writing that is submitted to program chairs and editors, conference presentations and publications, competitive awards like the Shanklin, and success in locating faculty positions. These observations are useful because the Program's learning outcomes also are the Program's goals--hence matters faculty keep in mind as they develop courses and work with students, in seminars, on doctoral committees, and in supportive student-faculty settings, such as Post Prelim Group, a monthly meeting designed to prepare doctoral students for the academic job market.

Various Program activities--developing courses, making assignments, mentoring students, etc.--are enhanced by the Program's Goals-Based Assessment Sheet which (a) provides considerable specificity about the brief learning outcomes; (b) suggests some activities and products associated with achievement of each outcome; and (c) suggests a format for students to log activities and products that indicate their achievement of outcomes. The Goals-Based Assessment Sheet provides students with the basis of self-assessment of their progress, as well as a heuristic to help them locate artifacts to include as evidence of Program learning outcomes in Epsilon--which the Program envisions as an internal, advising oriented portfolio and also as a place to organize material for use in public web portfolios for job-seeking and career advancement of Program graduates. This approach has been emphasized in the syllabi of some courses; it has been the object of orientation activities for students; and it is described for students and others at the E-Portfolio Project page that links from the Student page in the Program website

(<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/english/rcweb/pages/eportfolioinfo.htm>).

Future Plans--A: The core Program faculty decided at its year-end meeting in May to continue and increase student orientation to the Goals-Based Assessment Sheet and to the Epsilon Portfolio system. It also decided to look for ways to expand the number of course syllabi that indicate the key learning outcomes for the course and that encourage students to post course work to their Epsilon portfolios.

As discussion of Outcomes 2, 4, and 7 in the previous section suggests, this approach already is beginning to yield useful information--with multiple teachers in multiple courses judging student products and activities relevant to Program learning outcomes.

Future Plans--B: Because of the promise the approach has shown, the core Program faculty decided at its year-end meeting in May that it would continue its individual teacher ratings as part of its ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes.

Preliminary exams, dissertation proposals, and dissertations are key means by which we assess student accomplishment of outcomes 3, 4, 5, and 6. Such assessment was enhanced by the change in the specialized component of preliminary exams. Since the Spring of 2006, the specialized Prelim component has not been a second written exam but a Specialized Portfolio with four sections (A-revising toward publication, B-curriculum development, C-initial dissertation reading list, and D-review essay based on the reading list). One reason Rhetoric and Writing moved from a written exam to this Specialized Portfolio was to allow us to take a sharper "assessment perspective" on the work that students do as they complete course work and begin the dissertation process. Specialized Portfolios submitted by students in 2006-2007 provide evidence of student

accomplishment relevant to outcomes 1, 3, 5, and 7; indeed, Parts A and B are written products providing direct evidence on learning outcomes 7 and 1.

Future Plans--C: Because of the success of the Specialized Portfolio approach and the initial promise of individual teacher ratings of course work, the core Program faculty decided at its year-end meeting in May to develop a more explicit way to assess and record evidence of learning outcomes in Prelims, and also in Dissertation Proposals. One idea that has been suggested is to develop an outcomes checksheet for committees to complete together as part of their deliberations following Orals and Defenses.

### **Scientific & Technical Communication**

Student learning and achievement of course goals and objectives is assessed through collaboration in writing workshops, individual and collaborative oral presentations, writing journals, objective tests on course readings, through instructor's application of standard writing rubrics in the field to all information products (text, video, audio and web-based integrations), and job or postgraduate school placement.

### **3. Inferences from Assessments:**

#### **Creative Writing**

##### Undergraduate

Our inferences from both the B.F.A. theses and the portfolios to enter the major demonstrate that the students are fulfilling the learning requirements. These documents present a picture of students who are **learning to write effectively**, and especially learning to respond to criticism and revise to improve their work. Also encouraging is the extent to which **cultural awareness** is shaping the creative lives of our writers – topics such as the role of religion in contemporary culture or racial conflict appeared in several theses. **In terms of theory and practice**, students are not only learning to write; they are learning **how** to learn to write; this awareness will make them better teachers – of themselves and of others. Finally, students are **thinking creatively and critically** about their work, raising good questions that will propel them in useful and productive ways into their upper division courses.

Following are some representative statements from the thesis introductions, written by graduating B.F.A. majors:

#### **Using Writing Effectively:**

"I learned to write a non-rhyming poem." "Currently, I am attempting to eliminate my use of the passive voice in fiction, because I know it weakens the text." "I had to learn that subtlety was never an excuse for lack of plot." "Working with different voices, with different styles, with different types of narration – all of these are things that I now consider seriously before I sit down and start tapping away at my keyboard ... they're the things I gauge my story's success on: was the voice working? Was it consistent throughout? Was this point of view the best one to tell the story in? How does it sound? How does it *feel*?"

### **Historical / Cultural Contexts:**

"In future I would love to expand my range of work. I desire to write more poems addressing issues that affect my culture and my sex. I consider myself to be a feminist so giving women another voice would be self-gratifying. I also love being a multi-racial woman and would like to address things I have encountered as being so. Women and people of color are still shunned in so many aspects of life and I feel it is my duty to give my life experiences light. I have read so many poems that I relate to written by African-American, Caucasian, and Indian women and I would like to write something that incorporates all of those races and issues that people who are a mixture of races deal with because they don't have just one blood line.

### **Theory and Practice (including teaching situations):**

"I was pleasantly surprised by how open people were to sharing their work and giving constructive criticism."

"One of my favorite moments of my four years at Bowling Green State University was when I did my senior reading. I was so nervous ... once I began to read, I became completely relaxed. It felt like when I was back in high school on stage performing a dance. Performing my reading was incredible. I put every emotion I had written into it and belted it out the way it was meant to be heard."

### **Creative and Critical Thinking:**

" ... my writing when I first came into the program was nothing that rose above typical genre writing. Now, after my time here, I consider myself a language-driven writer – something I don't think most authors of genre fiction can say. I love writing sentences that sound good. I love being able to create a rhythm with my sentences that mimics the mood of the story I'm writing."

"After reading some of Billy Collins's poems in my Contemporary Poetry class, I was inspired to take a poke at writing and the struggles writers have as a result of losing their muse. I also thought it interesting that Billy Collins poked fun at

more serious writers. His poem 'Sonnet' mocks the form of a sonnet, and yet it maintains its integrity by holding a mirror to its audience, forcing them (serious writers) to see how ridiculous they can be ..."

### Graduate

In general, the program is doing a good job in seeing that graduate students are fulfilling the specified learning outcomes. Students are graduating with two years of intense concentration on their own creative work, reflected in the high quality of theses. In addition to this, they all have the opportunity to gain first hand experience in editing and publishing, as well as the opportunity to teach a section of Creative Writing. Many of them are already publishing work, and we have also seen a number of significant publications from recent graduates. For instance, Daniel Rzicznek's (MFA '05) new book *Neck of the World* won the May Swenson Poetry Prize and will be published by Utah State University Press; Anne Passing's (MFA '93) book *Super America* won the Flannery O'Connor Prize; Carmen Cole (MFA '04) won a \$5000 Pennsylvania Council for the Arts fellowship; Mary Biddinger's (MFA '98) new book *Prairie Fever* was published with Steel Toe Books; Randy DeVita's story "Riding the Doghouse" was selected for inclusion in *Best American Short Stories 2007*.

### **English as a Second Language**

In terms of writing programs, ESL seems to be meeting its goals. With undergraduate students, GSW reviews the portfolios of students who complete ENG 101 to determine if they are ready for admission into the GSW program. The students who successfully complete ENG 101 are accepted almost without exception, and some students are placed directly into ENG 111 or a regular ENG 110, not just ENG 110W, which is usually expected with learners of English. Indeed, occasionally, students who complete ENG 100 make significant enough progress as to have their portfolios submitted to GSW.

Graduate student progress is also quite strong on the whole. As Chemistry has implemented a new departmental agreement which requires many more ESL courses than in the past -with special emphasis on writing – the program was pleased to find that the majority of these Chemistry students were very successful in their writing courses, with two students making such substantial progress that they were able to move from ENG 500 directly to ENG 506 (skipping ENG 501 altogether).

Successes aside, there were some problems that came to light during assessment, and these seem to be tied to the need this year to hire adjunct instructors to teach many of our courses. A number of students complained to the Program Director

about the quality and teaching style of one of the adjunct writing instructors. Indeed, many of these students actually dropped the courses, preferring instead to wait to take the course at a later time with a different instructor. After two in-class observations and a meeting with the instructor, it became clear that the problem was primarily a fundamental misunderstanding of the goals of the course. It should be noted that similar complaints came from an adjunct-taught section of the reading skills course.

In terms of our ITA preparation goals, the tools used yielded predominantly positive results. The one gap discovered was the lack of support for students who are not teaching their own classes, but who are supervising labs and holding office hours. This problem was evident through student feedback from non-ITA courses. This was also a key topic of discussion at the International TESOL Conference.

### **Literature**

While it would certainly be a mistake to assume that all students are fully able to assess the degree to which courses have helped them achieve the Department's rather abstract and complex learning outcomes, the data suggest that most students believe their literature courses are helping them to achieve these outcomes.

As for the results for specific questions, the consistency across the two semesters is striking. In both semesters, students responded most positively to Question 18, less positively to Question 20, and still less positively to Questions 17 and 19—though all ratings except one were comfortably above 4.00. (This statement was also true last year.) To judge from student opinion, it appears that literature courses may be doing a slightly better job of acquainting students with the “larger historical and/or cultural contexts” of literature--and of enhancing their creative and critical thinking skills--than of making them more effective writers and helping them to see “connections between theory and practice.”

Again, some literature courses seem to be more effective than others in helping students achieve the Department's learning outcomes. The Department was particularly pleased to see that students in ENG 342 and 343, courses about which questions have occasionally been raised, tend to rate these courses quite high in relation to our learning outcomes. The program was less pleased with the results for ENG 320, 323, and 330, which were taught in 2006-07 by non-specialists, in part because of several unexpected leaves and resignations.

Overall, the Department's upper-level literature courses seem to be doing a somewhat better job than its lower-level ones in helping students achieve the

four learning outcomes, though this conclusion might be questioned on the ground that upper-level ratings routinely tend to be higher than lower-level ones in most Department (and probably in most University) courses.

### **Rhetoric and Writing**

From its assessment activities in 2006-2007 (see Section 1), the faculty has a good sense of overall strong student accomplishment of Program goals and learning outcomes, especially Outcomes 2, 4 and 7, and the general goal of preparing graduates for faculty positions. The faculty also infer from Prelims and from ratings of student course work by multiple teachers that students perform well with regard to Outcomes 3 and 5. Patterns of individual student accomplishment (many Strong or many lesser ratings for a student in several different courses) are beginning to develop.

From a program-assessment perspective, Rhetoric and Writing students are demonstrating Outcome 6. That is, their dissertations demonstrate that our students effectively utilize a range of research methodologies (for instance, historical, empirical, cultural-studies, ethnographic, and rhetorical-analytical). More work is needed, however, for the program to be confident of student-assessment judgments about which individual students are familiar with (let alone how familiar with) a variety of research methodologies. Efforts to improve student portfolio development and to have more products of student work available for review in Epsilon (see Future Plans--A, above) should help with assessment of this outcome.

This report's emphasis on teacher ratings of Rhetoric & Writing Program course work relevant to learning outcomes limits what we can say, here, about student achievement of Outcome 1: preparation to teach a range of courses. Also, evidence regarding Outcome 2 (working in computer environments--see Section 1) allows confident inferences about student preparation for computer-mediated writing instruction. But the fact is that much evidence relevant to Outcome 1 comes not from Program courses, but from the teaching assignments graduate assistants have and, in some cases, from elective graduate courses (in technical communication, linguistics/TESL, teaching literature. etc.). Exploring the broad range of evidence relevant to Outcome 1 is something for the future.

Future Plans--D: In future years, the Program will emphasize assessment of Outcomes 1 and 6 and make that an emphasis in Assessment Reports.

### **Scientific & Technical Communication**

Overall, the job-readiness of S&TC students demonstrates the program's effectiveness in achieving criteria 1 through 5, although the largest challenge

facing the program are the decreased numbers of majors and the small number of applicants that has led to a suspension of graduate admissions to focus on recruitment and curriculum updates (see Section 4).

However, among existing students, practicum presentations and thesis defenses (and required portfolios and presentations) provided the students with opportunities to demonstrate criteria 1, 2, and 3 to in-house faculty, out-of-department faculty (in MA Practica) and other interested parties. This year, all students who had practicum presentations and thesis defenses passed easily with positive comments from out-of-department faculty. Internships provided opportunities for students to evaluate their skills and performance in terms of business and technical success/

The program was also successful in accomplishing criterion 5, sensitivity to and ability to communicate with people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Through S&TC faculty involvement with the Xian program and the Chinese Student Scholar Program, the program has had opportunities to work with many Chinese and international students. This association has been very positive for the program, especially on the graduate level. In fact, one Xian student in the S&TC program, Wu Dan, will begin the doctoral program at Clemson University in fall 2007. Two other graduate students in S&C returned to China in May 2007 to resume teaching responsibilities at their home institutions.

A number of graduate students who enrolled in S&TC classes offered for the online certificate mentioned that the classes (Eng 641 and 642 specifically) lacked the content and rigor expected of a graduate-level class. The program believes that attempts to expand the course population to include students from other degree programs, including doctoral programs such as Rhetoric and Writing, will help in this process.

#### 4. Actions Taken/Program Improvements:

##### **Creative Writing**

The largest detriment to the success of the Creative Writing program has been a range of unexpected staffing shortages that have put less experienced, full-time instructors in classes at both the undergraduate and graduate level, often at the last minute. To counteract this shortage, the English Department successfully negotiated with the College of Arts and Sciences and the General Studies Writing Program to reassign a lecturer with significant teaching expertise and scholarly success in Creative Writing to return to English. In addition, the Department has prioritized hiring needs for two tenure-line position requests in both fiction and poetry, accounting for increased number of undergraduate majors and the growing professional development needs of the program's highly successful graduate population.

##### Undergraduate

Over the past several years, the Creative Writing Program has made major progress in curricula development: establishing the Thursday night readings; requiring vocabulary studies and examinations; requiring common readings and examinations of those readings; focusing individual courses on poetry theory and practice and fiction theory and practice; and requiring the self-assessment portfolios for students to continue in the program. The program continues to see these initiatives pay off. The base of declared majors continues to be strong. After having evaluated their self-assessment portfolios, the program accepted twenty-one new majors (and one minor) during the 2006-2007 academic year, and the total number of majors is close to one hundred.

The Creative Writing Website now includes two valuable resources for undergraduate students (and graduates.) **Careers Page** – This is a password-protected page that contains detailed information and directly links to sites concerning publishing, internships, jobs, writers' colonies, and further graduate studies. **Books by Graduates** – This link is on the left sidebar and allows access to a page of citations for books by graduates from the undergraduate program (this is true of graduate programs as well). These resources provide helpful practical information for professional development, as well as inspiration for young writers in the Creative Writing Program.

##### Graduate

The Distinguished Visiting Writer position to the Creative Writing Program has continues to expose our graduate students to a richer range of teaching styles

and creative work, and also helps to connect them with actively publishing writers of both fiction and poetry. This year's DVW was Nancy Lord, author of six fiction and nonfiction books, who has been reviewed with praise in such publications as *The New York Times*.

The **MFA Job Talk**, delivered by Professor Mary Biddinger, a BGSU graduate (MFA'98) and currently Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Akron, was extremely helpful to our MFAs. Comments gathered after the talk included: "I found the talk extremely helpful. The advice was practical, many examples were given, and particular processes were explained in great detail. Mary was knowledgeable and approachable. I would move for having this kind of talk regularly." (Julie Platt.) "Wow, Mary Biddinger was really helpful to me. I've been obsessing about finding jobs, worrying about academic interviews, and especially wondering about what kinds of questions I should anticipate. I thought Mary's presentation was well prepared, friendly, and informative. It really helped push me to get more active about prepping for my impending search to come." (Beth Kaufka.)

**Recruitment** - An informational talk with the Program Director, conducted by telephone, for each selected applicant, was a useful tool in recruitment. One applicant, Megan Ayers-Vidmar, wrote to Dr. Heinz Buhlman specifically to thank the Program Director and the Office Manager who, in her words, "went out of their way to answer my questions and extend a welcome to BGSU. As a result of their knowledge and kind attention, I will be starting at BGSU in the fall." The informational talk also has helped us increase **diversity**: we now have recruited two minority students for the current poetry classes of '07 and '08. In addition, the value of the website as a recruitment tool was confirmed by the solid number of MFA applicants to the program this year - over 100 total. Among those selected, every applicant mentioned the growing reputation of the program and its visibility thanks to the website.

### **English as a Second Language**

Based on the information gathered during this year, ESI has begun to implement a variety of program improvements to better meet the needs of our students. In terms of writing, ESL began by examining current and updated curriculum. The agenda in ENG 501, our intermediate level graduate writing class, has proven to be our most successful. Indeed, the WAC (writing across the curriculum) approach in this course is so innovative that the instructors responsible for its design (Kimberly Spallinger and Dayna Herrington) presented the course concept at the Ohio TESOL Conference and were very well-received by professionals from peer institutions.

Perhaps the weakest writing course has been ENG 500. The challenge of this course is that it is designed to serve the very lowest level students and, therefore, is necessarily grammar-intensive. One idea that came from discussions with various graduate coordinators is that ESL could make the actual assignments in this course extremely practical, such as writing memos or e-mails, so that students could be generating very brief, albeit meaningful and professionally relevant texts, while still attending primarily to grammatical issues. ESL plans to pilot this approach in the fall of 2007. To further support these very low-level students, this year ESL did bring back a one-hour reading skills course which students in ENG 500 took concurrently. As research overwhelmingly indicates that strong reading is directly linked to strong writing, the program is optimistic that including this one-hour addition to the ENG 500 requirement is one reason students have begun to show such rapid improvement. Indeed, while no undergraduate version of the ENG 502 reading course is currently on the books, it may be something ESL wishes to incorporate into the undergraduate curriculum.

Another action taken to support student and departmental requests was to offer two ESL courses in summer 2007. While attempts in the past few years to run summer ESL courses have been unsuccessful, the program has managed to populate the courses this year by directly contacting the departments in the spring to have them check with students to see who would be on campus during the summer sessions and which ESL courses they would most like to take. The result was that ESL now has two writing courses on offer, both completely filled with substantial internal wait lists. The departments and students are very pleased with this arrangement as it allows students to make significant headway on their ESL progress without interfering in their regularly-scheduled major coursework.

Finally, one very welcome program addition scheduled for fall 2007 is the new contract position created to bring in a writing specialist. This new instructorship is a hybrid position between the ESL Program and the University Writing Center. Our new colleague will spend 10 hours per week in the Writing Center, working with ESL students, training the other Writing Center Consultants, creating materials, etc., and will also teach 3 courses in the fall and spring semesters for the ESL Program. This new position solves many problems for ESL in that it will greatly reduce our reliance on adjuncts while bringing in an individual with very strong writing pedagogy. It also helps serve all of the ESL students in the campus community by putting an ESL expert in the Writing Center for training and consultations.

Regarding the needs of our ITA population, ESL has also begun to implement some exciting improvements. The biggest of these began last summer and

involved a specialized ITA Placement Test component. Students are given no less than 24 hours to prepare a mini teaching demonstration from their field. They then present this lesson to a “class” comprised of two ESL evaluators, at least two undergraduate student volunteers, and interested members of the various departments. This testing procedure has yielded far more accurate results than the “interview” technique used previously. One planned addition to this revised testing protocol is the inclusion of representatives from Communication Disorders (CDIS). Under the current system, incoming ITAs are tested twice –once by the ESL Program and a second time by CDIS. CDIS has indicated to ESL that they believe the teaching demonstrations we are using would be a more effective means for their assessment as well. Rather than continue to double-test students, CDIS will send its own testers to become part of the “class” present for the ESL ITA Placement Test. This will save students time and stress, will help insure that no students are missed in the second screening by CDIS, and will allow ESL and CDIS the opportunity to work jointly to discuss students’ skill levels and needs before making course recommendations to the departments and the Graduate College.

Another planned action for ITA service involves students, such as those in Chemistry, who have no direct teaching duties, but who do oversee undergraduate labs and hold office hours. Beginning in the fall of 2007, such students will be allowed to enroll in ENG 504 in lieu of the standard speaking and listening courses such as ENG 503 and ENG 508, so that they may receive structured information regarding the expectations of students in the US classroom. In addition to offering targeted pronunciation assistance, ENG 504 will work with these ITAs to explore how to handle office hours, respond to student questions, and conduct labs.

As a final point, the communications with various graduate coordinators regarding departmental agreements resulted in the addition of two new departmental agreements (with GREAL and ROML) and one pending agreement with the MFA program in Art. The departmental agreement we have with the Business College has been substantially revised, and we have also significantly updated our departmental agreement with Chemistry, including the modification regarding ENG 504 discussed above.

## **Literature**

### Undergraduate

It would be useful for the literature faculty as a whole to take a look at the overall numbers next fall with an eye to identifying strengths and weaknesses in our courses – and for individual instructors to take a look at the numbers with an eye

to strengthening their effectiveness in helping students achieve the various learning outcomes.

The literature faculty has yet to implement the plan developed last year of requiring ENG 201 instructors to provide copies of the first two papers submitted by students in the course to an Assessment Committee. The literature faculty were busy this year doing a wholesale revision of the English major and minor; the 201 faculty were busy reaching agreement on the specific goals of this essential course. In the fall of 2007, 201 instructors will be asked to provide copies of the first papers submitted by all students in the course to the Literature Director, who'll retain them for later consideration by an Assessment Committee. The Senior Thesis of each English major could, for example, be compared with his or her first paper in 201. Such an assessment plan could be cumbersome and time-consuming for faculty, but it would also have the potential to a valuable supplement to student evaluation data.

In 2007-08, ENG 201 instructors will continue to discuss ways of improving the consistency with which all course sections help students achieve the four learning outcomes, as well as the more specific goals of the course. Meanwhile, the instructors in ENG 302 will meet to discuss the revised version of ENG 202.

Overall, the literature program can claim a number of individual student successes, notably BA English graduate Emily Shreve's acceptance to the doctoral program at Lehigh University beginning Fall 2007 and graduate Meaghan Geraghty's Fulbright Award to Vietnam, one of three at BGSU this academic year.

### Graduate

The literature program is beginning to strategize ways to develop a structure for improving the quality of graduate admissions and to devote more consistent attention to professional development across courses in courses such as English 601, Research and Methods, and English 607, Theories and Methods of Literary Criticism (both courses encourage presentation and publication of student projects). An upcoming task is to develop more specific graduate-level outcomes and to better track alumni successes in job placement and graduate school.

### **Rhetoric and Writing**

Over the past year, the Rhetoric & Writing PhD Program has become more explicit and focused in its approach to assessing student work relevant to its seven learning outcomes.

The major result of this development is a growing record of teacher ratings of outcomes-related work in Program courses. After just a year, this record begins to show patterns of student accomplishment, which we expect will (as it fills with ratings of more students in more courses) guide us in student advising, program assessment, and course planning.

A specific curriculum improvement grew in part from faculty discussions about student learning outcomes. For several years, most new students have taken a fall-semester Special-Topics course, ENG 680 Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition. Through several iterations, the course evolved to stress disciplinary and professional matters of the scholarly field called rhetoric and composition--something suggested by the scattered 680 Fall 2006 notes in columns 5, 6, and 7 on the attached report. During the year, the program decided to green-sheet the course as ENG 621 and also to adjust our advising checksheet to make Introduction of Rhetoric and Composition a Core Course. Both decisions should help Program students begin early orientation to scholarly and professional issues of our field, and to several key learning outcomes of the Program.

Another improvement resulting from discussions of assessment is that faculty are starting to experiment with, or discuss ways of, foregrounding learning outcomes more explicitly in course syllabi. This extends and refines the Program's longstanding outcome/curriculum connection, in which various Core Courses have a special relationship to a learning outcome (e.g., ENG 728 to Outcome 2, ENG 722 to Outcomes 3 and 4, ENG 724 to Outcomes 3 and 5, ENG 726 to Outcome 6, ENG 729 to Outcome 7) and ENG 620 and Special-Topics Seminars (e.g., on Advanced Writing Pedagogy, WAC, Writing Administration, and Writing Assessment) relate to Outcome 1. As this approach is beginning to appear in syllabi, a teacher identifies learning outcomes that are of "major," "some," or "minor" importance for a course. Syllabi may also encourage (perhaps, in the future, require) students to put into Epsilon documents relevant to learning outcomes.

### **Scientific & Technical Communication**

The primary improvement this program needs to make is in the area of recruitment, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Three informational trifolds have been developed to advertise S&TC programs. At the undergraduate level, separate trifolds have been developed to advertise the STC major and minor. The program will use mailing lists from admissions and the department to target the distribution of these most effectively. S&TC also has a trifold to advertise our graduate offerings, which will be distributed to

colleges and technology-oriented businesses as well. These materials are currently being produced. The web site has also been updated and redesigned so we can advertise effectively online. Other forms of recruitment will include a presentation in development for high school students, undecided majors, and other possible populations, for both face-to-face and web-based delivery.

STC Faculty also met with faculty from the College of Technology to discuss offering four of our courses as part of an online Advanced Technology Education Degree specializing in technical communication. The proposed collaboration is a good way to boost undergraduate enrollments, especially in upper-level classes, and faculty are in the process of developing blue sheets for online delivery of Eng 389, 486, 487 and 488. The blue sheets will be ready Fall 2007 to go through the approval process, and students could apply to the program in Fall 2008.

On the graduate level, the Department Chair convened S&TC and Rhetoric and Writing faculty to discuss offering a more focused version of the MA Plan II that contained an emphasis in professional communication and rhetoric. This proposed collaboration has the potential to benefit enrollments for both programs as well as providing a closer collegial connection between them. The combined faculty developed the proposal and program green sheet that has been approved by the departmental graduate committee and will go through the approval process in Fall 2007 and begin accepting applicants Fall 2008.

The online certificate program has had 1 new applicant, and two current students need to take their final class as an independent study this summer – not an ideal situation for students or instructors. Currently, IDEAL and S&TC are promoting the program, and the certificate is also mentioned in the trifold developed.

## Graduate (Overall Actions)

The enhanced cooperation with ACS and WS cited above has to some extent improved the number and variety of courses available to MA Literature students, and a continuing effect of the terminated MA TESL program and the suspension of the MA program in Scientific and Technical Communication is a small increase in numbers in both the MA Literature and the PhD Rhetoric and Writing programs, which should also help improve our breadth of offerings.

Our major problem has been with recruiting, a problem with the doctoral program and especially with the MA program, a situation created primarily by the weak competitive position of the assistantship support program. Ours are among the very lowest stipend rates among comparable universities in the six-state area, by several thousand dollars. Support for medical insurance is equally non-competitive. In spite of the support from the College of Arts and Sciences that permitted us to lower first year teaching loads, loads for our TAs are still higher than most of the competition.

The strength of our programs depends heavily on the strength of the students we are able to attract, and while the level of assistantship support is a serious handicap, the unit taking what steps it can to improve our applicant pool and attract more students, including self-funded students. These steps include:

1. Increasing the number of graduate courses offered online. Such increases have so far been primarily during the summer, but we managed to teach 2 such courses during the regular terms in 2006-07, and we plan to offer more in 2008-09 once the online MA program has been approved (see below).
2. Adding programs and revising program descriptions. We have an online certificate program in Scientific and Technical Communication that has been operational this year. Proposals were created this year and submitted to the Graduate College – and to Continued and Extended Education in the case of online offerings – for two new tracks in the MA Plan II program, an online track in English Language Arts Teaching, designed to attract teachers in the area and beyond who desire a content-based masters degree, and a track in Professional Writing and Rhetoric, designed to prepare students for successful employment as writers, editors, and writing instructors in various industries and institutions, including business, technology, science, and two-year colleges (the online track has been approved by CEE and awaits final approval by the Graduate College). In addition we have prepared and submitted a proposal for a certificate program in Teaching English to Speakers of

- Other Languages, designed to serve students in graduate foreign language programs as well as area teachers.
3. Improving our web presence. We have initiated a plan, to be carried out next year, to effect a major redesign of the Department's website, our most effective recruiting tool. Part of this process will involve making our site more student-centered, with testimonials and details about graduate successes across programs.
  4. Reconstitute the English Graduate Student Association (EGSA) to create a stronger sense of community for all graduate students in English, particularly through professional development forums (which have been quite successful in past years) designed to help students on both the academic and professional job market and in the transition from the Masters to the Ph.D. as they extend graduate studies beyond BGSU. Improving internal community and job market placement are key to recruitment, retention, and student success.