Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): Creative Writing

2020-2021 Academic Year

Overview Information:

College: College of Arts, Humanities, and Sciences
Department: Stonecoast MFA in Creative Writing
Degree Program: Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing
Contact Person for the Assessment Plan: Justin Tussing, Stonecoast Program Director
Current Date: 5/28/2021
List the date of the most recent academic program review/self-study: 07/20/2016

Program Assessment Plan Information:

Do you have a Formal Program Assessment Plan? ___Yes ___X__No

If YES, please attach your Program Assessment Plan/Cycle, or indicate the link on your website: _______________________. Then, complete Step 3 of this ASLP form (see pages 4-5) to describe how the assessment results were used for program improvement purposes.

If NO, your department/program does not have a Formal Assessment Plan (beyond this academic year), please complete all sections of this ASLP form.

*(Please see assessment website for an example/template of a 3-year assessment plan)

Mission Statement:

1. Provide your program’s mission statement in the space below, or provide a link to the statement from your program’s webpage.

The Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing is a low-residency graduate program that brings together a faculty of nationally known writers from across the United States. The MFA is a two-year program, alternating intensive ten-day residencies with six-month independent
writing projects supervised by the faculty mentors. The MFA offers an interdisciplinary curriculum, including creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and popular fiction, with possibilities for elective work in such areas as writing about environment, writing for young adults, dramatic writing, performance, and writing for social justice.

Low-residency programs give students significant flexibility in pursuing graduate work as they do not require a day-to-day presence on campus.

2. Briefly describe the ways in which your program’s mission statement is aligned with the USM mission.

By developing engaged literary citizens, Stonecoast hopes to create the future leaders who are committed to civic engagement.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

If your program has diversity, equity, and inclusion related goals, or a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement; please provide a link to the statement and/or goals. Then, briefly describe any assessment activities related to your program statement/goals regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Stonecoast MFA educates and inspires creative writers and storytellers through a two-year graduate writing program in fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and popular fiction. Central to Stonecoast's ethos is the knowledge that by educating writers we are empowering the literary citizens who will reimagine and reshape the world we share. The Writing for Inclusivity and Social Equity (WISE) initiative ensures that students are prepared to address and overcome society's most persistent social problems. At each residency faculty and guests lead seminars and presentations introducing new writers, exploring new ways to think about advocacy and impact. By offering a broad slate of programming across all genres, students develop a sense of the literary landscape which reflects the rich diversity of the written word.

**Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment Steps**

**Step 1: Program-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s)**

a. Please provide the URL for your program-level student learning outcomes as published on your department’s website:
   
   n/a
b. Please provide the **URL** of your curriculum assessment map showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses:

n/a

If your program’s curriculum assessment map is **not** published, please complete the template (on page 6 of this document), and include it with your ASLP, or attach your own version.

c. Please list the program learning outcomes which were assessed since the submission of your last ASLP (May 2019).

In response to student and faculty feedback, we decided to assess our students’ facility in communicating their artistic choices. We asked fourth semester students to compose an *ars poetica* to accompany their qualitative residency response.

**Step 2: Assessment Methods Selected and Implemented /Summary of Results**

a. **Identify the assessment measures (evidence of student learning) that were used to determine whether students achieved the stated learning outcomes for the degree.**

Please check all the measures used since the submission of your last ASLP (May 2019), on the chart below. Also indicate when you implemented the assessment activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Assessment Methods Used this Academic Year</th>
<th>When Implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Exhibition/Types of Performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class assignments/Exams/Papers (completed in course)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Project (written project, non-thesis paper)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive or licensure exam (created by external org)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit Exam (created by department or program)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit Interview (individual or indiv self-reports of outcomes)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer meetings/discussions on student outcomes</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups (self-reports of outcome attainment)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship/Fieldwork (evaluations of performance)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Performance/conference presentation</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio of student work</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Essays (self-report of outcome achievement)</td>
<td>Fall  X      Spring X     Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Papers (used for course &amp; program assessment)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor/Employer Evaluation (performance outside of class)</td>
<td>Fall  Spring  Summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. **Briefly describe the implementation process** (i.e. where were students assessed, what courses, what class levels, or any other specific details, etc).

At the conclusion of their fourth residency, students were asked to reflect upon their development as writers in a short essay that was to serve as an *ars poetica* for the student and could also serve as a template for their thesis preface.

c. **Provide a brief summary (numerical or narrative) of your assessment results** (e.g., an illustration of the rubric-based scores, percentage of those who met the learning outcome you assessed, number of students assessed and findings, copies of instruments or rubrics used, etc.)

We began our assessment process in June of 2020. After reviewing the initial batch of essays, we determined that faculty and administrators needed to provide more opportunities for students to step back from their work and contextualize their writing in the larger literary landscape. Many students found the purpose of the assignment unclear or felt unprepared to look at their work with that critical lens.

d. **Provide a brief summary of what your program learned or concluded from the evidence you collected** (e.g., did your program meet the expected goal or benchmark, does the new knowledge raise additional questions, do you need to collect additional types of data, did you get insights about the assessment procedures or about teaching and learning in your program?, etc.)

As a result of that initial assessment, we asked faculty to engage students in aesthetic inquiries about their own work and the work they were reading. The faculty and administration will make it clear to students that they need to be able to think of how their work fits into the larger literary conversation. This assignment will be discussed with students who are in an early stage of their degree process so that are better prepared when it’s their time to assert who they are as artists.
Step 3: Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning

a. Who interpreted or analyzed the results that were collected this past year? (check all that apply)

- Program instructors/faculty
- Faculty committee
- Ad hoc faculty group
- Dept Chair/Program Director/Dean
- Faculty advisor
- Students (assistants, interns)
- Other: please explain

b. How did they evaluate, analyze, or interpret those results? (check all that apply)

- Used a rubric or scoring guide(s) for an assignment, paper, etc.
- Scored exams/tests/quizzes
- Used professional judgments (no rubric or scoring guide)
- Compiled or reviewed survey results
- Reviewed qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, open-ended responses)
- External organization scored/analyzed data (licensure, comp exams)
- Other: please explain

c. Indicate how the program will use (or has used) the results (check all that apply):

- Assessment procedure change (student outcomes, curriculum map, rubric, evidence collected, sampling procedure, communications with faculty, etc.)
- Course changes (course content, courses offered, new course, pre-requisites, course requirements, etc.)
- Course pedagogy changes (teaching)
- Personnel or resource allocation changes
- Program policy changes (admission requirements, student probation policies, course feedback forms, etc.)
- Student’s out-of-course experiences (co-curricular requirements, program website, program handbook, student workshops, etc.)
- Student Advising experiences (advisor-advisee relationship, communication of
changes or expectations, etc.)

__Results indicated no action needed, students met expectations

__Other: please explain

d. Briefly explain each of the program changes/improvements indicated above.

By introducing the concept of an *ars poetica* at an earlier point on their education, students have more opportunities to use the concept as a lens to examine the work of other writers, as well as their own work.

e. Indicate when the program improvements (noted above) will be implemented or if you already made program changes (e.g., during the summer months, beginning of the fall semester, etc.).

The change was introduced in our January 2021 residency and will be a part of the curriculum from here forward.

**Other Assessment Activities:** Briefly describe any additional assessment-related activities being done at the course level (e.g., common assignments and/or assignment rubrics for use across different sections of required courses, examining student progress in entry-level, capstone, or other courses, other assessment projects implemented by individual faculty, etc.)

n/a
### Curriculum Assessment Map of Student Learning Outcomes – CREATIVE WRITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Capstone/Internship Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRW 501</td>
<td>CRW 502</td>
<td>CRW 601</td>
<td>CRW 602</td>
<td>Assessed as part of the student thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 1: Ars Poetica</td>
<td>Introduced</td>
<td>Reinforced</td>
<td>Practiced</td>
<td>Practiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome 5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Details/Description:**

*Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) can be assessed on a 3-year cycle:*

*SLO’s 1 and 3 assessed in Year 1, SLO’s 2 and 4 assessed in Year 2, SLO 5 assessed in Year 3*

*Program improvements are made before the next assessment cycle.*