

UMass Amherst's Educational Effectiveness Plan (EEP) provides departments with an ongoing structure for conducting systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of their efforts to support student success. For the first phase of EEP, departments answered a series of prompts about their current educational effectiveness efforts, and their inquiry plans. Here we provide an edited version of this department's responses.

English EEP

Identify the evidence you currently use (beyond GPA) to determine that your undergraduates have achieved the objectives you have for them.

We look at student self-reporting on the senior-exit survey, Student Response To Instruction (SRTI) evaluations, and data from the Office of Institutional Research.

What changes has the department made in its undergraduate program(s) and offerings based on the results of the evidence described in the previous section, over the last few years?

The areas of most concern identified in the senior-exit survey and in data from the Office of Institutional Research have not been in our teaching mission, in bringing our students to meet learning objectives, but rather have been in what we might call matters of student experience, namely, advising and career preparation. In 2012 the department established a new lecturer position, one half of which was to be devoted to teaching, the other half of which was to be devoted to the job of chief undergraduate advisor and to career-preparation for our majors. Inasmuch as the director of undergraduate studies was conjointly relieved of advising responsibilities, this change did not have substantial impact on advising.

The department's advising problem was never due to insufficient or inadequate advising in the Undergraduate Studies Office. It resulted more, we believe, from the fact that students simply did not go to see their faculty advisors. On the other hand, the career-preparation responsibilities of the new lecturer position grew significantly to include a career-preparation course, multiple career-events each year (especially visits from alums who talk about their jobs), and an alum mentor organization and website presence. Getting students to participate in career-preparation events, however, has been difficult. And because the two-credit career-preparation course has not been a requirement of the major, students have not flocked to it, even though students who have taken it praise it and say that it ought to be required.

This year, the undergraduate studies program has inaugurated two additional efforts to improve advising and career preparation. To improve the department's advising record, students who take the major's introductory seminar are now required to see an advisor – preferably their faculty advisors, though they will also be able to get advising from the Undergraduate Studies Office—before they can register for courses for the following semester. If this experiment is successful, we may also require students in our junior-year-writing courses to see an advisor. To enhance our efforts at career-preparation for our students, each section of the introductory seminar also includes a unit devoted to

research or reflection on vocation, career-preparation, or "life beyond the major" in some form. Finally, the Undergraduate Studies Committee is developing a proposal to add an "English Major in the World" academic experience (minimum 2 credits) to the major requirements, meant to help students "explore the practical relevance of English as a field of study, whether that means in the job market, in community action, or anything in between." As currently envisioned, the requirement would be fulfilled by one of a set of options, possibly including our career-preparation course, an internship, a course in arts administration, a service-learning course, a course in the practical use of technology, the introductory course in our Professional and Technical Writing Specialization, our course in tutoring in the Writing Center, etc.

Please describe the focus of your inquiry and explain why this inquiry is important to your department right now.

The Department of English statement of goals and learning objectives for undergraduate education dates back to 2001. We believe it is time to revise and update the statement and then reassess what goals and objectives we had been most successful at achieving—and which ones we have been less successful at achieving.

What evidence do you plan to use to inform your inquiry focus? And, what are your initial thoughts on how you will collect this information?

We began the process of rethinking both undergraduate and graduate goals and learning objectives at the department retreat in October 2017 – a retreat focused on the department's aims and purposes. The retreat generated a rich variety of ideas, which will be one reference point as we move forward in this project. The department aims to establish focus groups – of undergraduate students and of graduate students – in order to get a better sense of our students' perspective on what they want to get from the major, what they have learned and are learning from the major, whether they would like to see different emphases or offerings, and how the student experience might be improved. The OAPA has offered help in establishing and managing these focus groups. The OAPA is helping us with a pilot project that we hope will help us identify what our students are learning and what we think they need to learn. We will be collecting writing done by seniors in our upper-division courses, from which we will derive a random sample. A team of four faculty members, along with the incoming director of undergraduate studies, will read these papers – in the spirit of inquiry, from the point of view of English department faculty members, with the aim of identifying in as nuanced a way as possible what our students have learned as writers. The project may tell us other things – about our students as readers, about how well they have learned to do research, about how well they have learned literary history, criticism, and theory. At this point we do not want to prescribe the outcome.

What are the Student Learning Objectives for your department or program(s)?

English, B.A.

- Attentive reading: Learn to read literature and other expressive forms with concentration, not only to grasp content but also to appreciate the patterns and effects of style, structure, and genre. Learn to read criticism and theory patiently and astutely.
- Imaginative analytical and persuasive writing: Conceive, draft, revise, and polish, with guidance from peers and professors, essays that 1) offer well-organized, significant, multi-dimensional

analyses of texts, 2) manifest a voice and sense of style, and 3) show mastery of standard grammar and punctuation.

- Proficient writing in other genres: Compose creative fiction, poetry, or nonfiction prose; produce lucid and accurate technical writing; or write efficient business or professional communication. Learn various forms of expression and the various purposes, and rhetorical situations, of the exchange of ideas and information.
- Articulate speaking and discussion: Participate in small, spirited classes that 1) develop reading, speaking, and listening skills, 2) heighten one's awareness of one's own and others' positions, and 3) improve one's ability to do productive work with others.
- Initiative in research & technology: Develop discernment and imagination in library research, both traditional and web-based, and become creative users of computerized forms of communication.
- Knowledge of literary history, criticism, and theory: Become familiar with literature in English from the beginnings to the present, including not only British and American literature but also literatures in English from around the globe, and including both well-established and newer authors and traditions. Become aware of some key texts, terms, or debates in criticism/theory.
- Self-conception as readers and writers in a social world: Graduate from the major with a sense of oneself as a literate and verbally skilled citizen who sees culture historically and dynamically and who therefore can participate thoughtfully in writing, interpreting, or teaching its texts, whether these are literary, legal, managerial, political, technical or scholarly, whether for government, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or schools.

English, M.A.; English, Ph.D.

- Knowledge base: demonstrate a professional working knowledge of content both of English studies in general and, more specifically, in a chosen field within the discipline of English, including relevant critical, theoretical, and methodological approaches.
- Communication: demonstrate proficiency in multiple forms of professional communication including analytical writing for scholarly publications, for conference presentations, and for wider publics.
- Teaching: acquire professional teaching experience and thorough sense of best practices in pedagogy both in writing and literature.
- Research: acquire professional skills in research and inquiry, including knowledge of resources and various research methodologies, both traditional and technological.
- Professionalism: acquire understanding of current conventions and expectations governing professional responsibilities and behavior. Students will become acquainted with professional protocols and develop self-conceptions as engaged scholars in a changing social world.

For the Ph.D.: Students will acquire the skills to propose and complete a book-length scholarly project.