Report on Writing Assessment (Sophomore-level General Education)
Spring 2011

Background
At Vice Chancellor Sciame-Giesecke's request, Sharon Calhoon and Ann Cameron undertook an assessment of sophomores regarding the General Education goal of Writing Effectively. This assessment identified sophomores (26-54 cr.) in courses fulfilling general education requirements in various disciplines taught by resident faculty. Deans and chairpersons in the various schools were asked to identify relevant courses, and five courses were volunteered for assessment:

EDUC-P251/P255	Educational Psychology
ENG-L225	Introduction to World Masterpieces
ECON-E202	Introduction to Macroeconomics
POLS-Y360	United States Foreign Policy
PSY-P216	Life Span Developmental Psychology

Papers were collected from sophomores in these courses. Dr. Calhoon supervised the collection of the papers, from which all identifying marks were removed. All submitted papers were accompanied by a description of the assignment (available upon request), were between 3 and 10 pages in length, and were completed between midterm and the end of the semester in Spring 2011. Because of the personal nature of some of the papers in PSY-P216, students were asked to give permission for us to use their papers. Otherwise, the sample included **all** papers submitted by sophomores in these five courses as follows:

E202	12 papers
L225	15
P216	5
P251/P255	17
Y360	2
	Total: 51 papers

Assessment Process
Ann Cameron supervised the assessment of the collected papers. Six English faculty members (Cameron, Snoddy, Keene, White, Westervelt, and S. Jones) served as evaluators, using a Written Communication Competency Rubric originally developed by English faculty in 2009 to evaluate writing in the General Studies degree program (rubric available upon request).

The six evaluators met on May 25, 2011, for a four-hour session to assess the 51 submitted papers. After an explanation of the background and purpose of the assessment, all six evaluators read and assessed three anchor papers in order to calibrate the assessments. Each evaluator assessed the three papers as "exceeding expectations," "meeting expectations," or "not meeting expectations," based upon the five categories of the rubric (audience awareness and tone, organization, style, evidence, and mechanics). For a paper to meet expectations,

the paper was required to "meet expectations" in all categories EXCEPT EITHER "Style" or "Mechanics" could be rated as "not meeting." Any paper ranked as "not meeting" in both Style and Mechanics was ranked as NOT MEETING expectations overall. Any paper "not meeting" in any other category was ranked as "not meeting" overall.

After a discussion of the ratings of the three anchor papers in order to provide consistency in the evaluation process, each evaluator read sixteen of the remaining submitted papers, guaranteeing two readers for every paper. In cases where the evaluators disagreed on an evaluation, the paper was sent to a third (and in some instances a fourth) reader.

Results

The competency ratings for the 51 papers were as follows:

Exceeding Expectations: 12 (24%)
Meeting Expectations: 21 (41%)
Not Meeting Expectations; 18 (35%)

Number of readers for papers: two readers=24, three readers=20, and 4 readers=4 (these totals do not include the three anchor papers)

The table below provides the totals of ALL reader ratings in each of the five rubric categories (excluding the anchor papers):

Table 1. Cumulative ratings for all student papers in each of the five rubric categories

	Audience Awareness and Tone	Organization	Style	Evidence	Mechanics
Exceeding Expectations	38	39	29	35	14
Meeting Expectations	75	53	77	52	80
Not Meeting Expectations	11	32	18	37	30

Suggestions

As with any assessment of writing across disciplines, it is sometimes difficult to compare assignments holding different expectations and standards. Including the description of the assignment with each paper made the evaluators' work more reliable. However, the evaluators recommend the following in order to improve the consistency and quality of writing across the disciplines:

1. Develop a CTLA workshop for faculty on how to construct effective writing assignments. The workshop would discuss how to match the scope of the task with the length of the paper, how to describe and construct the specific tasks required in the paper, and how to evaluate the results.

2. Administer a survey of writing assignments given in all courses at IU Kokomo. This has been done before, but it is important to continue to identify in which courses students are being asked to write, what types and lengths of assignments are being given, and how the freshman writing program can best prepare students for academic writing tasks.

3. Provide opportunities for faculty from all disciplines to consult with the Writing Center and with English faculty on how to incorporate writing into their courses.