English Undergraduate   **B.A.**

Program Mission:

The NMHU English program "endeavors to develop in students a fluency in the use of English through critical, creative, and technical writing" and "provides foundational knowledge of literary periods, genres, theory, and language." The University Mission, the College of Arts and Sciences Mission, and the English Outcomes Assessment Instrument are strongly linked in the following ways: (1) The mission to provide undergraduate education, (2) the mission to provide for forms of cultural literacy, and (3) the need to promote verbal and analytical skills.

Based on our discussion about past OA reports, and in an effort to evaluate student learning outcomes in different areas of our program, the faculty of the English department decided to continue revising our undergraduate outcomes assessment plan to more fully assess courses across the scope of our curriculum, including literature; composition, literacy, and linguistics; and creative writing. (Previously, the department evaluated only literature classes.) We evaluated SLOs for literature classes last year, and in the following year we will develop and evaluate SLOs for composition, literacy, linguistics, and creative writing. In the fall of 2019 we met to decide how to collect and assess data for the additional courses. The report for SLOs in literature classes (AY 2018-2019) follows.

In fall 2018, the department decided to refine its SLOs for literature. To create the new student learning outcomes, the English department utilized best practices in the field by drawing on the April 2014 "Report of the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment," published by the Association of Departments of English (ADE). This report includes guidelines for effective assessment of English programs and a list of sample SLOs. The English department selected four of the most relevant SLOs and modified them to fit our student body and the four Highlands traits. By aligning our program with national guidelines and research-based practices, the English department ensures that our students are receiving an education consistent with the latest standards of the field.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Close reading and use of primary and secondary texts: Students will read attentively, closely, and critically, effectively using primary and/or secondary texts, drawing conclusions and generalities beyond a given text, and offering a clear critical approach in interpreting texts, including traditional written, oral, and visual as well as

Web-based texts.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1

- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills
- Effective Use of Technology

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:
Each semester the outcomes assessment coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays ("products") written by English majors or minors for 300- and 400-level courses in English (literature, linguistics, and rhetoric). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	17	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	5
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	77%
Average Score for Outcome	3.92		

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

Given this outcome tied (with outcome 4) for the one that fewest students achieved, the department strives to offer more scaffolded writing instruction, especially with regard to use and analysis of primary and secondary texts. We realized that faculty expected students at the 300 and 400 levels to come to our courses with the ability to use sources as a foundation for their writing. However, more instruction in closely reading sources, evaluating them, and integrating them with one's own argument is required at all levels, even and especially in upper-division courses.

Another factor that we realized influenced our data was the inherent subjectivity in our OA process. Each essay is scored by two faculty on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3.5 considered the benchmark for meeting the outcome. Most evaluator scores hewed toward the middle, with few outliers of 1 or 5. As such, the department has decided to begin using a 6-point scale as well as a more detailed rubric, hoping to expand the range of score options as well as align faculty expectations for each point on the scale. The benchmark for success will remain 3.5.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Mastery of writing: Students will be able to write clear, grammatically consistent, and rhetorically effective texts, driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument or sequence of ideas.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2

- Effective Communication

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays ("products") written by English majors or minors for 300 and 400 level courses in English (Literature, Linguistics, and Rhetoric). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the Coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The Coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	19	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	86%
Average Score for Outcome	4.00		

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

This was the outcome students in our program most successfully met. Reinforcement of rhetorical concepts and strategies for entering an academic conversation at every level from 100 to 400 enables our students to produce sustained and coherent arguments. While some students continue to struggle with the mechanics of writing, integration of grammar and other nuts-and-bolts instruction at every level means they demonstrate improvement over their time in the English program.

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Student Learning Outcome 3:

Mastery of content, writing, and theory: Students will respond to and produce literary, creative, rhetorical, and linguistic texts in a way that reflects an awareness of form, theory, or critical approach appropriate to the content area.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills
- Effective Communication Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will request from faculty peers a set of randomly sampled essays ("products") written by English majors or minors for 300 and 400 level courses in English (Literature, Linguistics, and Rhetoric). To achieve a statistically significant sampling, the Coordinator should obtain 15-25 essays. The Coordinator, either unassisted or with the assistance of other faculty appointed by the Department Chair, will evaluate the products according to all three assessment criteria using a 1-5 scale (failing, poor, adequate, good, excellent) with 5 being the highest. Each essay will be read by two or three faculty members, and the scores of those readers will be averaged. The criterion for success is a score of 3.5 or higher.

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	18	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	22	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	82%
Average Score on Outcome	3.97		

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

Outcome 3 is difficult to draw conclusions about because it is so broad. It assesses how students respond to and produce a wide range of texts: "literary, creative, rhetorical, and linguistic." No one class asks students to address or produce so many types of texts. As such, as mentioned above, the department has decided to refine its assessment process and make it more specific to the types of texts students are being asked to respond to and produce within the various subdisciplines of English. Incorporation of rubrics will help with norming among evaluators' scores, as will inclusion of assignment

sheets for the essays under review, so that evaluators can assess whether students met the goals laid out by their instructor for that particular assignment.

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Student Learning Outcome 4:

Mastery of content and context: Students will understand the role of contexts in production, reception, and transmission of literature, language, and cultural texts across periods, histories, genres, geographic or national spaces, and cultural differences.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 4

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

Each semester the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will ask faculty teaching the required literary surveys (ENGL 290: British Literature to 1700; ENGL 291: British Literature from 1700; ENGL 294: American Literature to 1865, and ENGL 295: American Literature from 1865) to submit the scores of English majors or minors on the final exam, or, if there is no final exam, or a final project. The criterion for success will be a score of 80% or higher.

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	7	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	2
Total Number of Students Assessed:	9	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	78%
Average Score for Outcome	n/a		

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:

The 2018-2019 academic year was the department's first year to assess outcome 4. The problem with our interpretation of results for this SLO is the fact that, due to a faculty member's sabbatical, data was available from only one survey class. This is our only outcome measured by a test score, rather than faculty evaluation and scoring of

essays. Measuring based on a test score eliminates some of the inherent subjectivity that occurs in assessing outcomes 1-3. However, in this case, the small sample size (N=9) gives us little to work with in terms of interpreting results. We will continue to gather data on this SLO now that we are offering multiple literature survey courses, hoping that a larger sample size will produce more meaningful information. It's worth noting that we put this SLO in place as an attempt at measuring students' progress at the lower (survey) level in addition to at the 300 and 400 levels.

Utilization of Results:

In fall 2018, the English department finalized its revision of our Outcomes Assessment plan by creating a scoring rubric based on ADE guidelines to ensure consistency in our data collection. In fall 2019, the department will continue to meet to establish SLOs for composition, literacy, linguistics, and creative writing. Our plan is to continuously collect data for all subdisciplines during the two-year cycle, producing an alternate report each year. As we've mapped it out, in fall 2019, we've generated this report (literature); in fall 2020, we'll report on the first round of data for composition, literacy, linguistics, and creative writing. In other words, each subdiscipline will still be assessed on a two-year cycle, but with reports occurring in alternate years, given different parties will be responsible for assessing them. This staggering of assessment cycles allows time for continuous improvement while ensuring that all aspects of the English curriculum are being assessed, and at multiple stages.

See Appendix A: English Outcomes Assessment Cycle

Changes to Program Based on Results:

The largest change to our department is the continual evolution of our OA process to yield the data we need. With more specific subdisciplinary OA procedures, we will be able to gather data more pertinent to areas of study (composition, literacy, and creative writing—rather than solely literature), and thus to do a more precise evaluation of students' success in each area. Of course, achieving this precision will take time on the front end to develop learning outcomes for more areas and means of measuring them. It will also take more faculty time to ensure that all our target areas are assessed. However, the benefit of this evolution in our process is that more faculty will be involved in assessment, and that assessment will occur at multiple stages in students' progression through the program.
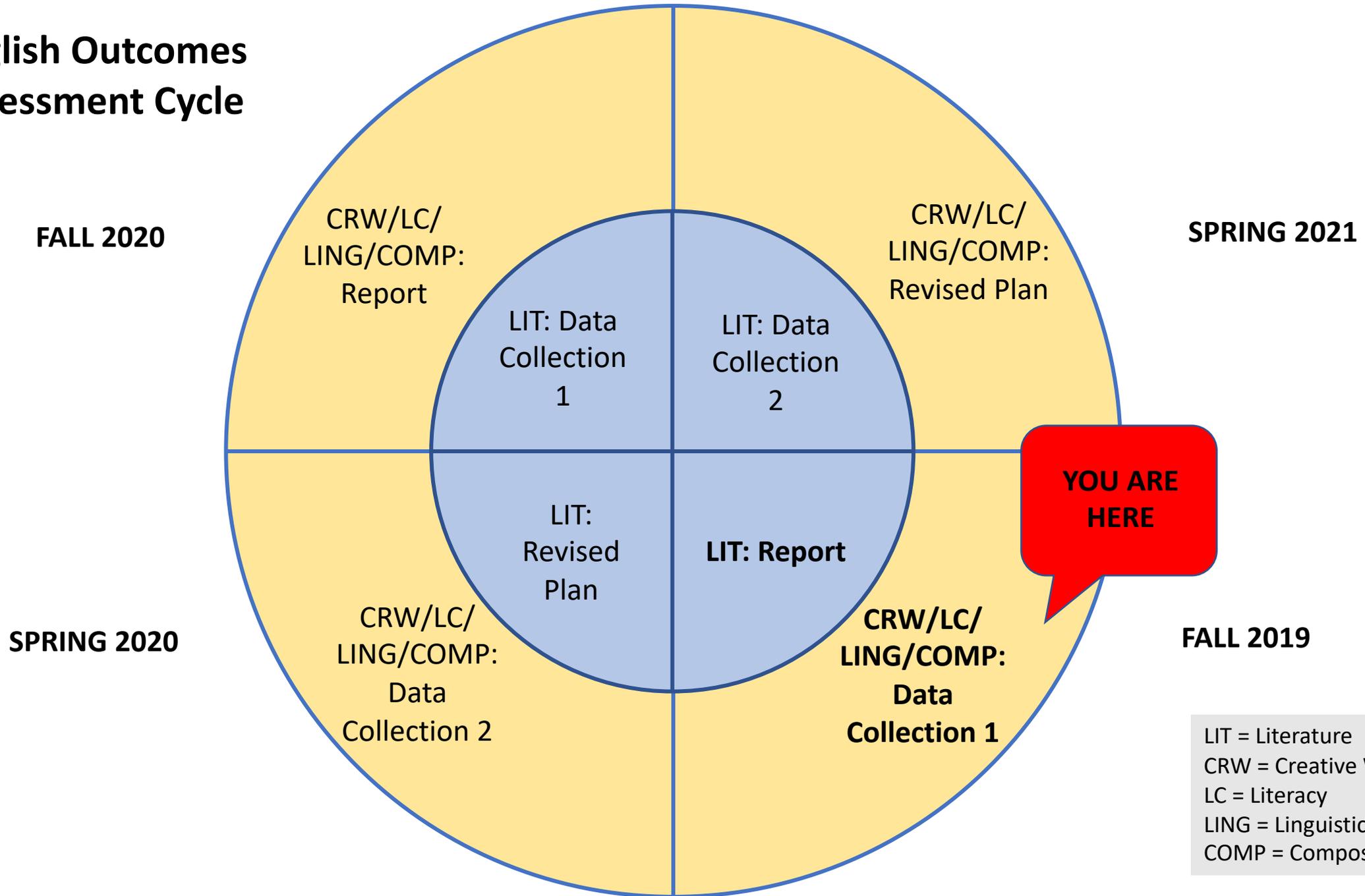
Retention Strategies:

In adding SLO 4, which assesses students in lower-level survey courses, we gain the opportunity to find out whether students in our literature courses are making sufficient progress early on in the major and minor. We also gain the ability to track students across more years toward achievement of their degree. Of course, we require more than the one data set we have to identify patterns in students' early courses in the major and minor, but it's our hope that by continuing to collect data on this outcome, we can

find ways to keep students not only in the English major and minor, but also at the university, thus improving their persistence and completion rates.

By assessing the various subdisciplines of our program, we will also be able to identify specific areas in which students struggle, and refine and improve our student support for courses that have the potential to be "killer courses" (those that cause students to drop out, either of the major/minor or the university).

English Outcomes Assessment Cycle