

**LIBERAL ARTS**

**SPRING 2010**

**OBJECTIVE ASSESSED:**

- Obj. 6: Creative thinking and behavior as well as knowledge concerning the creative process

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

September 23, 2011

## Report on the Liberal Arts Assessment of Creativity

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### Introduction

In the fall 2009 semester, Liberal Arts program faculty decided to assess their program objective in Creativity: *Creative thinking and behavior as well as knowledge concerning the creative process*. More specifically, the second outcome of this objective was chosen: [The graduating student will be able to]... *describe the creative processes employed by a thinker or artist ... and discuss the choices they made in one or more of their works and the reasons for those choices*.

The decision about where and how to assess this outcome presented a challenge. The sheer number and variety of arts and humanities courses would make it extremely difficult to create a single instrument which would be appropriate to use in all of them. Conversely, the difficulty of creating and then comparing different instruments to be used in that same variety of courses would be overwhelming. Thus, while it was agreed that creativity is discussed in many of the arts and humanities classes, as well as in myriad extra-curricular activities, the group concurred that English Composition 2 classes, which are required for all degree-seeking students and which generally use literature to teach composition, would be the optimal place to focus the assessment effort.

### Process

In the spring of 2010 a subcommittee of three Liberal Arts faculty collaborated to construct an essay question which would be general enough to serve all English Comp 2 classes and specific enough to elicit the assessment information we desired. The final result is below:

“Describe the creative processes used by a writer we have read. Think about the choices this person made as he or she created the piece. For example, writers need to choose a narrator, create an atmosphere, and decide whether to use symbolism or other figurative language. How do you think this writer made these decisions? Consider this author’s reasons for the choices he or she made in one or more works and cite examples from the text that illustrate those choices.”

In March of 2010, the LA Program Coordinator sent a request to English Comp 2 instructors, asking them to administer the assessment question to their students as part of their classwork (see Appendix 1). It was suggested that the question could serve as a homework assignment, as a question on a mid-term or final exam, or even as a bonus question, journal question, or extra-credit assignment. We hoped that including the question as part of their classwork would give students the motivation to answer thoroughly.

At the end of the spring 2010 semester, a total of 30 products were collected from the instructors. The essays produced ranged from 1 paragraph to 2 pages in length and were the result of a variety of assignments (both required and extra-credit).

In the fall of 2010 a new subcommittee of three LA faculty members began working to produce a tool with which to assess the creativity outcome products. After studying the outcome itself and the VALUE rubrics provided by the AAC&U to coordinate with the LEAP initiative, the subcommittee produced a rubric with 4 categories of criteria and a rating scale of 1 – 4 (see Appendix 2).

The same three LA faculty members agreed to serve as raters. It was decided that raters could assign a numerical value with a .5 rating; for example, raters could give a score of 1.5 on a particular criterion rather than choosing between a 1 or a 2 rating. Each product was read by at least two raters.

When raters' scores differed by one point or less on any criterion, the lowest rating was recorded as the student's score. Products where raters' scores differed by more than 1.0 on any criteria were given a third rating. When three ratings were required, the two which agreed most closely *overall* were used.

### **Results**

Liberal Arts students, at the completion of English Composition 2, show a marginal ability to describe the creative process of writers. The criterion representing the best performance indicated that only two-thirds of those assessed were able to demonstrate an understanding of the choices made in the creative process by attaining a score of at least 3 on a scale of 4. The criterion representing the worst performance revealed that only half of the students assessed were able to critique the creative process with a score of 3 or better, and fewer than 7% could critique the creative process "thoughtfully," with a score of 4 (see Appendix 3 for a full presentation of the results).

### **Recommendations for the Future**

One factor which may have affected the results was that students were not chosen based on the number of credits they had completed. Thus some students were likely only in their second semester at NECC, and it is quite possible that their understanding of the creative process would be enhanced through their future coursework. While we understood this at the start of the assessment process, for reasons discussed above, we felt using English Composition 2 classes was our best option. However, future assessments of this outcome may need to reconsider the pool of students to be targeted.

Another possible factor is that several English Composition 2 instructors mentioned that they did not *explicitly* discuss the creative process of writers in their classes. While they did discuss

creative elements of the literature, they didn't specifically ask students to think about the creative choices that writers are faced with when they compose. Some liberal arts faculty may wish to address this issue in the future.

# ASSIGNMENT

**APPENDIX I**



Dear Colleague,

This semester the Liberal Arts programs are assessing their creativity outcome and we are hoping you will help us. This would involve asking your English Comp 2 students to give a written response to this question:

"Describe the creative processes used by a writer we have read. Think about the choices this person made as he or she created the piece. For example, writers need to choose a narrator, create an atmosphere, and decide whether to use symbolism or other figurative language. How do you think this writer made these decisions? Consider this author's reasons for the choices he or she made in one or more works and cite examples from the text that illustrate those choices."

You could administer this as a homework assignment or an in-class writing assignment, or perhaps include it on a mid-term or final exam as a question or bonus question. Perhaps the students' answers to this question will serve as a springboard for some interesting class discussion. You do not need to grade or evaluate the writing in any way, although I will need you to forward me the students' responses when you're done with them. I would be happy to provide Xerox copies of the question to you or to discuss ways you might make this meaningful in the context of your class.

**RUBRIC**

**APPENDIX 2**

|  | 4   | 3   | 2  | 1   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Demonstrates an understanding of the creative process</b>                     | Student shows a clear command of the task at hand and presents a coherent and thorough discussion of the creative process.  | Student is concrete and is thoughtful about the creative process, and demonstrates significant understanding.   | Student is able to address the creative process to some extent, and offers at least a satisfactory understanding thereof.                          | Student either does not address the task at hand at all or does not attempt to understand the creative process.     |
| <b>Demonstrates an understanding of the choices made in the creative process</b> | Student includes an insightful and appropriate discussion of the choices a thinker/author made, while exploring new ideas and alternative outcomes.                                     | Student addresses at least one possible choice made by the author/thinker, discusses the implications vis-à-vis the creative process, and can develop this idea beyond the beginning identification stages. | Student attempts to explore choices made by the thinker/author, yet there is little evidence that he/she understands the outcome of those choices. | Student shows no apparent effort to identify or understand the choices made by the author/thinker.                  |
| <b>Demonstrates an ability to explain possible reasons of the choices made</b>   | Student provides a skillful analysis of a thinker's creative choices and provides a logical explanation as to why a thinker made such choices.  | Student identifies the choices the author/thinker made and includes at least one or two observations about the creative process.  | Student identifies choices made by the author/thinker but does not discuss the creative process involved in making these choices.                  | Student does not identify or address possible reasons for the choices made by the artist.                           |
| <b>Demonstrates an ability to critique the creative process</b>                  | Student is capable of interpreting the outcomes of the discussion at hand with some thoughtful commentary on the complexities of the creative process as it pertains to the assignment. | Student is able to respond to the analysis by sharing his/her own point of view about the specifics of the creative process.  | Student goes beyond identification and attempts to offer his/her own ideas about the assignment on the creative process.                           | Student is not able to connect his/her own ideas and offer original thoughts about the creative process as a whole. |

## **RESULTS**

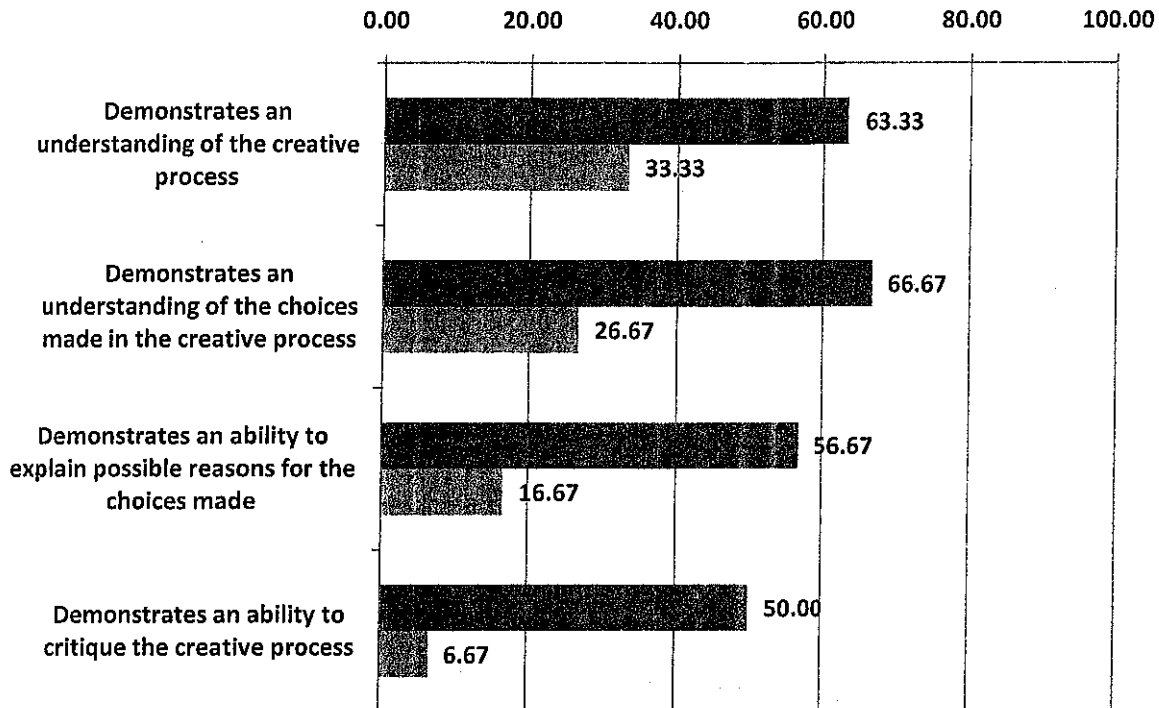
**APPENDIX 3**

June 28, 2011

Results – Creativity Outcomes Assessment

| Criteria  | Number of students rated... |     |        |     |        |     |        | Total number of students | Number of students rated 3 or higher (Good to Excellent) | Number of students rated 4 (Excellent) |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|--------------------------|--|--|
|   | 4 Excellent                 | 3.5 | 3 Good | 2.5 | 2 Fair | 1.5 | 1 Poor |                          |  |  |
| Demonstrates an understanding of the creative process                     | 10                          | 3   | 6      | 2   | 6      | 1   | 2      | 30                       | 19   | 10                                     |
| Demonstrates an understanding of the choices made in the creative process | 8                           | 4   | 8      | 3   | 4      | 0   | 3      | 30                       | 20   | 8                                      |
| Demonstrates an ability to explain possible reasons for the choices made  | 5                           | 3   | 9      | 4   | 6      | 1   | 2      | 30                       | 17   | 5                                      |
| Demonstrates an ability to critique the creative process                  | 2                           | 1   | 12     | 4   | 7      | 3   | 1      | 30                       | 15   | 2                                      |

Student Ratings on Creativity Rubric Criteria



■ Percentage of students rated 3 or higher (Good to Excellent)  
▨ Percentage of students rated 4 (Excellent)