

Writing at Lane Community College

Annual Assessment Report

Summary and Goals

Overview

Academic year 2010-2011 was the inaugural year of the Writing Program's large-scale Assessment Plan that will eventually encompass all writing / composition courses at Lane Community College and proceed on a permanent, continuous basis.

For the assessment year 2010-2011 we collected two (2) end-of-term artifacts from every course in the writing sequence in the fall term, one (1) end-of-term artifact from all courses in the winter term, and two (2) end-of-term artifacts from all courses in the spring. "Artifacts" included writing samples that ranged from one discrete formal writing assignment to entire writing portfolios that contained two to three or more formal writing assignments. While reporting and faculty participation left us with a sampling size that is smaller than ideal, the findings still suggest patterns that will allow us to focus on curriculum adjustments and faculty professional development in order to improve student outcomes across the writing sequence.

The 2010-2011 assessment year also marked the pilot project in which we read and scored student writing using guides developed directly from our shared course outcomes, *this year with a focus on the outcomes that represent students' rhetorical knowledge*. This inaugural outcomes-based assessment of student writing from Writing 115, 121, 122, 123, and 227 indicates that in the area of rhetorical knowledge a slight majority of students currently meet or exceed the expectations of each course in the core Writing sequence (115, 121, and 122) in the area of rhetorical knowledge.

A breakdown of assessment results for each course reveals a fairly strong trend in ratings of Writing 115 artifacts: 58% Meet or Exceed criteria for rhetorical knowledge; 30% are Approaching Meeting criteria; 11% clearly Do Not Meet criteria. Ratings for Writing 121 artifacts demonstrate a slight variation on the same pattern: 50% Meet or Exceed criteria, while 45% are Approaching Meeting criteria; 5% clearly Do Not Meet criteria. The scoring of Writing 122 artifacts demonstrate an even stronger bell curve in ratings distribution: 48% Meet or Exceed criteria; 39% are Approaching Meeting criteria; 13% Do Not Meet the criteria established for rhetorical knowledge in our shared course outcomes. Reporting and participation for Writing 123 and 227 are far too small to approach statistical significance, though this small sample also trends toward ratings that Meet criteria or are Approaching Meeting criteria.

Goals for 2010-11

The goals of the Writing Program's initial assessment year are fairly ambitious. We aim to begin evaluation of the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of our newly adopted course outcomes, including the recent state-mandated imbedding of information literacy outcomes in our required Writing sequence. However, we also face the even more elementary task of firmly establishing an ongoing, program-wide assessment project in Writing. As a result, the following goals emerged as the necessary focal points of our inaugural endeavors:

1. Initiate the ongoing collection of writing samples (artifacts) from every section of every course offered throughout the academic year (AY – defined as the beginning of fall term 2010 to the beginning of fall term 2011).
2. Store and catalog the collected artifacts until the initial reading and scoring pilot project can begin.

3. Design, schedule, and implement the initial reading and scoring project to determine the method and criteria to be used to rate the collected artifacts.
4. Report the findings of the inaugural assessment year to the English Department, College Administration, and the wider campus community.
5. Utilize the findings to fine-tune the assessment plan for 2011-2012 to improve sustainability, to strengthen curricular coherence, and to enhance instruction.

Writing Program and Assessment

In 2010-11, the English Department Writing Program (EDWP) offered 319 sections of Writing 115, 115W, 121, 122, 123, and 227 to 4,879 students. The multifaceted and rigorous curriculum in the EDWP sequence is built around collaboratively developed course outcomes, which articulate our programmatic vision for writing education at Lane Community College. That curriculum is also grounded in standards for best practices that have been developed and articulated by disciplinary experts representing writing programs in institutions of higher education across the country. (Course outcomes and curriculum are available at <http://www.lanecc.edu/lc/english/course-outcomes>.)

The central goal in all English Department writing courses is to produce critically engaged, confident writers who demonstrate intellectual agility and rhetorical sophistication in response to the rich variety of writing situations they will encounter across the college curriculum and beyond. The writing sequence, at its heart, conveys to students the increasing relevance and necessity of writing to life in the 21st century, including in everyday circumstances and contexts. WR 115 focuses on familiarizing students with common genres and conventions in academic writing, easing the transition into source-based reading and writing practices, and increasing students' facility and confidence with college-level literacy experiences. WR 121 engages students fully with complex academic reading and writing assignments, emphasizing their ability to "enter into the conversation" as critical writers and thinkers themselves. WR 122 shifts the pedagogical focus to effective and ethical argumentation that is relevant in an evidence-based culture. WR 123 seeks to finely hone and craft students' research and documentation skills. And WR 227 concentrates students' facility as critical thinkers and writers to compose documents that are both dynamic and persuasive in the workplace.

For this inaugural year of our assessment project, we conducted direct outcomes-based assessment of student writing in all of our Writing Program courses: WR 115, WR 115W, WR 121, WR 122, WR 123, and WR 227.

Outcomes and Scoring

In AY 2010-2011 we gathered 148 usable writing samples from the 319 sections of Writing offered from fall through spring terms. Our program-specific reading and scoring pilot utilized the following outcomes to rate the collected artifacts:

WR 115

C. Assess and meet different writing situations:

- Recognize and use academic writing strategies appropriate to specific audiences and purposes;
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality.

WR 115W

3. Observe the format and content requirements of various types of business communications and essays

WR 121

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process:

- Adopt a point of view, which takes into account voice, tone, and ethos, appropriate for a defined purpose and audience;
- Choose strategies of development appropriate for the purpose and audience, which may include, narration, cause/effect, description, comparison/contrast, classification, process, and definition.

WR 122

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Write argumentative essays that present a clear thesis or claim that is arguable, unified, and sufficiently narrow;
- Address issues of purpose and audience, including audiences beyond the classroom;
- Choose appropriate language (voice, tone, style, etc.) to persuade an informed and educated reader or to assert a position taken by a writer.

WR 123

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Use appropriate rhetorical strategies to support an argumentative or position-based thesis/claim within a research-based essay.
- Address issues of audience and purpose, anticipating reactions by audiences outside the classroom.

WR 227

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Analyze audience, purpose, and context to make effective writing decisions about content, form, style, and ethics;
- Understand a variety of technical/professional communication forms and their suitability for particular communication needs;

These traits, which attempt to describe students' rhetorical awareness, knowledge, and facility, were used to focus the reading process for our first ever large-scale assessment scoring. It should be noted here that the holistic reading and scoring of student writing samples is

certainly more ideal, and quite possibly yields more valid results in terms of findings. However, it was also necessary for us to begin this massive undertaking in institutional assessment in a way that facilitated better understanding of our own programmatic identity and the work we do collectively as writing professionals. Trait scoring allowed us to start that process with a keenly directed focus on our newly defined course outcomes, which constitute our most recent collaborative articulation of what we value and precisely what we do in the classroom. The EDWP's 5-year assessment plan, however, calls for the move to holistic scoring within the next 3 years.

This year, each artifact was scored by two (2) readers, and each reading was conducted blindly (second and third readers were not aware of the first or second ratings at the time of scoring). In the case of rating discrepancies reflecting a full point variation, a third reader was brought in to adjudicate a rating. The following scoring sheet—indicating that a writing sample either “Does Not Meet Criteria,” is “Approaching Meeting Criteria,” “Meets Criteria,” or “Exceeds Criteria”—was used to rate the collected artifacts:

Assessment Scoring Sheet – September 19 & 20, 2011

AY 2010-2011

	Does Not Meet	Approaching	Meets Criteria	Exceeds Criteria
Reader 1				
Reader 2				
Reader 3				

Comments:

WR 115 Findings and Discussion

Artifacts from WR 115 were read to determine how well students were able to:

C. Assess and meet different writing situations:

- Recognize and use academic writing strategies appropriate to specific audiences and purposes;
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality.

Student writing samples for Writing 115 were read and scored twice, with a third reader adjudicating in the case of rating differences of one full point variation. So, for example, in the case of a writing sample deemed to Exceed Criteria by one reader and to be Approaching Meeting Criteria by a second reader, a third reader would be called in to score the sample. The third reader's score was considered the final arbitration of any given writing sample. Artifacts were scored as follows: Exceeds Criteria; Meets Criteria; Approaching Meeting Criteria; Does

Not Meet Criteria. Further, the scoring rubric also had space for readers to add details about various aspects of the writing sample that led to their decision. Following is the final scoring tally for all Writing 115 writing samples:

Total papers submitted: 53 (of 145) – 37% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	6	11%
Approaching Criteria	16	30%
Approaching/Meeting Criteria	15	28%
Meets Criteria	11	21%
Exceeds Criteria	5	9%

A condensed version of the results gives us this breakdown:

- 58% Meet or Exceed criteria
- 30% are Approaching Meeting criteria
- 11% clearly Do Not Meet criteria

In our program-specific, outcomes-based reading and scoring pilot, a breakdown of assessment results for each course reveals a fairly strong trend in ratings of Writing 115 artifacts. It may be noted that a fairly significant sample size—some 30% of our total writing samples for WR 115—are in a borderline category between “Approaching Meeting Criteria” and “Meets Criteria.” This reflects the reading/scoring faculty’s sense that the scoring rubric, new and untried as it was, was missing a crucial and significant reality that emerged through our reading process: many students technically met the letter of the stated criteria for which we read, but only in rudimentary terms that lacked a level of sophistication we felt was assumed by the stated course outcome or “trait” that it described. This gave us an unexpected fifth rating category that we determined would be useful for us to examine separately in the overall assessment results.

These results demonstrate that students in WR 115 are still struggling with rhetorical knowledge at the end of a ten-week term. Most artifacts revealed students’ lack of awareness of the need for, or inability to clearly establish, the writer’s sense of purpose in composing. The target audience was often uncertain, or writing was obviously aimed at an audience of one (the instructor) with little understanding of or concern for the needs of the different readers who might be included in a classroom setting. Addressing an audience outside the isolated and decontextualized classroom was beyond all but the most sophisticated papers—the few that exceeded criteria. In keeping with these findings, the tone in most artifacts also demonstrated a lack of facility with the use of language to establish ethos and pathos. The results were often either rigidly formal, revealing student writers who relied upon formulaic genre conventions to do the work of establishing their credibility (ethos) as writers, or verging on the confessional, relying on pathetic appeals (pathos) from personal experience to persuade readers. *Hence, our inaugural assessment effort shows us that emphasizing rhetorical knowledge—teaching students to focus on a purpose, to adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality, as well as teaching students to understand how genres shape reading and writing—is an area where we need to re-focus our efforts program-wide.*

Part of the criteria assessed for—students’ ability to assess and meet different writing situations—could not really be evaluated given the artifacts we worked with this year. As most student writing samples included only one composition, it was impossible to discern how

writers might assess and meet writing situations different from the one isolated attempt that ended up in our assessment archive.

WR 121 Findings and Discussion

Artifacts from WR 121 were read to determine how well students were able to:

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process:

- Adopt a point of view, which takes into account voice, tone, and ethos, appropriate for a defined purpose and audience;
- Choose strategies of development appropriate for the purpose and audience, which may include, narration, cause/effect, description, comparison/contrast, classification, process, and definition.

Student writing samples for Writing 121 were read and scored twice, with a third reader adjudicating in the case of rating differences of one full point variation. So, for example, in the case of a writing sample deemed to Exceed Criteria by one reader and to be Approaching Meeting Criteria by a second reader, a third reader would be called in to score the sample. The third reader's score was considered the final arbitration of any given writing sample. Artifacts were scored as follows: Exceeds Criteria; Meets Criteria; Approaching Meeting Criteria; Does Not Meet Criteria. Further, the scoring rubric also had space for readers to add details about various aspects of the writing sample that led to their decision. Following is the final scoring tally for all Writing 121 writing samples:

Total papers submitted: 65 (of 279) – 23% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	3	5%
Approaching Criteria	29	45%
Approaching/Meeting Criteria	10	15%
Meets Criteria	19	29%
Exceeds Criteria	4	6%

Ratings for Writing 121 artifacts demonstrate a slight variation on the same pattern we found in our WR 115 reading. A condensed version of the results gives us this breakdown:

- 50% Meet or Exceed criteria
- 45% are Approaching Meeting criteria
- 5% clearly Do Not Meet criteria

Again, it may be noted that a reasonably significant sample size—some 15% of our total writing samples for WR 121—are in a borderline category between “Approaching Meeting Criteria” and “Meets Criteria.” This reflects the reading/scoring faculty's sense that the new, untried scoring rubric was missing an important reality that emerged through our reading process: many students technically met the letter of the stated criteria for which we read, but only in rudimentary terms that lacked a level of sophistication we felt was assumed by the stated course outcome or “trait” that it described. This gave us an unexpected fifth rating category that we determined would be useful for us to examine separately in the overall

assessment results. Still, in our program-specific, outcomes-based reading and scoring pilot, a breakdown of assessment results for each course reveals a fairly strong trend in ratings of Writing 121 artifacts.

These results demonstrate that students in WR 121, even more than in the precursory course WR 115, are still struggling with rhetorical knowledge at the end of a ten-week term. Even more starkly than in WR 115 artifacts, most writing samples revealed students' lack of awareness of the need for, or inability to clearly establish, an authorial sense of purpose in composing. Rather, artifacts seemed to capture students' attempts to simply "do what the teacher asked" of them without intellectually engaging in their own writing projects in any discernable way. The result was often an inflexible adherence to genre conventions—many slight variations on the five-paragraph theme—that came across as formulaic or rote, without bringing fresh perspective or insight to the issues under consideration. Some of this, too, may have been due to dominant trends in the topics under consideration, which included popular chestnuts such as the legalization of marijuana, violence in videogames/television/film, and the perils of obesity, for example. Due to the overwhelming abundance of information that is available on such cliché topics, choosing to write about them may make it even more difficult for students to develop their own purposes for composing.

Compared to WR 115 artifacts, the WR 121 samples did reveal more competence and internal consistency in the appropriate use of voice, tone, and established ethos. Still, the emerging notion of a target audience remained somewhat stilted, with the instructor still clearly positioned as the prototypical reader. WR 121 students also demonstrated greater facility with various strategies of development that included narration, cause/effect, description, comparison/contrast, classification, process, and definition, though they often also over relied on certain strategies of development in ineffectual attempts to imbue their texts with meaning. *Hence, our inaugural assessment effort once again shows us that emphasizing rhetorical knowledge—teaching students to develop a purpose in writing, to take a position or "adopt a point of view," as well as teaching students to understand how genres shape reading and writing—is an area where we can effectively re-focus and emphasize our pedagogical efforts program-wide.*

WR 122 Findings and Discussion

Artifacts from WR 122 were read to determine how well students were able to:

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Address issues of purpose and audience, including audiences beyond the classroom;
- Choose appropriate language (voice, tone, style, etc.) to persuade an informed and educated reader or to assert a position taken by a writer.

Writing samples for Writing 122 were read and scored twice, with a third reader adjudicating in the case of rating differences of one full point variation. So, for example, in the case of a writing sample deemed to Exceed Criteria by one reader and to be Approaching Meeting Criteria by a second reader, a third reader would be called in to score the sample. The third reader's score was considered the final arbitration for any given writing sample. Artifacts were scored as follows: Exceeds Criteria; Meets Criteria; Approaching Meeting Criteria; Does Not

Meet Criteria. Further, the scoring rubric also had space for readers to add details about various aspects of the writing sample that led to their decision. Following is the final scoring tally for all Writing 122 writing samples:

Total papers submitted: 23 (of 110) – 21% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	3	13%
Approaching Criteria	9	39%
Meets Criteria	9	39%
Exceeds Criteria	2	9%

The scoring of Writing 122 artifacts demonstrate an even stronger bell curve in ratings distribution. Reporting and participation for Writing 123 and 227 are far too small to approach statistical significance, though this small sample also trends toward ratings that Meet criteria or are Approaching Meeting criteria. A condensed version of the results gives us this breakdown:

- 52% Meet or Exceed criteria
- 39% are Approaching Meeting criteria
- 9% clearly Do Not Meet criteria

Interestingly, it may be noted that here we did not encounter any writing samples in the borderline category between “Approaching Meeting Criteria” and “Meets Criteria.” Again, however, in our program-specific, outcomes-based reading and scoring pilot, a breakdown of assessment results for each course reveals a fairly strong trend in ratings of Writing 122 artifacts. Students in WR 122 much more obviously either met or did not meet the criteria for rhetorical knowledge in their compositions compared to students in WR 115 and WR 121, and there are likely several reasons for this. One contributing factor could be the criteria itself, which in WR 122 alone (unlike in WR 115 and WR 121) explicitly calls out the existence of audiences beyond the classroom. Secondly, the vast majority of WR 122 artifacts were research-based essays (while the genre of compositions in WR 115 and WR 121 artifacts varied to a much greater degree, often including narrative and critical analysis essays). The heavy reliance on researched sources, likely in conjunction with limited conceptual constructions of the genre “research essay,” clearly impacted students’ composing efforts, in which they often reverted to elaborate listing of sources and the popular “data dump” in order to establish ethos and develop their essays. Hence, clearly established authorial purposes—despite the fact that these, too, are called out in the outcomes criteria—were even more unambiguously absent from the WR 122 artifacts as the ideas and voices of other writers overtook students’ compositions.

Also once again, compared to WR 115 and WR 121 artifacts, the WR 122 samples did reveal more competence and internal consistency in the appropriate use of language (voice, tone, style, etc.). Of note here is the fact that WR 122 outcomes are the only ones that explicitly call out how that language is to be used: “to persuade an informed and educated reader or to assert a position taken by a writer.” This specific detail may help students identify exactly what voice, tone, style, etc. is appropriate to the writing situations they encounter in WR 122.

Thus, our inaugural assessment effort in WR 122 again reveals that emphasizing rhetorical knowledge—teaching students to develop a purpose in writing and especially to understand how genres shape reading and writing—is an area where we can effectively re-focus and emphasize our pedagogical efforts program-wide. Moreover, WR 122 is likely where the

“chickens come home to roost,” as the saying goes, exposing the gaps in students’ prior experience with critical thinking, reading, and writing, or their abilities to: use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating; to understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources; and to integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others.

WR 123 and WR 227 Findings and Discussion

Artifacts from WR 123 were read to determine how well students were able to:

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Use appropriate rhetorical strategies to support an argumentative or position-based thesis/claim within a research-based essay.
- Address issues of audience and purpose, anticipating reactions by audiences outside the classroom.

Artifacts from WR 227 were read to determine how well students were able to:

C. Make appropriate and effective rhetorical choices during all stages of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing:

- Analyze audience, purpose, and context to make effective writing decisions about content, form, style, and ethics;
- Understand a variety of technical/professional communication forms and their suitability for particular communication needs;

Writing samples for Writing 123 and WR 227 were read and scored twice, with a third reader adjudicating in the case of rating differences of one full point variation. So, for example, in the case of a writing sample deemed to Exceed Criteria by one reader and to be Approaching Meeting Criteria by a second reader, a third reader would be called in to score the sample. The third reader’s score was considered the final arbitration for any given writing sample. Artifacts were scored as follows: Exceeds Criteria; Meets Criteria; Approaching Meeting Criteria; Does Not Meet Criteria. Further, the scoring rubric also had space for readers to add details about various aspects of the writing sample that led to their decision. Following is the final scoring tally for all Writing 123 and WR 227 writing samples:

Writing 123: Total papers submitted: 4 (of 25) – 16% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	1	25%
Approaching Criteria	2	50%
Meets Criteria	1	25%
Exceeds Criteria	0	0%

Writing 227: Total papers submitted: 3 (of 41) – 7% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	1	33%
Approaching Criteria	0	0%
Meets Criteria	1	33%
Exceeds Criteria	1	33%

Reporting and participation for Writing 123 and 227 are far too small to approach statistical significance, though this small sample also trends toward ratings that Meet criteria or are Approaching Meeting criteria. Interestingly, it may be noted again that here we did not encounter any writing samples in the borderline category between “Approaching Meeting Criteria” and “Meets Criteria.” However, future outcomes-based reading and scoring projects with greater participation will need to be conducted in order for us to begin to establish patterns that can be analyzed and interpreted as we’ve been able to do with WR 115, WR 121, and WR 122 here.

Conclusion: English Department Writing Program – Beginning the Assessment Loop

This report culminates the English Department’s initial foray into program-wide assessment. However, our hope is that by fine-tuning our assessment process and adding data year-by-year, ongoing efforts will produce multiple streams of intersecting data, providing rich results and productive insights into our Writing Program. Those results and insights will in turn be used to inform the work we do as faculty members and teachers within that program, as well as strengthening the practice and culture of assessment across our campus community.

Goals for 2010-11 Revisited

For 2010-11 our goals were to:

1. Initiate the ongoing collection of writing samples (artifacts) from every section of every writing course offered throughout the academic year (AY – defined as the beginning of fall term 2010 to the beginning of fall term 2011).

While the rate of participation for the first year was 28% overall, quite a bit lower than we had initially hoped for, we were able to institute the program-wide assessment project. In addition, and no small feat unto itself, we were able to develop a system for informing faculty of the assessment collection details and to gather submitted writing samples or artifacts in an efficient and organized fashion. Faculty members are now educated about the assessment project, they understand the procedure, and the Department has had three academic terms to acclimate to the process. Hence, we anticipate that next year faculty participation rates will increase significantly.

Next year we also plan to streamline the process by establishing regular assessment reminders and collection dates throughout the year.

2. Store and catalog the collected artifacts until the initial reading and scoring pilot project can begin.

While goal #2 seems fairly simple on its face, finding adequate storage for bulky assessment collections turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. Ultimately artifacts were stored temporarily in the office of the Writing/Composition Coordinator, but the cramped quarters made it clear that we will have to revisit the plan for storing and cataloging the archive next year.

3. Design, schedule, and implement the initial reading and scoring project to determine the methods and criteria to be used to score the collected artifacts.

Goal #3 was accomplished and resulted in the reading and scoring methodology recorded in the report above. The findings, also discussed in the report above, are important, yielding rich insights on our collaboratively written course outcomes in particular. Those insights are discussed in the Summary of Results below. However, our reading process also reinforced the sense that student writing cannot readily be dissected in discrete “traits” to be scored or rated in isolation from other characteristics of the writing. Each feature of a composition impacts and even imprints all other aspects of the writing. While our initial assessment plan called for reading and scoring artifacts by “traits”—aligned with our defined course outcomes—for the first several years of the assessment project, the results suggest that we would do well to move to more holistic reading and scoring sooner rather than later.

4. Report the findings of the inaugural assessment year to the English Department, College Administration, and the wider campus community.

Findings were indeed reported to the Department and Division Dean at a regularly scheduled Writing/Composition meeting in the fall of 2011, then conveyed to a larger audience in an email follow-up, which went out to all English Department faculty. Our report to the campus community was made later in the academic year at the first annual A-Team retreat.

5. Utilize the findings to fine-tune the assessment plan for 2011-2012 to improve the sustainability of our assessment program, to strengthen curricular coherence, and to enhance instruction in the Writing Program.

As goal #5 is an ambitious and multipart goal, improving sustainability will be addressed here, and strengthening curricular coherence and enhancing instruction in the Writing Program will be discussed in the summary of results below. In the course of our first year’s process, it quickly became clear that in order to improve the sustainability of our assessment project we would need to move quickly toward a system of digital collection and storage. Given that our five-year assessment plan calls for a permanent and pervasive assessment program in Writing, a move to digitize the project will reduce the use of paper, eliminate the need for massive storage areas to keep large collections of paper artifacts, and could at the same time streamline our collection process for faculty members. The Writing/Composition Coordinator will draft a proposal for a LETS (technology) student position to assist with the design and development of a digital collection and archival system for English assessment artifacts.

These goals provide the foundation for successive year's assessment efforts and launch our formal programmatic conversations about student learning and pedagogy. In subsequent years, we will be able to look both backward and forward to reflect upon and take stock of where we've been as we simultaneously plan future directions for the Writing Program at Lane Community College.

Summary of Results

Aggregate Findings

Total papers submitted: 148 (of 529) – 28% participation

Does Not Meet Criteria	14	9.4%
Approaching Criteria	56	37.8%
Approaching/Meeting Criteria	27	18.2%
Meets Criteria	39	26.3%
Exceeds Criteria	12	8.1%

This year's assessment efforts have revealed what appear to be certain trends related to rhetorical knowledge in our writing courses. Most glaringly, even at the end of a ten-week term, regardless of the level of composition—whether in WR 115 or WR 227—our students still struggle to comprehend and develop meaningful purposes as writers. Instead, students' writing too often appears to dwell in the realm of “doing what the teacher asks” without making significant intellectual investments in their own composing work. Secondly, upon completion of their writing courses, many students, but particularly those in WR 115 and WR 121, still have difficulty imagining audiences for their writing beyond the college classroom and, indeed, even beyond their instructors of record.

These are areas that we can work on programmatically, and our findings influenced the development of a Department-wide faculty professional development workshop that focused on assignment construction and design. The vast majority of our Department faculty attended the workshop, and it accomplished the following goals related to our assessment findings:

- Writing Program instructors received information and materials on national standards and best practices for assignment design in the field of composition and rhetoric
- Several faculty members shared expert examples of assignments that make rhetorical knowledge, along with other important pedagogical expectations and assumptions, explicit in framing student tasks as well as their own assessment criteria
- Attendees shared and discussed their own assignments, which they brought with them to the workshop, with each other, focusing on how they might revise their current assignments to better align their practices with the national standards and examples of best practices just presented

We can also make use of another faculty professional development site, the Faculty Interest Groups (FIGs), to emphasize the recursive nature of writing, taking compositions through multiple drafts, and assessing student writing in ways that encourage developing awareness

and increasingly deeper understanding of complex rhetorical concepts like purpose and audience through the portfolio assessment methodology.

Looking back at the year's assessment, we can say that, overall, Lane students are quite successful in writing courses that are both facilitative—supporting students in negotiating the often unfamiliar literacy demands of an academic environment—and rigorous, challenging them to grapple with new skills and knowledge at significant levels of depth and complexity. Similarly, the Writing Program faculty is quite successful in their teaching and continues to demonstrate impressive commitment to their profession as well as to their students. Our first-year assessment results will no doubt give faculty knowledge that will deepen their reflective teaching practices, helping us all to reexamine and reinterpret our collective work together in the English Department, and assisting us to move forward together with a shared vision for deepening and strengthening our Writing Program in the coming year.