

The following is a distillation of the ideas offered from the members of our group:

### **The Process**

On its face, it is somewhat concerning that there is little improvement is made from the sophomore level to the senior level in total scores and that language ability actually regresses. There are probably several reasons that could account for this lack of progress. It has been fairly consistent in our assessment reaching back at least to 2014, especially where language usage issues are concerned. It used to be that scores would rise through English 201 and then drop in English 315. There would still be progress from 101 to 315, but not from 201 to 315. Now, with no English 201, we just see the regression. Changes in our GE program could make some of that difference.

But the larger difficulty is that no one on the committee felt entirely sure about the reliability of our assessment in making that determination. One member of the committee expressed that it was difficult to keep from differentiating the English 101 papers from the English 315 papers, which was often obvious, and then assessing them as good or bad for their level, which would skew results towards showing a lack of progress. Another member of the committee expressed that not including advanced writing courses other than English 315, though understandable because of the difference in deliverables also could skew results, as students who were included in the results for English 101 self-selected to not be part of the later group. If differences in ability correlated to those choices of program that led them to take a different class, then those differences would be reflected in our data in ways that might make it hard to say that improvement did or did not happen generally. Perhaps we could remove artifacts from students who later took other courses from the English 101 group of papers to account for this, but the member of the committee who commented on this was especially concerned that we be able to assess how well those other courses were working as well and advocated for a rubric broad enough to account for the differences in assignments. The suggestion was also made to include qualitative data that demonstrated the types of analytical data we see or do not see in the assignments we are assessing. Of course, institutional research in education deals with broad realities and is always messy, so while we recognize the need to further refine our methods, we must also deal with the data we have as best we can.

### **ENGL 315/316**

Some of the improvement could certainly happen in the curriculum and teaching of ENGL 315 and 316. It may be best to encourage more use of the Reading/Writing center in ENGL 315 and 316. We might also consider using the language lab in new ways to support these classes. In our actual teaching of ENGL 315 and 316, we need to focus more on our course outcomes, which do speak to the criteria for claim, evidence, and coherence that the assessments measured. For example, the outcome that requires students to “develop sophisticated thought by asserting and supporting *a complex thesis* in their writing” relates to coherence. We need to improve at translating this sort of course outcome into intermediate learning goals and from there into practice that effectively helps meet those goals. It would be helpful for the instructors who teach ENGL 315 and 316 to work with the Center for Learning and Teaching to help them develop learning goals from the course outcomes for individual

lessons and larger units within the class and to develop activities that help to address those goals. This might lead to more targeted accomplishment of the course outcomes.

One committee member remarked that the decline in language use scores reflected experience in the classroom, as many students may have more errors at higher levels. Another opined that we must find new ways of working with our large EIL population that has difficulties especially in this area. 315 instructors sometimes use the lab at the Reading/Writing center that was created for English 101 students. In the past, instructors have used the testing center to assess students' mechanical abilities in English and have used a variety of resources, including mini-labs at the Writing Center to address particular concerns, as well. We could encourage the use of the center more in ENGL 315. The language lab supports language acquisition, as well. We could expand the use of these resources and/or create others to encourage language acquisition beyond EIL and English 101.

### **Writing Across the Curriculum**

More generally, we need to support writing in more robust ways, perhaps encouraging or providing guidelines for writing in our major and minor programs, since much of the burden of writing instruction has been shifted from GE writing classes to the new Holokai program. We should assess how much and what types of writing are taking place between students taking their English 101 course and taking their English 315 course. Are students writing frequently or infrequently, and are there differences among programs? Certain areas scored higher than others, and that may have to do with the amount of writing they are required to do in those areas. The more we know about this, the more we can address the best ways to develop these skills more deliberately in our new structure. English 315 and 316 are part of the overall experience of writing at the university, but it cannot pull all of the weight in developing this crucial skill.

Mechanical language ability, especially cannot be the responsibility of only ENGL 315. We need to encourage wider teaching of English in all classes. It may be worthwhile to repeat and/or expand the workshops in teaching English across the curriculum that were offered several years ago and to place continued emphasis on this important aspect of our instruction.

### **Addressing Demographics**

Finally, one participant noted that there was a modest discrepancy in progress between male and female students in the data. It would be worthwhile to investigate as many demographic differences as possible to make sure that we are as inclusive as possible in our classroom pedagogy and university policies to make sure all students are gaining from our writing instruction. Pacific Island students' scores, for instance, drop from ENGL 101 to ENGL 315. This may be for any number of reasons, including what majors they tend to take, when they tend to take the courses, or pedagogical methods that do not address their needs. This might have to do with adjusting curriculums so that students write more across the curriculum, advising students not to wait to take ENGL 315, or better training our faculty in culturally relevant pedagogies. We need to examine this more closely for all groupings to see what we can do. We may not have enough information to make such recommendations at this time.