

**Review of the MFA Results and Report on Curricular Change
2008**

B.A. English

Reviewing results of student comments on the Southeastern Exit Survey, we find our English majors well satisfied with the quality of their teachers overall, particularly the individual care and attention their teachers give. In the last two Exit Surveys (2005-2006 and 2006-2007), over 88% of English majors judged themselves “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the effectiveness of the faculty as teachers ((2006: 94.5%; 2007: 83.3%), and over 79% were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the interest shown by faculty in the student’s academic development (2006: 70.8%; 2007: 88.9%). In preparation for advanced courses, over 64% judged themselves “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” (2006: 66.7%; 2007: 62.5%), and over 91% were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the quality of instruction in advanced courses (2006: 94.5%; 2007: 87.5%). The Exit Survey also indicates that over 85% of our Majors are “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the overall quality of their degree program (2006: 83.4%; 2007: 87.5%).

Further providing assessment of our English majors’ competency in language and literature, the English Department maintains the policy that all English majors must maintain at least a C average in all major classes in order to graduate, and that each instructor of a 300- or 400-level English class evaluates essay assignments for competency in language and literature. In addition, the critical analysis/research papers from our graduating English majors that are collected by our MFA Committee are judged on “Valid interpretation of primary text” with the following scale:

1. Below adequacy
2. Adequate
3. Good
4. Excellent

In this first group of 30 papers, English majors averaged 2.73 in this category, surpassing our MFA’s plan goal of 2. In addition, Exit Surveys confirm that our majors feel competent in language and literature. Over 95% (2006: 94.4%; 2007: 95.9%) felt “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with their knowledge of major literary works, over 84% (2006: 77.8%; 2007: 91.7%) with their knowledge of literary theory, over 90% (2006: 88.9%; 2007: 91.6%) with their knowledge of literary history, and over 85% (2006: 83.4%; 2007: 87.5%) “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” in their ability to analyze both prose and verse.

Assuring our English majors’ expertise in composition, besides their instructors’ evaluation, the MFA Committee reviews critical papers from an English 300- or 400-level class for essential qualities of composition: “Focused topic”; “Clear thesis/argument structure”; “Organization: development, transition, coherence, supporting evidence”; “Sense of audience”; “Sentence sophistication / effective use of voice and diction”; and “Mechanics / grammatical correctness.” In these areas, 30 English major papers analyzed averaged the following on a 1 (Inadequate) to 4 (Excellent) scale, all above our goal score of 2 (“Adequate”):

Focused topic	2.6
---------------	-----

Clear thesis/argument structure	2.46
Organization: development, transition, coherence, supporting evidence	2.46
Sense of Audience	2.77
Sentence sophistication / effective use of voice and diction	2.37
Mechanics / grammatical correctness	2.28

In recent Exit Surveys, English majors indicated confidence in their writing skills: over 72% (2006: 66.6%; 2007: 79.3%) were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with their improvement of knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, and composition; while over 89% (2006: 83.3%; 2007: 95.9%) felt “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with their ability to write a coherent essay that is well organized and developed, grammatically correct, and stylistically appropriate.

In the area of scholarly research and criticism, the department continues to require a thorough knowledge of research and MLA documentation format, beginning in English 102. Critical papers and/or research papers are required at every level of the major courses, and these are also evaluated by instructors for correct use of MLA documentation. Well over 80% of our English majors who graduated in the past two semesters earned a B or better in LS 102, also demonstrating research competency. In evaluating a critical analysis/research paper from each graduating English major, the MFA Committee considered the criteria “Incorporating secondary sources/use of MLA documentation.” English majors averaged a score of 1.63 on the 4-point scale, the lowest average of the 8 criteria. On the Exit Survey, over 92% (2006: 88.9%; 2007: 95.9%) of English majors rated themselves in their ability to use library resources, especially in the field of English, “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied.” This discrepancy indicates that, although our English majors do well in Library Science and believe themselves competent in MLA documentation form, their papers do not indicate expertise. This is an area we will address to all faculty in upper-level classes so that they stress the importance of careful research and documentation.

Our English majors’ global awareness and multicultural knowledge is evidenced by several of their required courses that address multi-cultural literature. Also, our faculty encourage students to take advantage of the several Study Abroad programs offered by Southeastern, which will provide valuable real-life encounters with the places and people inspiring our literary studies to add to research and classroom experience. Two faculty

members in our department lead study-abroad trips, both focusing on cultural awareness, language, and literature. An average of 11% (2006:5.6%; 2007: 16.7%) of surveyed English majors had participated in study abroad/exchange programs and were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the experience. Over 63% (2006: 61.1; 2007: 66.6%) of English majors rated themselves Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the global perspective of their courses.

The future plans of our English majors indicate preparation for the real world. In the area of plans after graduation, 20% of those taking the latest Alumni Survey (Spring 2004) indicated they were currently enrolled in a graduate/professional degree program, 10% had already completed an advanced degree, and 30% are likely to enroll in the future. Of those with graduate plans, 57% plan on obtaining a doctorate. A full 80% of the alumni respondents were employed full time since completing their degree. The majority (75%) found their employment within six months of graduation.