2020 English Department Assessment
Hendrix College

OVERVIEW
On 26 May 2020, our department met (via Zoom) for our annual assessment meeting. We accomplished the following:
1) Direct Assessment of the English Department's "Writing" Learning Goal:
    a. We assessed the competence of each of our graduating seniors in relation to our learning goals rubric. As a group, we discussed each senior's progress within the major, performance in class, and thesis capstone project.
    b. Through discussion, we arrived at a collective decision as to which of the rubric categories best fit each student's accomplishments.
    c. We tallied our shared assessment so as to quantify and visualize our department's sense of students' strengths and weaknesses in relation to this learning goal.

2) Indirect Assessment of the English Department's "Writing" Learning Goal:
    a. We considered our students' senior surveys (comparing surveys received last year and this year) and our conversations with students, as to their sense of accomplishment in relation to writing within our department.
    b. We discussed how students' self-assessment does and does not match the results of our departmental direct assessment.
    c. We considered how student feedback, in tandem with our direct assessment of seniors, reveals strengths and weaknesses of our pedagogy in relation to this "writing" goal.

DEPARTMENTAL DIRECT ASSESSMENT
In AY 2019-20, we focused on the English Department's "writing" learning goal.

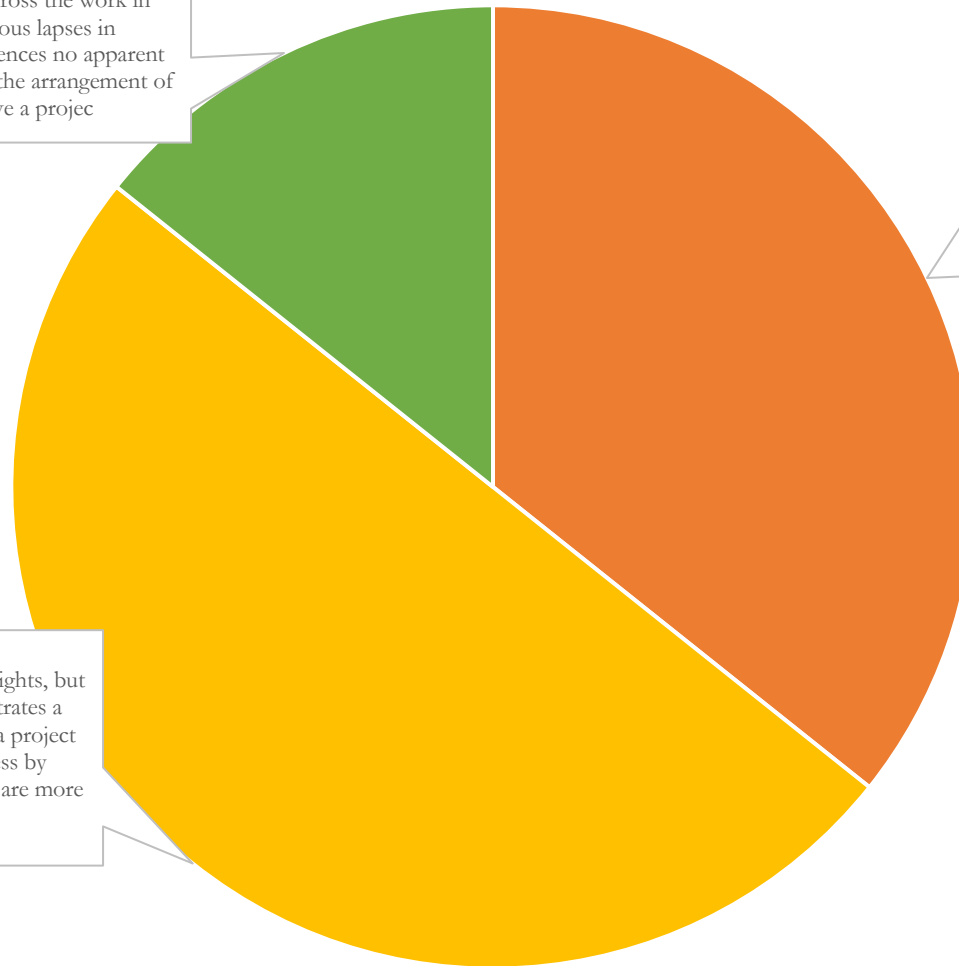| Learning Goal: Students will learn to produce writing characterized by self-reflection, risk-taking, critical analysis, and lucid communication		
Category of Student Achievement	Description of Student Achievement	# of English graduates (2020) at this level
High Achieving	Develops rich, possibly novel insights that unfold throughout the work in question (essay, story, poem, etc.); demonstrates sophisticated organization and necessary progression of ideas, images, plots, and themes; enriches a project over the course of the writing process by restructuring and crafting prose for optimal clarity and effect.	5
Competent	Develops clear insights, but may be tentative or simplistic; demonstrates a coherent but imperfect order; develops a project over the course 2of the writing process by improving structure and prose, but gains are more modest than substantial.	7
Needs Improvement	Fails to display a unifying idea or coherence across the work in question; contains numerous lapses in organizational coherence; evidences no apparent method or purposeful order in the arrangement of content; fails to improve a project's ideas, structure, and prose through the writing process	2

Percentage of 2020 Graduates Achieving "Writing" Learning Goal (English Department)
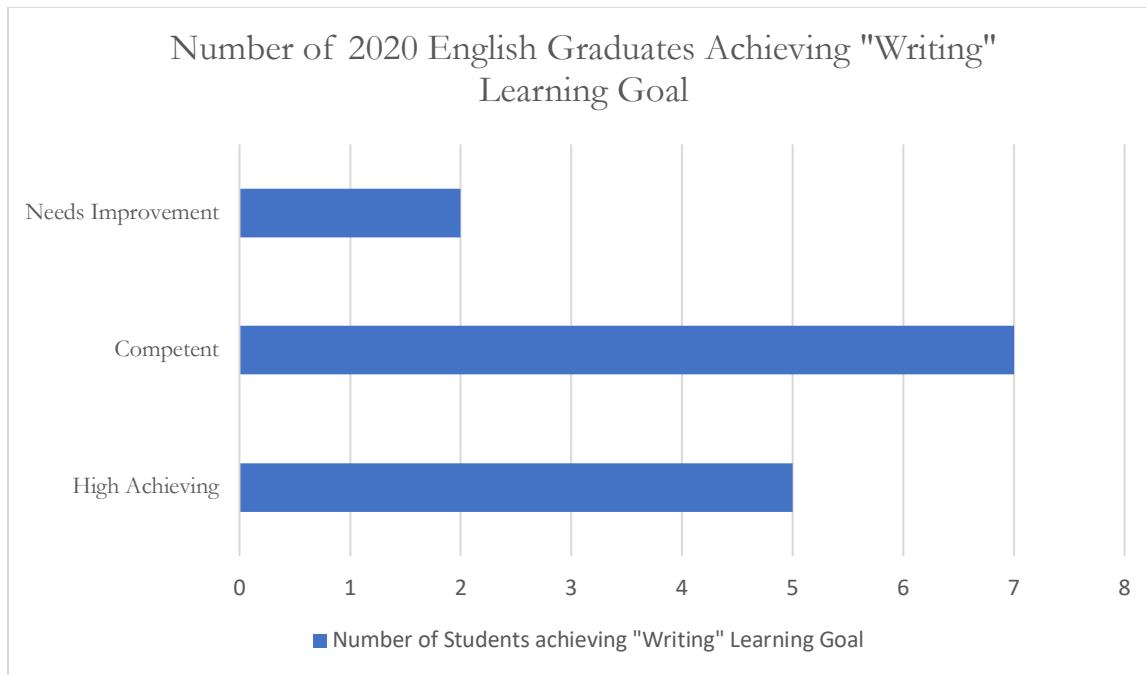
■ High Achieving   ■ Competent   ■ Needs Improvement

14%, NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: Fails to display a unifying idea or coherence across the work in question; contains numerous lapses in organizational coherence; evidences no apparent method or purposeful order in the arrangement of content; fails to improve a projec

36% HIGH ACHIEVING: Develops rich, possibly novel insights that unfold throughout the work in question (essay, story, poem, etc.); demonstrates sophisticated organization and necessary progression of ideas, images, plots, and themes; enriches a project over

50%, COMPETENT: Develops clear insights, but may be tentative or simplistic; demonstrates a coherent but imperfect order; develops a project over the course 2of the writing process by improving structure and prose, but gains are more modest than substantial.

**Number of 2020 English Graduates Achieving "Writing"
Learning Goal**

Category	Number of Students
Needs Improvement	2
Competent	7
High Achieving	5

■ Number of Students achieving "Writing" Learning Goal

DEPARTMENTAL INDIRECT ASSESSMENT

To what extent does our above assessment of seniors' abilities match their assessment of a) departmental strengths and weaknesses and b) their own strengths and weaknesses (meta-cognitively).

Points that we addressed:

- We feel pleased with the distribution of students' abilities here. That most of our students are "competent" or above means that we've written our learning goals in ways that reflect what we're actually accomplishing with our students. As to the two students who yet "need improvement," they have nonetheless graduated with a degree in English; we discussed the fact that these two students have strengths in our two other learning goals, and so we feel relieved that we're not turning out graduates who "need improvement" in all of our learning goals (these students would have been categorized as "competent" in other areas).
- We discussed how to close the loop, in using this assessment data to strengthen our department (both *how* we do what we do, and our sense of *what* we do). We plan to close the loop as follows:
  - We observed that students' performance in Literary Analysis (ENGL 297) was, for this year at least, a fair predictor of their placement within our senior assessment. This fact prompted our consideration of what we expect of our 300-level courses. We decided that we would track students' work in ENGL 297 so as to have a fuller picture of what might be students' weaknesses, strengths, and growth by the time that they are seniors. This exercise would be an undertaking that yields longitudinal data, which would help us to better appreciate what we're *doing* as a department and not who was strong upon entering the major. We will create a repository of students' first papers in

ENGL 297 (a close-reading assignment) so as to better track their growth in the major and to reveal to us what does or doesn't happen in our 300-level classes.

o   We will also emphasize the value of revision within our courses. Though all of our courses expect students to revise their work so as to chart measured improvement over time, we realize that we should dedicate more class time to the actual *practice* of revision.

o   We will add explicit questions about our learning goals to our senior survey, such that we can have a clearer map as to how students' self-assessments match our direct assessments.

o   We will work to increase the participation of seniors in future surveys. We discussed several options: a certificate of completion, submitted to the thesis instructor, so as to earn a final grade; proof of completion, brought to the thesis defense; submitting of survey to our Humanities area administrative assistant, who will check off students' names (with some kind of penalty for not submitting it, or reward for so doing). We haven't arrived a clear answer here, but we hope to improve upon our 50% average response rate in the past two years that we've gone to an online survey form.

o   Through how we frame our assignments and describe the learning goals within our individual courses, we will try to help students appreciate how the writing they prepare for each of the English emphases enjoys and benefits from a broader cohesion.

o   We will revisit our capstone/thesis objectives so as to cast them in language that better aligns with collegiate learning goals. Thesis instructors, students, and department faculty all would benefit from this clarity as to how our capstone lines up with the college's collegiate learning goals.