

Millikin University College of Arts & Sciences
Assessment of Student Learning in English Writing Major 2017-18
July 1, 2018

Snapshot of the English Department 2017-18

The English Department and Writing Major in 2016-17 added a new minor in Publishing & Editing two years ago. We have graduated our first students with the concentration and developed important classes to deliver the program.

The numbers of graduating seniors in the writing major show consistency in previous years, highlighting 2017-18 as an anomaly (6 in 2013; 9 in 2014; 11 in 2015; 8 in 2016; 8 in 2017; 2 in 2018).

Goals and Mission of English Writing Major

Millikin's English writing major program emphasizes experiences in a variety of contexts including: creative writing, journalism, professional writing, academic writing, literary writing, editing, and computer-aided publishing. By learning to shift among these multiple contexts, Millikin's writing majors are prepared for a wide range of professional writing, editing, and publishing opportunities. Students majoring in writing develop an area of advanced writing studies in one of three tracks: journalism, professional writing, or creative writing. Related extracurricular activities such as work on the *Decaturian* student newspaper and the *Collage* literary journal or Bronze Man Books publishing company allow our students to put their theory into practice. Through a combination of theoretical understanding in courses such as "Applied Writing Theory" and numerous writing and publishing workshops culminating in professional writing internships, writing majors are prepared for professional employment or graduate studies.

Learning Outcome Goals

All writing major students will:

1. know classical and contemporary rhetorical theories.
2. apply writing theories and pedagogies to their own writing processes.
3. synthesize theories to produce original writing theory scholarship.
4. be able to critique their own writing processes and artifacts.
5. synthesize knowledge specific to their writing concentration and develop a personal theory of writing or poetics.

Writing major students will demonstrate specific learning goals of their area of concentration, (creative writing, journalism writing, or professional writing):

1. know the form and structure of genres and writing techniques in the concentration.
2. understand the tradition and contemporary responses to those traditions in the concentration.
3. be able to create or publish near professional texts in the concentration.

Snapshot of the Writing Major Program

The English Department has offered three major programs for a number of decades now: the English writing major, the English literature major and the English education major. Each shares a common core of English studies, but provides distinctive advanced levels of development in writing, education, or literature.

The Learning Story

The curriculum map shows the sequence and strategy of how writing major students develop and fulfill the learning outcome goals. The curriculum map provides an indication of points of engagement in relation to each learning goal. Our assessment of student learning is based on review of artifacts in the English Writing major's portfolio, which demonstrates a culmination of these learning engagements.

Table 2: **Curriculum Map for Writing Major Core Learning Goals**

Writing Major Requirements	Writing Major Core Learning Goals				
	WM1-knowledge of classical & contemporary rhetorics	WM2-apply writing theories to own processes	WM3-produce original writing theory research	WM4-reflect on & critique own writing	WM5-develop own personal theory of writing or poetics
EN241 Classical Traditions	•				
EN310 Applying Writing Theory	•	•	•		
EN410 Senior Writing Portfolio				•	•

Table 3: **Curriculum Map for Creative Writing Learning Goals**

Creative Writing Course Options	Creative Writing Learning Goals (acquired through choice of three advanced writing courses)		
	CW1-know form & structure of genres	CW2-know contemporary writers' aesthetic responses to tradition & own contributions to those traditions	CW3-creation of publishable or near professional texts
EN200 Writing Seminar	•		
EN201 Introduction to Creative Writing	•		
EN300 Advanced Creative Writing	•	•	
EN301 Advanced Writing	•	•	
EN382 Advanced Publishing Projects			•
EN410 Senior Writing Portfolio			•
EN480 Professional Writing Internship			•

Table 4: **Curriculum Map for Journalism Writing Concentration**

Journalism Writing Course Options	Journalism Writing Learning Goals (acquired through choice of three advanced writing courses)

	JW1-gather & critically evaluate information from variety of sources	JW2-apply journalistic writing techniques & story formats	JW3- editing & revision skills for publication standards	JW4-understand multiple perspectives on the role of a free press in society
EN215 Newswriting 1	•	•	•	
EN280 Journalism lab	•	•		
EN315 Beat Reporting	•			•
EN316 Feature Writing		•		
EN380 Studies in Journalism				•
EN410 Senior Writing Portfolio			•	
EN480 Writing Internship		•	•	

Table 5: **Curriculum Map for Professional Writing Concentration Learning Goals**

Professional Writing Course Options	Professional Writing Learning Goals (acquired through choice of three advanced writing courses)		
	PW1-know genres and professional publication conventions	PW2-understand audience expectations (ethical, legal, cultural implications of rhetorical choices)	PW3-write, edit, design and publish professional publication using computer technologies
EN200 Writing Seminar	•	•	
EN210 Business & Prof. Writing	•	•	
EN270 Computer Aided Publishing			•
EN301 Advanced Writing	•	•	
EN382 Advanced Publishing Projects			•
EN410 Senior Writing Portfolio			•
EN480 Professional Writing Internship			•

All writing majors complete the English major traditions core for historical breadth of the role of writing and literature in society over time. Within the traditions core, writing majors take a section of section of EN241 Western Classical Traditions, which specifically introduces them to

the origins of writing theory, both rhetoric and poetic. All writing majors also complete at least one course on publishing contemporary technology.

Writing majors choose an area of concentration for advanced studies in writing. We offer three areas of concentration: creative writing, journalism, and professional writing. Students must complete three advanced studies courses in the area of concentration and one advanced writing course outside their chosen area of concentration.

Writing majors concentrating in **creative writing** develop advanced creative writing abilities in a variety of methods and genre. All creative writing concentration majors begin with the Introduction to Creative Writing course. They can then take as many Advanced Creative Writing Courses as they like, depending on their interests. Topics for Advanced courses range from poetry translation, scriptwriting, fiction, prose and poetry sequences, to courses where students collect their work in chapbook and/or manuscript form and reflect on it. Students are prepared with the professional skills needed to prepare and submit their work for publication. Creative writing concentration majors often find homes for their work in *Collage* or with Bronze Man Books. These concentration majors generally plan to enter MA, MFA, and/or Ph. D programs in Creative Writing.

Writing majors concentrating in **professional writing** develop advanced editing, publishing, and business writing abilities. They typically take two or three courses on print media publishing, web publishing, technical or business communication, and related courses on public relations or marketing. Some of the professional writing students plan to go directly into the industry as web designers, publication editors, or technical writers. Others plan to go to graduate school, usually with a combination of rhetoric, composition, or professional writing.

Writing majors concentrating in **journalism** acquire advanced writing and editing methods specific to journalistic story formats. Beginning students take News Writing in which they learn fundamental skills necessary to generate story ideas, interview sources, as well as write and edit stories. Advanced writing classes such as Feature Writing and Studies in Journalism teach students more sophisticated data collection and writing techniques. Additionally, these courses push students to further investigate the ever-changing role of the press and their contribution to it. While some students go on to graduate studies in journalism, others enter the print, broadcast, or Web news industries.

Students who major in writing take advantage of learning communities beyond the classroom. These advanced opportunities for integrating theory and practice prepare our writing majors for a variety of professional opportunities in the future.

The student paper, the *Decaturian*, is an on-going living classroom in which students blend theoretical lessons with practical experience. Creative Writing students often participate as editors for *Collage*, the student literary magazine as well as other student anthologies and events. Professional writing students often serve as editors and designers for *Collage* and Bronze Man Books.

These advanced opportunities for integrating theory and practice prepare our writing majors for a variety of professional opportunities in the future. Employing their advanced writing, editing, and publishing skills in the service of others, writing majors often complete professional writing Internships in the community for a wide range of business and non-profit organizations.

In the spring of the junior year, all writing majors come together to take the course, Applied Writing Theory. This course on contemporary writing theories (again both Rhetoric and Poetic) prepares students to develop a rich theoretical understanding of writing in the current society. Students in Applied Writing Theory study one of the major applications of writing theory, the teaching of writing. They also apply writing theories to a research project, studying writing as the subject of original research. This advanced theory and practice course is a gateway course for graduate studies in writing and prepares students to discuss their own writing abilities in future job interviews.

The final chapter of the writing major learning story is that all writing majors complete a senior writing portfolio in the fall semester their senior year. Each portfolio is a custom creation, demonstrating the student’s ability to write, edit, and design a collection of their best work. The portfolios provide a means of demonstrating the range of professional abilities, and it becomes a place for reflection on the student’s abilities and future goals.

2017-18: In Fall 2017, 3 students enrolled in EN410 Senior Writing Portfolio, one student planning to graduate in December 2018. All three students completed the course, all three in the creative writing track in the writing major. Only the portfolios of students graduating in May 2018 are assessed here. One of those portfolios was incomplete and poor in quality. So, 50% of the portfolios could not be assessed here fairly any higher than the lowest rating. These numbers significantly alter the overall assessment.

2017-18 was unusual in the number of students graduating in the major, the limited representation in a single track in the major, and the incomplete status of one of the two assessed portfolios. Any conclusions drawn from 2017-18 assessment should be tempered with these limitations in mind.

Assessment Methods

In June 2018, English faculty reviewed the Senior Writing Portfolios evaluating the quality of learning demonstrated for each learning goal, using the portfolio review rubric.

- Portfolio Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics
- Portfolio Artifact 2: sample of writing theory research
- Portfolio Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples and/or publication designs
- Concentration Portfolio Artifacts: writing samples and/or publication designs in area of concentration

Assessment Results Data

Assessment data is reported for all English writing majors then broken into the three areas of concentration. Portfolios were evaluated using the rubrics.

- 3.00 – 2.50 = green (excellent level of performance)
- 2.49 – 1.50 = yellow (adequate level of performance)
- 1.49 – 1.00 = red (inadequate level of performance)

2017-18:

In the following tables, the number of students rated in each level of performance are reported, along with a “total” composite score for all students. This total score indicates the level of performance of this graduating class.

Table 6: **2017 Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Ratings (n=3)**

	Green	Yellow	Red	total
Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics (<i>synthesizes classical & contemporary theories</i>)	1 50%		1 50%	2.00
Artifact 2: writing theory research (<i>grounded in methods & issues of contemporary writing theory research</i>)	1 50%		1 50%	2.00
Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples (<i>reveals richness of rhetorical</i>)	1 50%		1 50%	2.00

<i>strategies of near-professional performance)</i>				
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Table 7: **2017 Creative Writing Concentration** Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation (n=3)

	Green	Yellow	Red	total
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(awareness of methods and forms of genres successfully implemented in samples)</i>	1 50%		1 50%	2.00
Artifact 2: introductions, essays, annotations on writer's own goals and connections to traditions <i>(contextualize self in contemporary traditions)</i>	1 50%		1 50%	2.00
Artifact 3: publishable or near professional texts <i>(engaging texts in variety of genres with lasting impression on reader)</i>	1 50%		1 50%	2.00

Table 8: **2017 Journalism Concentration** Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation (n=3)

	Green	Yellow	Red	total
Artifact 1: annotated news stories <i>(variety of news stories demonstrate use of story format, sources and journalism techniques)</i>				
Artifact 2: editing skills sample <i>(demonstrates effective revision and editing of own or other's stories in AP style)</i>				
Artifact 3: research on role of media in society <i>(research on role of free press in society)</i>				

Table 9: **2017 Professional Writing Concentration** Portfolio Evaluation (n=0)

	Green	Yellow	Red	total
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(variety shows knowledge of conventions, ethical and legal and cultural audience expectations)</i>				
Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples <i>(shows understanding of technical user knowledge, design rhetorical effectiveness, project management and tutoring knowledge)</i>				

Comparison of 2016 (n=3) and 2017 (n=3) portfolio evaluation ratings:

Table 10: **Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Ratings**

	2017	2018
Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics <i>(synthesizes classical & contemporary theories)</i>	2.68	2.00
Artifact 2: writing theory research <i>(grounded in methods & issues of contemporary writing theory research)</i>	2.53	2.00

Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples <i>(reveals richness of rhetorical strategies of near-professional performance)</i>	2.88	2.00
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Table 11: **Creative Writing Concentration** Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2016	2017
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(awareness of methods and forms of genres successfully implemented in samples)</i>	2.86	2.00
Artifact 2: introductions, essays, annotations on writer’s own goals and connections to traditions <i>(contextualize self in contemporary traditions)</i>	2.79	2.00
Artifact 3: publishable or near professional texts <i>(engaging texts in variety of genres with lasting impression on reader)</i>	2.54	2.00

Table 12: **Journalism Concentration** Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2016	2017
Artifact 1: annotated news stories <i>(variety of news stories demonstrate use of story format, sources and journalism techniques)</i>	2.86	
Artifact 2: editing skills sample <i>(demonstrates effective revision and editing of own or other’s stories in AP style)</i>	2.86	
Artifact 3: research on role of media in society <i>(research on role of free press in society)</i>	2.63	

Table 13: **Professional Writing Concentration** Learning Goals Portfolio Ratings

	2016	2017
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(variety shows knowledge of conventions, ethical and legal and cultural audience expectations)</i>	3.00	
Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples <i>(shows understanding of technical user knowledge, design rhetorical effectiveness, project management and tutoring knowledge)</i>	2.63	

Analysis of Assessment Results

The academic year 2017-18, the writing major graduated only 2 students, both with creative writing concentrations. One student completed EN410 with committed effort and submitted a portfolio of exceptional quality. The second student did not—the portfolio representing that student was limited in quality and quantity. In all the years the English Department has formally assessed its majors, we have not seen a portfolio of this kind.

So, 50% of the portfolios could not be assessed here fairly any higher than the lowest rating. These numbers significantly alter the overall assessment.

2017-18 was unusual in the number of students graduating in the major, the limited representation in a single track in the major, and the incomplete status of one of the two assessed portfolios. Any conclusions drawn from 2017-18 assessment should be tempered with these limitations in mind.

RECOMMENDATION: We have two junior faculty in the Journalism and Professional Writing concentrations. These areas are showing significant improvement in the quality and preparedness of graduating seniors. We need to help these faculty grow their concentrations through recruiting efforts and through course and curriculum development.

RECOMMENDATION: Senior Writing Portfolio is a significant workload for students: gathering materials, writing and rewriting touchstone documents, and developing two important senior year projects (career search and a new writing project). While the course warrants 3 credit hours, the 3 hours of class time for a course that is not workshop oriented could be adjusted. For the first time in Fall 2017, class time was 1 hour per week. We need to continue to gauge the effectiveness of this class time commitment.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS: In addition to the specific recommendations that come from direct assessment results, general recommendations for improving the writing major are as follows:

- 1) As new writing faculty join the department, an exchange of ideas seems possible and welcome. The department is committed to assisting new faculty grow into their roles as they shift into the touchstone courses (200, 290, 241, 310, 410).
- 2) Faculty should explore 200 & 300 course offerings to augment the Professional Writing major and the range of writing for our students
- 3) The Writing Committee developed and launched a new minor in Publishing and Editing. The quality of that new minor needs to be monitored.
- 4) Annual Independent Studies in the Spring term to help students complete their degree on time. Transfers and scheduling conflicts (with double majors and minors and extracurriculars) account for this need, but the faculty should be mindful of the required 410 in Fall terms and advise earlier semesters anticipating potential conflicts.

Improvement Plans

The annual report will be shared with the Writing Major Faculty Committee and the English department faculty in order for them to discuss and implement ways to improve the quality of student learning experiences in the writing major. Discussion and development of improvement plans and initiative will take place in a fall English departmental meeting focused on the 2017-18 academic year assessment results.

Appendix 1: Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
<p>Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics</p> <p>Related goals: WM1 WM3 WM5</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a personal theory of writing (within the student's concentration) that synthesizes appropriate applications of classical and contemporary writing theories.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a personal theory of writing (within the student's concentration) but provides only a superficial acknowledgement of connections to classical and contemporary theories.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks a personal theory of writing (within the student's concentration) or conveys a lack of theoretical basis for the student's writing strategies. "Good writing is a gift or knack."</p>
<p>Artifact 2: writing theory research</p> <p>Related goals: WM3</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes high quality original research on writing grounded in methods and issues of contemporary writing theory research.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes original research on writing grounded in issues of contemporary writing theory, but lacks significance or connection to current issues.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes no evidence or poor quality research on writing (lacks grounding in issues of contemporary writing theory).</p>
<p>Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples</p> <p>Related goals: WM4</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes critical annotations on the student's own writing revealing a richness of strategies and high levels of understanding of the skills of near-professional writing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes critical annotations on the student's own writing revealing some understanding of strategies and skills of near-professional writing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes arbitrary annotations that demonstrate the inability of the writer to be self-critical or to seriously reflect on higher levels of strategies of near-professional writing.</p>

Appendix 2: Creative Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
<p>Artifact 1: annotated writing samples</p> <p>Related goals: CW1</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes writing samples with critical annotations that show the writer is not only aware of the methods and forms of a variety of genres but successfully carries out formal and structural arrangements of the materials in their writing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of writing samples with discussion that shows some awareness of the methods and forms of a variety of genres. Students attempt to practice and follow-through on formal and structural arrangements of the materials in their writing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks a variety of writing samples. Samples and annotations suggest the writer is not consistent and does not show awareness or command of form and structure of genres.</p>
<p>Artifact 2: introductions or essays and annotations on writer's own goals and connections to contemporary traditions</p> <p>Related goals: CW2</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio shows an awareness of contemporary writers' aesthetic responses to the tradition, but accurately identifies themselves and their own work within a specific group of contemporary writers and recognizes that group's response to the tradition.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio shows an awareness of contemporary writers' aesthetic responses to the tradition. Students attempt to understand how to contextualize their own work within these traditions.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks an introduction or statement of poetics. The writer is not consistent in recognizing contemporary writers' aesthetic responses to the tradition and/or cannot place his or her own writing in contexts with one another, including himself or herself.</p>
<p>Artifact 3: publishable or near professional texts</p> <p>Related goals: CW3</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes samples of engaging and compelling texts in a variety of genres that demonstrates longevity and an enduring or lasting impression on the reader.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes samples of attempts to create readable texts in a variety of genres</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes samples that suggest the student is limited in ability to write in a variety of genres and/or does not produce readable or lasting texts.</p>

Appendix 3: Journalism Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
<p>Artifact 1: annotated news stories</p> <p>Related goals: JW1 & JW2</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a rich variety of news stories with critical annotations discussing the writer's evaluation of sources, story format and journalistic techniques.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of news stories with some discussion of the writer's critical thinking and understanding of journalistic story formats and techniques employed.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks a variety of news stories and includes only superficial levels of discussion of the writer's evaluation of information formats and techniques.</p>
<p>Artifact 2: editing skills sample</p> <p>Related goals: JW3</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a sample of effective revision and editing of the student's own writing or editing of other's stories showing mastery of AP Style.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a sample of editing of the student's own writing, with little more than low-level edits evident. Student work demonstrates some understanding of AP style.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks a sample of editing skills or demonstrates low quality editing throughout the portfolio due to typos, errors or evident lack of AP style.</p>
<p>Artifact 3: research on role of media in society</p> <p>Related goals: JW4</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a sample of high quality research on the role of a free press in society.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes research on media but does not reach insights about the role of a free press in society.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks research on media or demonstrates a lack of understanding of multiple perspectives on the role of a free press in society.</p>

Assessment of Student Learning in the English Writing Major 12

Appendix 4: Professional Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
<p>Artifact 1: annotated writing samples</p> <p>Related goals: PW1 & PW2</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a rich variety of writing samples with critical annotations discussing the writer's knowledge of conventions and ethical, legal and cultural implications of audience expectations.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of writing samples with some discussion of the writer's critical thinking and understanding of professional conventions and audience expectations.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio lacks a variety of writing samples. Samples and annotations suggest a lack of knowledge of professional writing conventions and audience expectations.</p>
<p>Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples</p> <p>Related goals: PW3</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a rich variety of professional publication designs. Annotations reveal an understanding and creative application of (1) user knowledge of computer technology for editing and publishing, (2) design knowledge based on the rhetorical goals of the design, (3) project management knowledge, and (4) an overall ability to teach others to understand professional publishing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a variety of professional publication designs. Annotations reveal an some understanding and reasonable application of (1) user knowledge of computer technology for editing and publishing, (2) design knowledge based on the rhetorical goals of the design, (3) project management knowledge, and (4) an overall ability to teach others to understand professional publishing.</p>	<p>Senior writing portfolio includes a limited variety of professional publication designs. Annotations reveal a lack of understanding and limited strategies for editing and publishing techniques. Poor quality publication samples will be evident, with a lack of deliberate choices of emphasis, limited typographical control, and excessive reliance on templates.</p>

Appendix 5: **Writing Major Portfolio Ratings 2009**

Student Name:

Writing Concentration (circle one): creative writing journalism professional writing

Writing Major Core Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Ratings

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: personal writing theory or statement of poetics <i>(synthesizes classical & contemporary theories)</i>			
Artifact 2: writing theory research <i>(grounded in methods & issues of contemporary writing theory research)</i>			
Artifact 3: annotations of writing samples <i>(reveals richness of rhetorical strategies of near-professional performance in concentration)</i>			

Creative Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(awareness of methods and forms of genres successfully implemented in samples)</i>			
Artifact 2: introductions, essays, annotations on writer's own goals and connections to traditions <i>(contextualize self in contemporary traditions)</i>			
Artifact 3: publishable or near professional texts <i>(engaging texts in variety of genres with lasting engagement or impression on reader)</i>			

Journalism Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: annotated news stories <i>(variety of news stories demonstrate use of story format, sources and journalism techniques)</i>			
Artifact 2: editing skills sample <i>(demonstrates effective revision and editing of own or other's stories in AP style)</i>			
Artifact 3: research on role of media in society <i>(research on role of free press in society)</i>			

Professional Writing Concentration Learning Goals Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

	Green	Yellow	Red
Artifact 1: annotated writing samples <i>(variety shows knowledge of conventions, ethical and legal and cultural audience expectations)</i>			
Artifact 2: annotated publication design samples <i>(shows understanding of technical user knowledge, design rhetorical effectiveness,</i>			

Assessment of Student Learning in the English Writing Major 14

<i>project management and tutoring knowledge)</i>			
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