

2014 CptS Junior Writing Portfolio Assessment Report

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1. Background

The WSU Writing Program has earned national recognition from U.S. News & World Report for excellence in making “the writing process a priority at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum” and for encouraging students “to produce and refine various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines.” The Junior Writing Portfolio, part of the Writing Program, is a mid-career diagnostic assessment of all undergraduate students’ writing prior to their enrollment in two upper-division Writing in the Major [M] courses, which instruct students in the written conventions of their chosen fields of study. In computer science, there are three (“M”) courses: the two required software engineering courses, CptS 322 and CptS 422, and the required Social and Professional Issues course, CptS 402 (302 starting in Fa14). These courses also all contain oral presentation components.

All WSU undergraduates include five samples of their written work in their Junior Writing Portfolios. Two of these samples come from a two-hour writing exercise that students must perform under closed conditions. They are assessed by a set of cross-disciplinary faculty raters who are recruited and trained as paid evaluators for the WSU Writing Assessment Program. The other three samples are drawn from students’ college coursework. These three pieces of writing are re-evaluated for the Writing Portfolio by the original instructors of the courses as Acceptable or Outstanding.

All five of these samples become part of a student’s Junior Writing Portfolio, which aims to provide a basis for determining each student’s readiness to meet the challenges of the upper-division Writing in the Major courses. Students whose Writing Portfolios demonstrate readiness for “M” courses earn ratings of Pass. A small percentage of undergraduates are recognized for exceptional writing abilities, earning ratings of Pass with Distinction. Finally, students whose writing demonstrates a need for additional assistance in managing the challenges of upper-division M-courses earn ratings of Needs Work. These students are required to take either a one-credit writing tutorial concurrently with one of their “M” courses, or a three credit writing course. The intent of the additional coursework for students who “need work” is to provide students with appropriate support as they navigate the increasingly more difficult writing tasks they encounter in upper-division, discipline-specific Writing in the Major courses.

The results of the Junior Writing Portfolio assessment are thoroughly documented in semi-annual reports issued by the University College Writing Program. These reports are made publicly available on their website (<http://universitycollege.wsu.edu/units/writingprogram/units/writingassessment/reports/index.html>). The latest available report is for the 2011-2013 biennium.

2. Assessment Methodology

According to the Assessment Manual, the CS Assessment Committee Chair obtains the latest version of the report when it becomes available (usually in the summer or early fall), and posts the results to an online discussion, so that the entire Assessment Committee can comment on and discuss the results. Our target is that **80 percent or more** of CS majors pass their Junior Writing Portfolio, with 10% of those students passing with distinction.

3. Results

According to the latest Junior Writing Portfolio report for the 2011-13 biennium (p. 42), 88% of CS majors (482/547) passed their Junior Writing Portfolio during this time period. Of those who passed (482), 9.8% (47) passed with distinction.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

We surpassed our target of an 80% pass rate, and nearly met our target of a 10% pass-with-distinction rate. We conclude that no further action is needed at this time.