

Bennett College for Women Quality Enhancement Plan

“Enhancing writing skills through the general education curriculum”

The Bennett College for Women (BCW) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is an endeavor designed to improve students’ writing skills through the implementation of changes in the General Education (GE) curriculum. Bennett College’s Mission, in part, seeks to prepare students for leadership roles, to excel in scholarly pursuits and to be life-long learners. To do so, Bennett graduates must enhance their writing skills.

Assessment data and input from faculty, staff, students, and alumnae indicated that writing skills were a specific area of concern. Through a recursive, cooperative, and inclusive process, we have developed the topic, researched best practices for instruction in writing at the undergraduate level (examining both faculty development and student learning), developed implementation and assessment plans, and set in motion the beginnings of the pilot study from which the fully-implemented QEP will emerge.

The BCW QEP will take a two-pronged, multi-phased approach and be implemented in stages. The first prong will focus on faculty development and will, in several stages, engage GE faculty members in training to assist them in identifying ways in which they could teach integrated writing and literature courses and, later, in ways to infuse writing in all parts of the GE curriculum. Faculty members will be trained in instructional methods (i.e., coaching writing skills, selection of appropriate writing assignments, setting up threaded discussions, blogs, etc.) and in assessment of writing performance (development and adoption of appropriate rubrics and use of technological tools such as Turnitin.com and Grade Mark).

The second prong will focus on student skills development. This will begin with a limited group of students (first-year, conditionally admitted students) and then expand to all first-year students and subsequently to all students enrolled in GE courses. Eventually, all students will be affected by the QEP.

The implementation will involve a new Writing-Intensive (WI) integrated writing and literature course, which will be in the form of a Bennett Learning Community model (LC), and one additional Writing Intensive (WI) GE course will be required of all students to further increase their exposure to and experience with writing. Over a five year period we will saturate the remainder of the GE courses with writing experiences.

The assessment plan will measure how well faculty are trained in writing instruction and infusion; how much writing is occurring in the GE curriculum before, during, and after implementation of the QEP; how well students write; and how engaged students are in their courses. Analysis of the assessment results will be used to modify or strengthen the plan for maximum enhancement of student learning.

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