

Word Up! Transforming Writing at STU

St. Thomas University
Miami Gardens, FL

Word Up! Transforming Writing at STU is an ambitious and comprehensive Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) designed to improve the writing skills of undergraduate students. This goal will be accomplished through three major initiatives: a.) Writing Communities; b.) Writing Intensive Courses; and c.) Writing in the Discipline Courses. Progress toward this goal will be measured by continual assessment of student achievement based on clear and measurable student learning outcomes.

The First-Year Writing Communities form the centerpiece and foundation of *Word Up!*. They are modeled on learning communities, a nationally proven strategy for improving student engagement and success. These Writing Communities link first-year composition courses with lower-division General Education Requirement Courses and sections of the first-year UNI-seminar. The Writing Communities are thematically linked and cohorts of first-year students are enrolled in the same three courses to create a writing community.

Building upon the foundation of Writing Communities, Writing Intensive Courses are to be introduced at the sophomore and junior levels. Faculty members are to propose appropriate courses for development into Writing Intensive Courses. These courses are to focus more heavily on writing with written assignments forming a significant component of the course. These Writing Intensive courses are to be launched in Year Two of the plan.

The third component of *Word Up!* is the development of Writing in the Discipline Courses. These courses build on the foundation of the Writing Communities and the development in the Writing Intensive Course. Individual degree programs are to be encouraged and incentivized to develop senior-level, 3-credit Writing in the Discipline Courses and to make the course a part of the program's major requirements. Writing in the Discipline Courses are designed to provide a capstone to a four-year program of writing instruction that is to take students from first-year Writing Communities through Writing Intensive Courses to Writing in the Discipline – a transformational multi-year and multi-tiered writing experience.

Five learning outcomes have been designed to assess student learning in the Writing Communities and the Writing Intensive Courses. These outcomes include: a.) Knowledge of Writing Conventions (Grammar, Syntax, Spelling), b.) Knowledge of Writing Conventions (Citation and Quotation), c.) Writing Organizational Skills, d.) Writing Research Skills, and e.) Writing Argumentation Skills.

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