

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
Quality Enhancement Plan

PUSH Writing: Preparing Undergraduates for Scholarly Holistic Writing

Contact: Dr. Ghussan Greene, Chair of the Department of English & Modern Languages
ggreene@scsu.edu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Carolina State University (SC State) Quality Enhancement Plan, “Preparing Undergraduates for Scholarly Holistic Writing” or “PUSH Writing”, is the result of more than two years of study and planning by a broad base of SC State stakeholders who identified writing as the key skill that could be targeted to best improve learning outcomes for all SC State students. The goal of the PUSH Writing Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to enhance student writing skills in first year composition studies. Students at SC State write across the curriculum throughout their college experience, but face three crucial hurdles in their first year. The General Education Curriculum (GEC) requires that students: (1) complete English 150, College Composition and Communication, with a “C” or better; (2) complete English 151, College Composition and Communication, with a “C” or better; and (3) pass the English Proficiency Exam at the end of English 151. The freshman year curriculum heavily emphasizes writing skills; therefore, the first year composition sequence is well suited as a target for effective intervention to improve these skills.

The PUSH Writing QEP has two essential features: (1) supplemental instruction in writing; and (2) instructional technology. The specific model of supplemental instruction adapted for this QEP is the Writing Studio model developed by Grego and Thompson (2008), which calls for students to meet in small, regularly scheduled weekly Studio sessions, directed by a trained Studio leader, to solve problems and challenges faced by writers. The instructional technology component will encompass the creation of online modules—short focused learning activities that provide immediate feedback. The online modules will be created by faculty in consultation with the instructional design staff from the Office of Extended Studies to meet the specific challenges of SC State students.

The PUSH Writing program will expand over a five-year period. In the first full year of implementation, the PUSH Writing director will identify 5 faculty members to teach the first cohort of 5 sections each of English 150 and of English 151. Faculty and selected student leaders will be trained in leading the Writing Studio and one-on-one writing coaching sessions. They will also receive training in Blackboard and related technology to facilitate student use of the online component. As the program develops, additional faculty and student workers will be recruited and trained as Studio leaders.

Ongoing formative and summative assessments will be aligned to five learning outcome goals. The learning modules developed by faculty will serve a crucial role in the formative assessment of students’ writing skills, grammatical facility, and research writing competency. The summative assessments of these skills will occur through examinations (the English Proficiency Exam, an internal exam, and the ETS Proficiency Profile Exam). A survey aligned to a specific rubric will serve as a tool of formative assessment of students’ writing dispositions, and later as a summative assessment. Because the PUSH Writing QEP will require that faculty and staff engage in technological and pedagogical professional development, they too will be assessed, through the creation of a teaching portfolio and surveys of student attendees at studio sessions. The findings from these assessments will be used recursively for continuous improvement of course design, instruction, and student learning outcomes.