

## Improving the Culture of Communication Texas Lutheran University

The focus of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at Texas Lutheran University (TLU) is the creation of a Student Communication Center (SCC) that offers peer consulting for students with an emphasis on the professional practices of peer review, revision, and collaboration for producing high quality written, oral, and visual communication projects. We encourage students to think about the ways in which their habits and practices will transfer from their classes into their professional lives beyond the classroom. This QEP addresses a need for improving students' communication skills as well as a gap in instruction between lower and upper division classes at TLU. The SCC is also the next logical step in the institution's long history of curriculum reform focused on improving students' communication skills.

The SCC offers individual consultations with highly trained peer consultants; workshops that address broad concerns such as avoiding plagiarism; one-credit-hour lab courses that support upper division courses in the majors; consultation services for faculty on best practices in teaching and responding to communication projects; and classroom-based tutoring.

To be successful, we need to shift the attitudes, practices, and habits of our faculty and students in a way that makes peer review and revision a vital part of any communication assignment or task. We seek to normalize the process by which all successful communicators compose and polish their work. We also want students to develop greater rhetorical awareness to improve their ability to anticipate the needs of the audience and the situation across multiple contexts.

Our assessment of the SCC focuses on the following student learning outcomes:

- Students will achieve the goals of the assignment
- Students will effectively apply disciplinary and/or instructor-mandated conventions
- Students will effectively revise their work based on their session(s) with a peer consultant, after attending a workshop, and/or as a part of their one-credit hour course.
- Students will demonstrate engagement in their sessions with consultants
- Students will demonstrate increased confidence and positive self-efficacy in their communication skills

The process of identifying the QEP, which involved significant input from the faculty and students, included a faculty-led, data-driven process for developing the mission statement, student learning outcomes, and the pedagogical approach of the SCC. The design and implementation of the SCC is informed by TLU's mission to provide students with "the liberating potential of the disciplined pursuit of academic excellence within the context of academic freedom" and to "engage each student in a process of self-education which will assist him or her to develop as an informed and resourceful person in today's rapidly changing world" (Texas Lutheran University Mission Statement).

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