

“Creating a Culture of Writing”

University of Virginia

The University of Virginia’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is designed to advance writing across the undergraduate curriculum. Consistent with the University’s strategic vision for promoting educational experiences that deliver new levels of student engagement and cross-disciplinary work, the QEP will extend the range of writing opportunities for students and enhance pedagogical support for faculty so that students will develop more significantly as writers, and faculty will be better positioned to promote an academic culture that values writing across disciplines. The QEP has been structured so that faculty from diverse disciplines teach writing regularly, hold high standards for written work, and engage in well-informed practices to help students meet those standards. Ultimately, these efforts should culminate in an institution that demonstrably values and celebrates writing as being fundamental to its mission.

Selected in consultation with faculty and administrators from the eight schools serving undergraduates, **Creating a Culture of Writing** responds to campus-wide assessments of writing in 2009 and 2015, which revealed that students were largely competent but that only a small percentage displayed the advanced aptitude desired from graduating students. For example, the 2015 assessment found that 99 percent of fourth-year students were competent writers but that only 27 percent were highly proficient. The QEP also responds to widespread recognition that students have not been required to write enough in the current curriculum: one-third of first-year students in the College of Arts and Sciences (the College) test out of the First Writing Requirement and many of the Second Writing Requirement courses in the College do not provide sufficient writing instruction. Furthermore, the QEP leverages recent efforts to enhance faculty development in writing instruction and the benefits of engaging faculty from different disciplines in this objective.

Building on a new universal first-year writing requirement that will begin in the College in fall 2017, the QEP consists of three major interrelated endeavors:

- **Faculty preparation** – A pilot, week-long faculty seminar in writing instruction will be expanded; while these seminars already serve faculty across the University, outreach to all schools and creation of Web resources will multiply the number and range of faculty who have access to support for writing pedagogy. In addition, newly-arrived faculty members will participate in a workshop on writing pedagogy as part of their introduction to the University.
- **Curriculum** – A new approval process will assure that Second Writing Requirement courses actively foster excellence in student writing through instruction, peer review, and multiple opportunities to write and revise. Through the Writing Fellows program, highly proficient undergraduate and graduate student writers will offer tutoring in disciplinary writing. Early in the planning stages, students may have the opportunity to create digital portfolios of their writing.
- **Infrastructure Support** – Resources will go toward creating, adopting, or enhancing digital portfolios, online learning platforms, and classroom design to support student writing.

The QEP assessment plan, which focuses on faculty and student learning outcomes and on program implementation outcomes, provides direction to guide the ongoing implementation of the multiple initiatives and to document progress and achievements throughout the five years. Descriptive, indirect, direct, and qualitative assessments will be completed during the course of the QEP. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will manage implementation, supported by the QEP Oversight Committee, and in partnership with the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies (IAS), the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and the deans’ offices of the undergraduate schools.

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