

The QEP at the University of West Georgia: Undergraduate Writing in the Core Curriculum

The University of West Georgia's inaugural Quality Enhancement Plan, scheduled for 100% implementation in the fall 2015 semester, aims to improve undergraduate writing in the core curriculum, with the goal of preparing students to write more effectively, thus positioning them to succeed at the upper level of the undergraduate curriculum and beyond graduation. With this ambitious goal in mind, the university has adopted a commensurately ambitious five-pronged approach:

- 1.** An online, non-credit summer course has been developed to be taken by all in-coming freshmen as part of summer orientation, preparing them for writing at the college level.
- 2.** A writing learning outcome has been added to core areas A-E, thus ensuring that all students will complete the core with a minimum of six courses with a significant writing component -- two in area A, and at least one each in areas B-E. Since the aim is for students to gain experience by writing across disciplines in the core, the university has developed a rubric template, which individual departments then customize for their particular disciplines and courses. The university's QEP Implementation committee includes representatives from every department that teaches courses in the QEP.
- 3.** Support services, especially the Writing Center and the Library, have been enhanced to help students with writing assignments in their core courses.
- 4.** The Faculty Development Center has been leveraged to support academic units in their effort to improve writing competence for students in online courses, thus ensuring that students taking any core courses online have access to comparable resources to those available to on-campus students.
- 5.** The Center for Teaching and Learning has been established, and provides faculty development opportunities based on QEP faculty input and needs. In particular, the CTL hosts regular Lunch & Learn sessions furthering faculty dialogue about the QEP, and best practices for all stages of implementing it in the core curriculum.

The involvement of multiple centers and entities across campus in the implementation of the QEP, assures the integration of the QEP into campus culture at all levels: new students learn about the QEP as part of initial orientation and via the online summer course; faculty are actively engaged in cross-campus dialogue about writing pedagogies in the core; and staff are a vital part of the support services.

In recognition of the fact that the ultimate success of this QEP is best measured at the exit stage, the QEP Implementation Committee will assess a sample of student exit papers each semester, thus tracking improvement from the first QEP course taken by the student through graduation.

Questions about *Undergraduate Writing in the Core Curriculum* may be directed to: Nadya Williams, Associate Professor of History, QEP Director, nwilliam@westga.edu