

Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success

Executive Summary

In keeping with Core Requirement 2.12 of the Principles of Accreditation, Virginia State University has selected as its Quality Enhancement Plan the topic: "Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success." To create a culture of writing, the QEP is designed to achieve four major goals: (1) provide all freshman students a strong and effective first-year writing program that emphasizes academic writing and includes, among others, the essential "literacies" of critical thinking, reflective practice, and technology; (2) create opportunities for students throughout their general education program to practice writing and critical thinking in a variety of contexts both informally and formally as a way to continue to strengthen the writing and thinking skills developed in the first-year writing program; (3) provide opportunities for students to continue to develop their writing competencies and critical thinking skills through discipline-specific and genre-specific informal and formal writing activities in their major courses (designated writing Intensive courses); and (4) develop a Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) to provide writing assistance and e-portfolio support to students, faculty, and staff in meeting the writing demands of the Quality Enhancement Plan and helping to develop a culture of writing throughout the university.

To achieve these goals, the plan emphasizes three areas: academic writing; writing across the disciplines; and, in the junior/senior years, writing intensive/capstone courses in the major. Critical thinking as an essential literacy in writing is infused throughout the plan. The Writing/E-Portfolio (WEPS) studio is designed to promote the development of the culture of writing and ensure that students attain the expected writing competencies through formal writing assignments and informal writing practices from the first year through graduation and beyond.

Determining the impact of the QEP on student learning will be accomplished through the use of e-portfolios for instruction and assessment. Aside from demonstrating to faculty, parents, future employers, and students that a proficient level of critical thinking and writing has been achieved, the e-portfolios will consist of a collection of work that students can use to support employment and graduate school applications. Most importantly, these portfolios will also include a final essay that provides students an opportunity for reflection as a means towards a higher and more permanent level of learning. Finally, the Washington State University Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric will assess students' critical thinking skills, and a series of surveys will serve as one means of determining the extent to which a culture of writing is evolving at Virginia State University,

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