



Weatherford College
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Getting Engaged in Active Research Strategies at Weatherford College (GEARS @ WC) addresses students' use of sources—the ways they find, understand, use, and document others' work in relation to their own. The goal of GEARS@WC is for **WC students to learn to integrate research, writing, and critical thinking to improve their success in these areas as demonstrated across the breadth of the general education disciplines**. By helping students understand how to use sources ethically, appropriately, and with increasing complexity both in and beyond their college work, we support the college's mission to "provide effective learning opportunities that enrich the lives of its students and the communities it serves."

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will evaluate source information in terms of reliability and appropriateness to the context.
2. Students will read critically in order to analyze sources.
3. Students will synthesize multiple sources and integrate source material effectively with their own thinking.
4. Students will attribute and document sources appropriately in research-based projects.

Faculty Work Groups

In order to encourage broad-based and significant change in students' understanding of source use, we must first make sure faculty and academic support staff share a common understanding of best practices in the instruction of research, reading, synthesis of information, and documentation. Our project therefore depends heavily on professional development. Using a "train the trainer" model, we have designed two cohorts of Faculty Work Groups (FWGs)—small committees of faculty who meet weekly to read scholarly research on students' use of sources and to discuss how best to create a culture of complex and responsible use of sources in our classrooms and across campus. These FWGs are responsible for developing and piloting pedagogical and curricular changes in their own courses, for sharing their findings with their departments in formal ways, and for creating resources for other faculty and for students that guide them, respectively, in the instruction and practice of source use. The FWGs also coordinate with representatives from the Library and Writing Center to share ideas and resources and to facilitate a campus-wide approach to helping students learn to use resources effectively.

Assessment

We rely on a variety of direct and indirect measures including pre- and post-testing and a rubric based in AAC&U VALUE standards to assess our success in improving students' abilities to integrate research, writing, and critical thinking in the creation of research-based projects.