

Rams Write: Improving Writing in the Major
Winston-Salem State University
Executive Summary

Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) engaged all categories of university constituencies, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Board of Trustees, in developing its QEP, “Rams Write: Improving Writing in the Major.” The university examined available data of student performance on 21 century skills and on mathematics and science competencies. All categories of university constituencies were surveyed to determine the most important skill that should be developed in students. Subsequent focus groups, forums, and meetings with WSSU faculty, staff, students, and the leadership team narrowed the topic to writing in the major.

The analysis of student performance data and the review of literature on writing research led to the establishment of four writing goals to enhance students’ writing skills, to affect their writing behavior, and to impact their efficacy beliefs. Thus, students will (1) demonstrate competence in written communication, using appropriate language, conventions, organization, supporting evidence, and content appropriate to the purpose and audience; (2) know/understand and use the writing process to produce WIM papers, drawing upon available resources (writing process—prewriting, drafting, revision, Writing Center, O’Kelly Library, and online resources); (3) understand and use the criteria for judging effective writing (WSSU Holistic Writing Rubric--HWR and the Critical Reading Guide--CRG); and (4) demonstrate confidence in their ability to write effectively and to provide useful feedback to peers (efficacy beliefs, peer review). These goals will be assessed through direct and indirect measures each year; and outside consultants with expertise in writing and assessment will conduct program reviews and make recommendations for improvement.

The QEP Writing in the Major ((WIM) Program uses a model which includes student development, faculty development, and curriculum modifications to ensure that WSSU graduates are able to write competently. To ensure success, juniors and seniors enrolled in required courses in the major will submit writing assignments requiring their use of the writing process, use of appropriate criteria, engagement in the peer review process, and use of university resources, including the Writing Center, the O’Kelly Library, and online WIM materials. Faculty who teach the WIM courses will be trained in holistic and analytic evaluation of writing, in strategies for integrating peer review into their courses and use of the CRG, and in designing and redesigning writing assessments.

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