

AC WRITES | AUSTIN COLLEGE

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Austin College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), titled *AC Writes*, is designed to promote a culture of writing at Austin College by increasing opportunities for students to practice and reinforce their writing skills in different disciplinary and rhetorical contexts, improving pedagogical support for faculty, and creating new resources for integrating writing and writing instruction into the Austin College mission.

The QEP furthers the College's mission to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences in order to prepare them for rewarding careers and for full, engaged, and meaningful lives. The QEP aligns with the College's Strategic Plan, which recognizes that students in the 21st century must both "understand how knowledge is constructed and challenged" and "know how to communicate with audiences, actual and virtual, using a wide range of compelling strategies and techniques." The QEP's enhanced curricular and co-curricular components provide students with "opportunities for critical reflection, creative expression, and appreciation for complexity." Writing provides students with intensive and intentional means of academic, professional, and personal engagement. As a high-impact practice, writing-intensive courses facilitate significant interactions among instructors and students in support of deep learning and engagement.

AC Writes enjoys the broad-based support of students, staff, faculty, and administration, the result of intentional discussions about writing over the course of three years. The planning, development, and implementation of *AC Writes* has been guided by shared principles gathered from student and faculty input, best practices among peer institutions, and research on writing pedagogy, recognizing that effective writing instruction: 1) values continued, guided practice, 2) should be integrated into the knowledge-making work of regular class instruction, 3) should be explicit and intentional, 4) approaches writing as rhetorical, and 5) needs to be institutionally manageable and sustainable.

Meeting the challenge of the strategic plan to develop signature opportunities to enhance written communication skills, the QEP consists of two major interrelated components:

- **Writing Curriculum:** The College's old writing requirement is replaced by a new, more integrated, and more effectively supported three-credit writing curriculum. Students will take a Foundation Writing (FW) course no later than the first semester of the sophomore year, and will also take two Advanced Writing (AW) courses in two different disciplines. Advanced Writing courses will allow students to reinforce and build on their writing in discipline- and/or rhetorically-specific contexts. This integrated curriculum will create intentional opportunities for students to practice, reinforce, and diversify their skills, ensuring all Austin College students gain key writing knowledge and practices that will allow them to grow as writers and build the communication skills needed to lead fulfilling personal and professional lives.
- **Curricular and Co-Curricular Support for Students and Faculty:** The College will implement specific initiatives to support student learning and faculty pedagogical development. The newly created **Scarborough Center for Writing** supports *students* by offering one-to-one tutoring, writing workshops and resources, and significant educational and professional experiences for peer tutors; it supports *faculty* teaching in all aspects of the writing curriculum. The Writing Center also works with campus programs to provide writing resources for the extracurricular and professional endeavors of students, staff, and faculty.

The QEP assessment plan identifies three student learning outcomes and four institutional outcomes. Multi-modal assessment tools will be used to measure student achievement, assess the success of the plan, and guide changes and improvements as appropriate. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will manage the assessment plan, a new standing academic committee for writing skills has been created to oversee the writing curriculum and writing center, and the QEP task force is responsible for implementing the QEP, monitoring its progress, and making recommendations for improvement.