ELON UNIVERSITY

Writing Excellence Initiative

{ QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN }

We write

On-site Review April 16 to 18, 2013

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Writing Excellence Initiative

Quality Enhancement Plan

Elon University

Dates of On-Site Review

April 16-18, 2013

President

Dr. Leo M. Lambert

Accreditation Liaison

Dr. Steven D. House

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CHAPTER 1

Executive Summary

After a community-wide process of identifying our topic, articulating shared goals, and developing a comprehensive action plan, Elon University is prepared to embark on a Writing Excellence Initiative that will significantly enhance the writing abilities of all Elon students, undergraduate and graduate, in every major and program. The Initiative aligns with Elon's mission to "integrate learning across the disciplines, and put knowledge into practice, thus preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good."

The Writing Excellence Initiative has three student learning outcomes. By the time of graduation, every Elon student will be fully prepared to:

Write to learn: Through writing, Elon graduates will understand new content and perspectives, analyze information and problems, and generate knowledge.

Write in a discipline: Through writing, Elon graduates will develop and communicate ideas effectively to readers, for purposes and in contexts that are appropriate for their fields of study.

Write as a citizen: Through writing, Elon graduates will communicate effectively with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.

Four primary actors will guide our efforts to prepare students for these outcomes:

1. Academic Departments
2. General Studies Program
3. Student Life Division
4. Elon Center for Writing Excellence

Taken together, the actions of the four primary actors will provide every Elon student with intensive and extended instruction related to each student learning outcome. To assure that their actions produce complementary high-impact improvements, the primary actors will follow the same four-phase process. The process begins with evaluation of current practices followed by careful planning of possible improvements. The central phase is pilot testing, which always incorporates assessment. The process concludes with careful attention to the implementation and assessment of the actions that pilot testing has demonstrated to be effective.

To help us achieve our aspirations for the QEP, we will create the Center for Writing Excellence. By combining our student Writing Center and Writing Across the University Program, the new Center will diversify and greatly expand the support for writing and writing instruction offered to faculty, staff, and students. The new Center will occupy renovated space at the symbolic and practical heart of Elon's intellectual life, Belk Library.

The Writing Excellence Initiative will unfold over five years, engaging each primary actor on its own pace depending on its particular needs and goals, although all will complete the full action cycle at least once during the next five years.

To guide our Writing Excellence Initiative, we will establish an organizational structure that is integrated with our current systems for efficiency, follows our institutional traditions for sustainability, enlists broad participation to achieve maximum impact, and provides a high level of flexibility so we can take

advantage of opportunities that arise in the years ahead.

Because the Writing Excellence Initiative aligns with Elon's mission and strategic goals, the University is committed to providing the extensive resources necessary for success. Most of these resources will go to work at the grass roots, supporting the efforts of the primary actors in departments and programs across campus.

We will integrate the Writing Excellence Initiative's assessment processes and procedures into existing structures at the university. To assess the overall impact of the Initiative, a committee reporting to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will be charged with gathering, synthesizing, and reporting on the diverse assessment data being generated, and with making recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

CHAPTER 2

Process Used To Develop the QEP

Since 2010, the Elon University community has been developing our Quality Enhancement Plan, proceeding in three major stages: generating ideas, selecting a topic, and constructing the plan. At every stage, we have involved faculty, staff, and students by organizing meetings, inviting community members to contact the persons most closely involved with the QEP process, and creating digital forums, some affording anonymity, where community members could contribute their ideas, suggestions, concerns, and criticisms.

We began in November 2010 by creating a four-person QEP Topic Selection Committee (Figure 2.1) charged with helping the Elon community generate possible topics, explore their implications and potential benefits to Elon students, and select a final topic that has gained widespread enthusiasm and support.

Figure 2.1. Membership of QEP Topic Selection Committee (December 2010 – November 2011)

Name	Role
David Copeland	A.J. Fletcher Professor of Communications
Pam Kiser	Watts/Thompson Professor of Human Service Studies and Distinguished University Professor
Todd Lee	Professor of Mathematics
Jodean Schmiederer	Assistant Dean of Students

GENERATING IDEAS

The QEP Topic Selection Committee devoted winter and spring 2011 to soliciting potential QEP topics from the entire university. Members met with academic and administrative departments, Student Life leaders, and other organizations; staffed a QEP table at weekly College Coffees (a once-a-week campus-wide gathering for all students, faculty, and staff); and published articles about the QEP selection process in our student-run newspaper, the *Pendulum*, and on our University newsfeed, *E-Net*. The committee also developed a website where community members could post their ideas publicly and invite further discussion of them. For community members who did not feel comfortable posting their views on the website, the committee established the qep@elon.edu email address where community members could send their ideas (for examples of communication about the QEP with various campus constituents, see Appendix I).

SELECTING A TOPIC

After spring break 2011, the QEP Topic Selection Committee began a deliberate, inclusive process for selecting the final topic. This process proceeded in five major stages.

1. **Narrowing the list to twenty-two topics.** After spring break 2011, the committee began narrowing the long list of suggested topics by identifying twenty-two prominent topics or themes. The topics, all of which were aligned with Elon's mission, were: Civic Engagement,

Critical Thinking, Deep Learning, Diversity, Engaged Learning, Ethical Reasoning/Ethics, Four-Year Learning Plan, Futures Thinking and Innovation, Global Citizenship, House System, Integrative Learning, Intellectual Climate, Internationalizing the Curriculum, Learning Resource Center, Mentored Learning, Post-Disaster Response Studies and Service, Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning, Residential Campus, Research Skills, Study Away, Transformative Learning, and Writing. The committee posted these twenty-two topics, along with a brief description of each at the QEP website for comment and discussion, and continued to meet extensively with groups across campus to solicit input.

2. **Narrowing the list to six topics.** The committee then narrowed the list of twenty-two possible topics to six that it felt deserved the most serious consideration. For this purpose, it used comments it had received on the twenty-two in order to generate a list of four selection criteria (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Criteria for QEP Topic Selection

Criteria for QEP Topic Selection
The potential to have a major impact on student learning
Perceived levels of viability, value, and feasibility by each and all University constituencies
Fit with the University mission and strategic priorities
Both fit and uniqueness in relation to current initiatives (i.e., neither doing something completely unrelated nor simply doing more of the same)

By applying these criteria at the end of spring semester 2011, the committee identified six topics with the greatest support across campus:

1. Civic Engagement
2. Diversity
3. Futures Thinking
4. Information Literacy
5. Intellectual Engagement
6. Writing

3. **Enabling detailed consideration of the six major options by the university community.** The QEP Topic Selection Committee and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs agreed that the next step should be to prepare for a detailed discussion of the six topics when classes resumed in the fall. The Provost/VPAA appointed a pair of knowledgeable advocates for each option to prepare a 10-page white paper that would help the campus-at-large understand what implementing it would entail and what benefits it would bring to Elon students. For writing these papers, the twelve authors each received a stipend. To clarify the nature of the white papers,

which included supporting documents and the timetable for this work, the committee met with the twelve writers in late May. In August, it reviewed the drafts and posted them on the QEP website for the community to read and discuss.

4. **Preparing a recommendation to President Lambert.** In August 2011, the QEP Topic Selection Committee initiated the campus-wide discussion of the six options that would serve as the basis for its recommendation to President Lambert. During the week before classes began—a time when all faculty and staff are engaged in meetings focused on advancing Elon's mission—the committee hosted two University-wide sessions at which the writing teams presented their work and promoted discussion. Throughout fall 2011, it again sponsored University-wide lunch sessions at which the six potential QEP topics were discussed more deeply. Faculty, students, and staff posted their thoughts about each of the ideas on the website at which they could download the six white papers and also post comments, suggestions, and critiques of each. Also, articles in the *Pendulum* and on *E-net* invited students to share their thoughts on the web site or with those facilitating this process. The QEP Topic Selection Committee also staffed a table at each weekly College Coffee and arranged to talk with diverse community constituents about their reactions to the six ideas under consideration. Posters summarizing the six ideas (and providing a link to the website through a QR code) were on display throughout the campus.

After more than a month of discussion about the six white papers, the committee in early October conducted an online poll that included both Likert scale-type and open-ended questions to assess the support for each topic among faculty, staff, and students. The committee analyzed the poll results and discussed its findings with a range of campus constituencies including the President's Senior Staff. Following those deliberations, the QEP Topic Selection Committee announced that it had narrowed the topic list to the three that had been most highly rated in the poll:

1. Civic Engagement
2. Information Literacy
3. Writing

5. **Final Selection**

The QEP Topic Selection Committee prepared a formal report for the President and the Provost/VPAA summarizing both the opportunities and the challenges of each of the three potential topics. Shortly after it submitted the report, the committee met with the President and Provost/VPAA to discuss the top three topics. All committee members shared their individual views on the relative merits of each topic proposal and told the President and Provost/VPAA that they supported the selection of any of the final three topics.

After this meeting, the President conducted a series of informal discussions with diverse groups across campus about possible QEP topics. In November, the President contacted the QEP Topic Selection Committee to announce that Writing was selected as the final topic for Elon's QEP, and a university-wide announcement was made.

DEVELOPING OUR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

In January 2012, the Provost/VPAA appointed a 28-member planning committee that has worked from January 2012 through February 2013 to develop the QEP report and to raise awareness about the QEP (Figure 2.3). This committee included diverse representation from across campus and also many people with distinct expertise in writing instruction and assessment, as well as the co-authors of the 10-page white paper on Writing that inspired the QEP, Paula Patch and Paula Rosinski. Peter Felten, Assistant Provost and Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, was named committee chair. Paul Anderson joined the committee when he was hired at Elon in the summer of 2012.

Figure 2.3. Membership of QEP Committee (January 2012 – present)

Name	Role
Paul Anderson	Director of Writing Across the University, Professor of English
Steve Bailey	Professor of Physical Therapy Education
Steve Braye	Professor of English
Scott Buechler	Assistant Professor of Business Communications
Jeffrey Coker	Director of General Studies, Associate Professor of Biology
Steve DeLoach	Professor of Economics
Peter Felten (chair)	Assistant Provost, Executive Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching & Learning, Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Associate Professor of History
Kenn Gaither	Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Communications
Betty Garrison	Reference/Business Librarian
Mary Kate Hinshaw	Student
Melissa Jordan	Associate Director of the Multicultural Center

Libby Joyce	Assistant Director of Institutional Research
Lauren Kearns	Associate Professor of Dance
Katie King	Associate Professor of Psychology, Associate Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching & Learning
Maurice Levesque	Associate Dean of Elon College, Professor of Psychology
Phillip Motley	Assistant Professor of Communications
Mary Morrison	Director of the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement
Angela Owusu-Ansah	Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Education
Paula Patch	Director of College Writing and Lecturer in English
Rebecca Todd Peters	Associate Professor and Chair of Religious Studies
Tim Peeples	Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, Professor of English
Kelly Reimer	Director of Teaching & Learning Technologies
Paula Rosinski	Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center
Jodean Schmiederer	Assistant Dean of Students
Karl Seinerth	Professor of Chemistry
Megan Squire	Associate Professor of Computing Sciences
Jeff Stern	Student
Rissa Trachman	Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology
Catherine Wasson	Associate Professor of Law, Director of Legal Writing and Research

During the next year, the committee organized itself and prepared three major drafts of the QEP report, each a significant advance over the previous one.

1. **Organizing the committee's work.** During the spring of 2012, the Committee met monthly to begin developing the 10-page white paper into a comprehensive plan for the Writing Excellence Initiative. The Committee divided into three subcommittees to expedite this work:
    1. Communication Subcommittee to focus on raising awareness about the QEP.
    2. Culture of Writing Subcommittee to focus on articulating the QEP's goals and outcomes.
    3. Research Subcommittee to focus on gathering relevant assessment and other data related to the QEP.

By the end of the spring semester, the Committee had accomplished several of its goals, including creating an informational QEP website (www.elon.edu/qep), outlining possible student learning outcomes, developing a set of shared values to serve as a foundation for the QEP, and synthesizing the existing assessment data on writing at Elon. The Committee shared its work to-date in a May campus-wide forum, soliciting feedback on its draft outcomes and prompting discussion about goals and concerns about the emerging QEP. The Committee met at the end of the spring semester to charge a 6-person team of writers to develop a first draft of the QEP report over the summer. The committee chair and the Provost/VPAA then discussed the QEP with Elon's Board of Trustees at its May 31-June 2 retreat.

2. **Preparing the first major draft for campus consideration.** The summer writing team (Anderson, Coker, Felten, Patch, Peeples, and Rosinski) crafted an initial draft of the student learning outcomes, actions, and assessment process. They received feedback on this draft in early August from a group of associate deans and others with considerable assessment experience and then revised the draft for presentation to the full QEP Committee in mid-August 2012. In early September 2012, President Lambert emailed a draft of the Writing Excellence Initiative to the entire Elon community (faculty, staff, and students) requesting conversation and feedback.

3. **Preparing the second major draft for campus-wide consideration.** Throughout fall 2012, QEP Committee members fanned out across campus to talk about the draft with academic departments, Student Life Division, Student Government Association, Young Alumni Council, and many other groups. The committee also solicited online feedback about the draft, and hosted open forums to bring together people from across campus to discuss it. In late fall, the committee synthesized the many suggestions, concerns, and requests for clarification. In early December 2012, the committee chair emailed a significantly revised draft of the Writing Excellence Initiative to the entire Elon community requesting further conversation and input.

4. **Preparing the final draft.** The QEP Committee again met with diverse groups across campus to gather feedback on the second major draft. After a February 2013 campus forum, it convened to make final revisions to the report, bringing to a conclusion the process through which it engaged the entire Elon community in the development of our QEP (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. Constituents Involved in Developing Elon's QEP

Constituents	Stage of Development		
	Generating Ideas Fall 2010 – Spring 2011	Selecting Topic Spring 2011 – Fall 2011	Developing Plan Winter 2012 – Spring 2013
Faculty	✓	✓	✓
Staff	✓	✓	✓
Administration	✓	✓	✓
Students	✓	✓	✓
Board of Trustees	✓	✓	✓
Alumni	✓	✓	✓
Visits to QEP web site	Not tracked	2378	3006

FINAL STEPS IN THE PROCESS

As the QEP Committee prepared to submit the QEP Report to SACS, it also launched a campus-wide communication campaign to further raise awareness about the Writing Excellence Initiative. This campaign included print and online materials featuring prominent student and administrative leaders under the slogans “I Write” and “We Write” (see Appendix 2). Unlike previous efforts, which focused on gathering feedback about the evolving plan, the spring 2013 efforts concentrated on promoting the core ideas for the Writing Excellence Initiative that emerged during our extensive, community-wide deliberations–that Elon aspires to have all of its graduates be excellent writers; that we value writing to learn, writing in disciplines, and writing as citizens; and that, as individuals and as a community, we write.

The past 2.5 years of campus conversations about the QEP has prepared Elon to launch a Writing Excellence Initiative that has the support of constituents throughout our community. We are ready to begin.

CHAPTER 3

Identification of the Topic

The Elon community selected our QEP topic because an intensive focus on writing across the university complements our mission, strategic priorities, and shared aspirations for our graduates. Writing is a foundational skill for learning, professional success, and engaged citizenship. Writing also is an opportunity for continual improvement–even our best student writers can become better, and even our best teachers of writing can become better. We recognize that the Writing Excellence Initiative is ambitious in its scope and its goals. That suits our institutional ethos of aiming to provide the most engaging educational experiences for all of our graduates.

Elon's mission statement articulates our intention to "transform" students through a "rich intellectual community" and "dynamic and challenging" curricular and co-curricular programs that "integrate learning across the disciplines, and put knowledge into practice, thus preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good" (Figure 3.1) The Writing Excellence Initiative's student learning outcomes echo this mission by preparing graduates to write to learn, write in disciplines, and write as citizens.

Figure 3.1. Elon University Mission

Elon University Mission

Elon University embraces its founders' vision of an academic community that transforms mind, body, and spirit and encourages freedom of thought and liberty of conscience.

To fulfill this vision, Elon University acts upon these commitments:

a. We nurture a rich intellectual community characterized by active student engagement with a faculty dedicated to excellent teaching and scholarly accomplishment.

b. We provide a dynamic and challenging undergraduate curriculum grounded in the traditional liberal arts and sciences and complemented by distinctive professional and graduate programs.

c. We integrate learning across the disciplines and put knowledge into practice, thus preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good.

d. We foster respect for human differences, passion for a life of learning, personal integrity, and an ethic of work and service.

In December 2009, the University's Board of Trustees launched a 10-year strategic plan, The Elon Commitment (www.elon.edu/eloncommitment). In announcing this action the Board affirmed:

> Our vision for The Elon Commitment is simple and powerful: to engage students' minds and inspire them to act as leaders and global citizens. Key to our success will be a continued focus on increasing the level of academic

> challenge at the university, with a strong emphasis on liberal arts and sciences as the foundation of an Elon education.

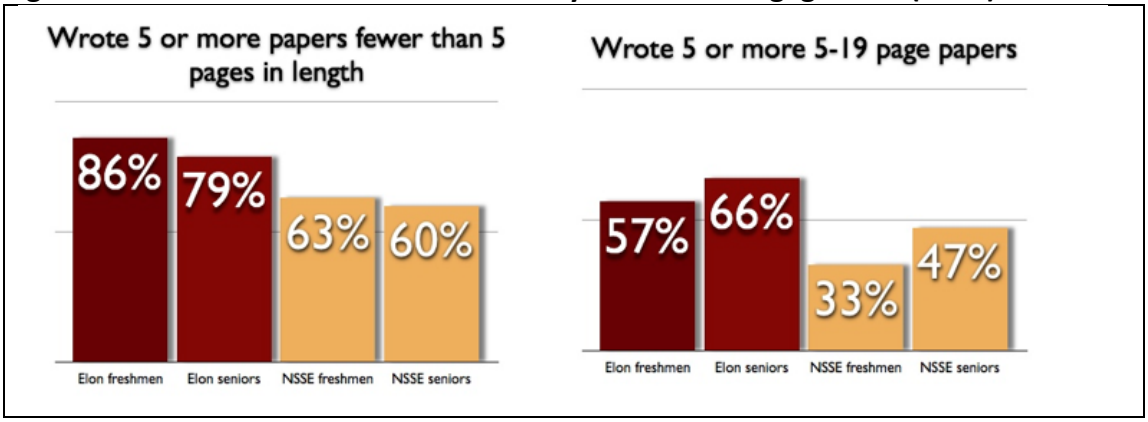
The Writing Excellence Initiative aligns with that strategic commitment to academic challenge, engaged learning, and liberal education for all of our students.

Attention to writing is not a new feature of Elon's education. Our learning environment has been enriched and strengthened over the past 20 years by a vigorous writing-across-the-curriculum effort that has fostered attention to writing throughout coursework at all levels of the university and by a heavily utilized student Writing Center that is centrally located on the first floor of Belk Library. The foundation for the Writing Excellence Initiative also builds on our curricular strengths at the undergraduate and graduate level, such as: a well-designed first-year writing course and our writing-intensive required first-year seminar, The Global Experience; many curricular requirements related to writing in, for instance, the School of Communications, the Love School of Business, and the School of Law; and an emphasis on effective writing and communication as core competencies for graduate programs in Business, Education, and the Health Sciences. In addition, Elon's co-curricular programs have a history of supporting writing excellence, including a long-standing committee on writing in the Division of Student Life and extensive one-on-one work with student writers offered by our Student Professional Development Center, the National Fellowships Office, and the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement.

The foundations for the Writing Excellence Initiative are a primary reason why Elon has been recognized nationally for our sustained commitment to engaged learning. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, we are at or above the average rating for the top ten percent of all NSSE schools for providing students with enriching educational experiences, active and collaborative learning opportunities, and frequent student-faculty interaction. Our Law School, which *The National Jurist* recently recognized as one of the top 20 innovative law schools in the country, includes a Center for Engaged Learning in Law. And in 2012, *U.S. News & World Report's* profile of colleges and universities that "focus on student success" listed Elon in seven of eight possible categories: First-Year Experience, Internships, Learning Communities, Senior Capstone, Service Learning, Study Abroad, and Undergraduate Research/Creative Projects. While we are proud to be the only institution listed in more than four *U.S. News* categories, we also notice our absence from one: "Writing in the Disciplines."

Our assessment data suggest that writing is an area for improvement at Elon. As part of recent conversations about possible revisions to our General Studies curriculum, a committee surveyed faculty about various aspects of our undergraduate academic program. Sixty-nine percent of faculty respondents noted the importance of writing and expressed a desire for more writing instruction, integrated throughout the four undergraduate years and also in the disciplines. Similarly, Elon's NSSE data indicate that 57% of Elon first-year students and 66% of Elon seniors wrote five or more 5- to 19-page papers, and 86% of first-year students and 79% of seniors five or more papers fewer than 5 pages in length (Figure 3.2). While Elon's students' NSSE results compare favorably to many other NSSE institutions, these numbers also suggest that a significant portion of Elon's first-year students and seniors may still be drifting through an academic year without significant practice in or attention to writing, particularly rigorous scholarly writing. The Writing Excellence Initiative will help us to close that gap, ensuring challenging and engaging writing opportunities for all Elon students every semester.

Figure 3.2. 2012 Data from National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)



Because writing is not only an end in itself but also a means of increasing student engagement, the Writing Excellence Initiative has and will be able to maintain strong support from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our Board of Trustees. Through the QEP selection process we repeatedly discussed research demonstrating that well-designed writing activities increase students' engagement and learning, as well as their self-reported gains in general education knowledge, practical competencies, and personal and social growth. Writing, in short, is a tool for achieving the diverse goals of our campus community. The Writing Excellence Initiative is not a burden or distraction to our community. Instead, engaged writing is a powerful way of enabling Elon to become "more Elon."

CHAPTER 4

Student Learning Outcomes

From January 2012 to March 2013, Elon faculty, staff and students participated in dozens of discussions about the Writing Excellence Initiative's student learning outcomes. Through this process, our campus community articulated and affirmed certain values and purposes for our common work:

- We value writing as means of thinking, learning, and communicating.
- We use writing to help students achieve course and program objectives.
- We want our students to approach writing as a process through which they develop their ideas as well as refine their expression.
- We want our students to learn transferable skills that will enable them to write effectively on campus and in whatever career or advanced study they choose after graduation.
- We value the diverse forms of writing made possible by print and digital formats.
- We want our students to continue to improve their writing abilities as they proceed through the university—and beyond.
- We want our students to use writing for self-reflection, self-development, and self-expression.
- We want our students to value and use writing as a tool to contribute positively to our campus, their professions, their communities, and the world.

To achieve our shared aspirations for student writing, we have developed three student learning outcomes.

By the time of graduation, every Elon student will be fully prepared to:

SLO 1. **Write to learn:** Through writing, Elon graduates will understand new content and perspectives, analyze information and problems, and generate knowledge.

SLO 2. **Write in a discipline:** Through writing, Elon graduates will develop and communicate ideas effectively to readers, for purposes and in contexts that are appropriate for their fields of study.

SLO 3. **Write as a citizen:** Through writing, Elon graduates will communicate effectively with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.

Our three student learning outcomes provide a focus around which we will organize the Writing Excellence Initiative's actions. We also intend to deepen our campus culture of writing by helping all members of the Elon community write effectively, including faculty and staff who wish to increase their writing abilities, and by becoming a major contributor to national and international discussions of writing and the teaching of writing in higher education.

Our student learning outcomes center on *engaged* writing, the writing through which our students and graduates will interact with, collaborate with, argue with, and affect others. Engagement is a central theme of Elon's approach to education. We strive to enact engaging pedagogies and create an engaging learning environment. Because engaged learning holds such a prominent place in Elon's culture, the

Writing Excellence Initiative's focus on engaged writing is a powerful way of helping Elon to enact our mission of "integrat[ing] learning across the disciplines and put[ting] knowledge into practice, thus preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good."

CHAPTER 5

BEST PRACTICES IN INSTITUTION-WIDE WRITING INITIATIVES: LITERATURE SEARCH AND MODEL PROGRAMS

We have designed the Writing Excellence Initiative not only to build on Elon's existing strengths, but also to enact best practices in institution-wide writing initiatives that have emerged from our research in the literature and of model programs. The best practices we identified are based on new research, lessons learned from the successes and failures of the writing across the curriculum movement that originated in the 1970s, and models being developed and adopted by universities that are investing significantly in new ways of advancing their students' writing abilities. Writing programs that served as examples and inspirations for our work include those at:

- Auburn University
- Carleton College
- Chalmers University of Technology (Gothenburg, Sweden)
- Clemson University
- Duke University
- Indiana University
- Miami University (Ohio)
- North Carolina State University
- Queen Mary College (London, England)
- Stanford University
- University of Minnesota
- University of Missouri
- University of Wisconsin

Through our study of the programs at these universities and our literature search, we identified nine groups of best practices that serve as foundations for our Writing Excellence Initiative. These best practices have guided our decisions about everything from the student learning outcomes we have developed through the way we have designed our actions and assessment processes; and these best practices will continue to shape our work throughout the course of the QEP.

BP 1. ESTABLISH GRADUATION-ORIENTED GOALS FOR ALL STUDENTS

a. Directly target the writing students will do after graduation
b. Enhance the writing abilities of all students

Our examination of best practices in institution-wide writing initiatives begins with the way these schools define their overall goals. All aim to prepare students to write effectively after graduation. An emerging best practice involves the way universities pursue this goal. Studies by Beaufort, Dias et al., Freedman, and Medway and Pare (among others) have revealed the struggles many college graduates have as they try to learn how to write competently in their professions. Graduates encounter these difficulties because of the substantial differences between the kinds of writing they learn to do in school

and the kinds demanded in their careers, a difference that is captured in the title of a book edited by Dias: *World's Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Settings*. Consequently, the new best practice in establishing goals for institution-wide writing initiatives is to directly target the writing students will do after graduation by replacing instruction and practice in writing school-genres such as the term paper, in which students address their professors for the purposes of demonstrating their knowledge, with instruction and practice at writing the genres used in the students' fields of study (*Auburn, Chalmers, Miami*). Sometimes termed "authentic" assignments (Beaufort), the latter involve teaching students to write to the kinds of readers they will address after they leave the university, readers whose purposes for reading and criteria for evaluating writing differ greatly from those of professors. In addition to targeting the writing done in the disciplines and professions students are studying, authentic assignments may also include the kinds of writing through which graduates participate in public discussions of issues of local, regional, and global importance (Clark, Grabill, S. Rose, Simmons).

Institution-wide writing initiatives also vary in the portion of their student bodies that they aim to benefit. Many programs concentrate their efforts on a subset of their students, such as first-year students, undergraduates, or students perceived to have significant writing deficiencies. The best practice pursued by all of our model programs is to aspire to help every undergraduate and graduate student, no matter how proficient already, to write even more expertly.

BP 2. BASE THE OVERALL APPROACH ON A ROBUST UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MAKES GOOD WRITING

a. Recognize that what makes good writing and thinking varies from context to context
b. Treat writing and thinking as different aspects of the same activity
c. Establish overall goals and centralized monitoring, but entrust implementation to each program
d. Include the variety of technologies with which people will write in the twenty-first century

Four best practices supported by our literature survey and the examples of our model programs concern the ways good writing is defined. Most important is the practice of recognizing that what makes good writing differs from context to context (Bean; Carter, Writing; Forsman; Herrington). Chemists would not be able to publish a report on their research in a peer-reviewed chemistry journal if they wrote it by following the model of an article published in a literary-studies journal about a play by Shakespeare. One best practice in institution-wide writing programs is to recognize the significance of differences among the kinds of good writing and, therefore, to help students develop the ability to write well in specific contexts, including (but not necessarily limited to) the contexts of the fields in which they are studying. Their adoption of this best practice is one feature that distinguishes our model programs from programs that focus only on generic writing skills they believe will assure success in any context.

A closely allied best practice is to treat writing and thinking as different aspects of the same activity (Carter, Ways; Forsman; Russell, Thaiss). The way people in any field write is so closely tied to the ways they think and act that writing and thinking are different aspects of the same activity: to write like a chemist, sociologist, historian, or literary scholar requires one to perform the intellectual work of a chemist, sociologist, historian, or literary scholar. This relationship between writing and thinking is one reason that writing is such an effective means of learning. To learn to write in a course in any other field is to learn to think like a specialist in that field, at least if the writing being taught is authentic. Even intellectual tasks that educators typically speak of generically, such as critical thinking and information literacy, differ from field to field—and a way to learn to how a field performs them is through writing (Bean; Bowles-Terry; Condon, Assessing; Lewis; Selber; VanHome). To operationalize the best practice of

treating writing and thinking as different aspects of the same thing, faculty can fully integrate the writing assignments and outcomes with the other assignments and outcomes of their courses (Burge, Townsend). Student writing centers can develop strategies for collaborating with librarians in developing the information literacy and critical thinking abilities of the students who consult them (*Miami, Indiana*).

The context-specific nature of good writing leads directly to a best practice involving the assignment of responsibility for designing, implementing, and assessing the actions taken to develop students' writing abilities. While the overall goal is institutional, the link between writing and learning and the context-specific nature of "good" writing makes each department or program the most effective locus of action. These local actors are uniquely qualified to define the writing outcomes for their programs—because they know the domain-specific kinds of writing prepared by specialists in their fields, and they know the ways of thinking that they intend to develop in their students. Likewise, because they understand the contexts, readers, communication strategies, and intellectual processes that are inextricably linked with authentic writing in their areas, they are also uniquely qualified to provide instruction in and to assess the quality of that writing. Consequently, the best practice for the overall design of institution-wide writing programs is for the university to entrust implementation details to departments and programs while it also establishes overall goals, provides the support necessary for success, and maintains ongoing review of local actions (Townsend; *Auburn, Miami, NCSU, Minnesota*).

An additional best practice related to the definition of good writing is to expand the definition to encompass writing done in multimedia genres as well as in print or digital files that resemble print (Council, Council et al., Grabill et al., Porter, Porter, Sheridan, WPA, Yancey*, Miami, Minnesota, and Stanford*). Many university graduates will need to be able to communicate in twenty-first-century modes.

BP 3. TAKE A CURRICULUM-WIDE APPROACH

a. Have students write throughout their studies and time in college
b. Design programs to develop students' writing abilities progressively throughout their years of study
c. Teach for transfer of writing knowledge and skills from course to course and situation to situation

A best practice shared by all of our model programs is to take, in various ways, a curriculum-wide approach aimed at assuring that students write a great deal throughout their years of study. The first reason for wanting to assure that students write extensively is that learning to write effectively takes a long time, lots of practice, and lots of feedback. University faculty, staff, and administrators—even writing specialists—continue to learn throughout their careers. Consequently, it is unrealistic to imagine that in one first-year composition class, undergraduates would learn all that is needed in their future studies, to say nothing of their lives after graduation, or that graduate students could become outstanding writers from a few written projects in their courses. Another reason for aiming to involve students in a great deal of writing is that more writing leads to more engagement in the deep learning activities recognized as producing the growth in students' knowledge, skills, and abilities that are the goals of higher education. Based on interviews with hundreds of students at several dozen universities, Light concluded that "The results were stunning. The relationship between the amount of writing for a course and the students' level of engagement . . . is stronger than the relationship between students' engagement and any other course characteristic" (55). In *Academically Adrift*, Arum and Roksa found one striking exception to their overall conclusion that, as evaluated by their methodology, many students make no appreciable progress during their first two years in college: Students who took writing-intensive courses along with courses that required substantial amount of reading made the

progress that was otherwise absent. These and other studies indicate the value of assigning students lots of writing throughout their studies (Astin, Bok, Kuh).

An additional best practice developed by some of our model programs is to coordinate the writing instruction and practice provided in some sets of courses so they progressively develop students' writing expertise over the students' time at the university. This best practice is an application of *constructive alignment*, in which learning outcomes for courses and for entire degree programs are explicitly stated; teaching methods are chosen that are likely to achieve the objectives; students are asked to perform the tasks identified in the objectives; the tasks and associated instruction are scaffolded to lead students to levels of task performance that are appropriate for the students, course, and program; and assessment focuses on the students' abilities at the end of their study to perform the tasks at the desired level (Biggs, Biggs and Tang). For writing, constructive alignment has been adapted to reimagine courses that satisfy traditional writing-intensive course requirements that are anchored in students' majors (often called a writing-in-the-disciplines requirement). Sometimes academic programs treat these courses as independent of one another. When constructively aligned, the courses are coordinated to progressively develop students' writing abilities as the students advance from the introductory to the culminating courses in their programs (Beaufort, Burge, Hall, Sageev, Smit*; Chalmers, Miami*).

Another best practice is to teach students in a way that enhances their ability to apply in a novel situation the relevant knowledge they gained in another context. Beaufort, Carroll, Moore, Nelms and Dively, Perkins, Wardle, and Yancey, among others, have identified effective techniques that substantially increase students' abilities to recognize the opportunity to draw on existing knowledge and their ability to apply that knowledge effectively. This best practice not only supports the steady, intentional development of students' writing abilities through constructively aligned courses, but also prepares them to write effectively in the new contexts in which they will find themselves after graduation.

BP 4. INCORPORATE THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

a. Incorporate the writing students do in their courses
b. Incorporate writing students do with faculty outside of their courses
c. Incorporate writing students do with Student Life and other staff
d. Incorporate students' self-sponsored writing

A best practice adopted by many of our model programs is to reach beyond the curriculum for opportunities to develop students' writing abilities. Some incorporate well-designed writing assignments, instruction, and feedback. Examples include the mentoring faculty give to students applying for internal or external research grants and the assistance that career centers provide students about their employment and graduate school applications. Even the large amount of writing students undertake on their own, without any formal connection with the university, can help students develop their writing abilities (Fishman, Grabill et al., Roozen). All writing, whatever the occasion, provides students with a learning opportunity.

BP 5. MAXIMIZE STUDENT LEARNING FROM EACH WRITING EXPERIENCE

a. Provide explicit instruction about ways to write the assigned communications effectively
b. Create meaning-making assignments in which students authentically engage in the kinds of writing done by disciplinary specialists and professionals in the fields they are studying
c. Make writing and thinking expectations clear
d. Incorporate an interactive writing process that provides students with feedback while they are working on their assignments
e. Set class sizes at a level that promotes effective teaching and learning of writing

Every institution-wide writing program wishes to maximize the learning that will occur with each writing experience students have. One of the most obvious best practices for helping students increase their writing abilities is also one of the most challenging. Sometimes faculty assign and then collect writing without providing students with any of the writing techniques and strategies they could learn while working on the project. Research has demonstrated the value of giving students explicit instruction in the conventions, strategies, and techniques used to communicate effectively in particular genres (Bawarshi and Reiff, Dwyer Greene, Mathison, Rutz). Covil demonstrated that explicit teaching not only increases writing quality, but also alters student writing practices and increases self-efficacy. Research also suggests ways to help faculty who are not writing specialists provide effective writing instruction based on what they already know about writing in their fields and without requiring them to study the teaching of writing (Beaufort, Burge). Not coincidentally, these approaches involve using authentic assignments.

In addition to providing explicit instruction, faculty can increase student learning by following three best practices in assignment design: create meaning-making assignments (ones in which students create knowledge rather than merely report), include an interactive writing process in which students receive feedback while working on their assignments, and provide clear expectations of the instructor's writing expectations. Anderson et al. demonstrated that adding any one of these features increases students' engagement in three kinds of deep learning activities—higher order learning activities, integrative learning activities, and reflective learning activities—and that these features produce greater self-reported gains in practical competence, personal and social development, and general education learning.

An additional way to maximize student learning from each assignment is to create a teaching situation that promotes effective teaching and learning of writing. Students benefit from individual attention to their work. Faculty need time to guide students through the writing process and to give them meaningful feedback on drafts. The larger the class, the less time faculty can devote to each student. After classes reach a certain size, faculty feel compelled to limit the number or scope (or both) of the writing assignments and instruction. While many factors influence class size, a best practice is to restrict enrollment for at least the courses that place the most emphasis on writing or to provide instructors of those courses with additional help, for instance through a well-trained undergraduate or graduate teaching assistant (Association, Glau, Townsend, Zubizaretta).

BP 6. PROVIDE THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO ENSURE SUCCESS

a. Provide support faculty and staff need to succeed at teaching writing
b. Provide support faculty and staff need to succeed with their own writing
c. Provide support to all students for the many kinds of writing they do
d. Integrate support for faculty, staff, and students into a single unit

Providing the support needed by faculty and students is a best practice followed by all of our model programs, although the scope of this support varies. All of our model programs expend substantial energy on workshops and individual consultations that help faculty design effective writing activities, assignments, and instruction that support their course goals without becoming overwhelmed by the paper load. A few also help departments define writing outcomes for their students and review and revise their curricula in order to enable their students to achieve them (Carter; *Miami, Minnesota, North Carolina State*). At least one advises faculty about their own writing (*Duke*). We do not know of any university that offers any of these supports on a systematic basis for staff, but we conclude that doing so

would be a best practice, especially for schools that emphasize staff contributions to the institution-wide writing initiative as extensively as we do.

The best practice in supporting students is to offer substantial help with all the writing they do, including all the types of writing, including self-sponsored writing, that they create during their time at the university (see BP 4).

Offering faculty, staff, and student support in the same administrative unit is an additional best practice because the information exchanged between the three areas enhances the ability of each to pursue their goals effectively and because it emphasizes the unitary nature of the university's commitment to writing (Chlders; *Auburn, Duke, Miami, Minnesota*).

BP 7. NURTURE A CULTURE OF WRITING

a. Nurture a culture in which the activities involved with enhancing student writing abilities are central, prestigious, and satisfying parts of faculty and staff life
b. Nurture a culture in which students value the writing instruction they receive from faculty and staff, strive to increase their writing abilities, develop a sense of self-efficacy in their writing, and enjoy writing

Cultivating favorable attitudes toward writing, teaching writing, and learning to improve one's writing is a best practice that is pursued by all of our model programs. Attitudes toward writing affect the motivation of faculty, staff, and students to engage in teaching, learning, and related activities that will enhance student writing and thinking abilities (Driscoll and Wells). Major contributors to a culture of writing have been mentioned above: providing many opportunities for writing (BP 4); providing instruction that enables faculty, staff, and students to see progress in student writing (BP 5); and providing the support necessary for faculty, staff, and students to succeed with their teaching and learning (BP6). Our model programs create contexts in which faculty, staff, and students can talk about writing and also share their writing, teaching techniques, and written products. Other strategies include recognizing and celebrating their achievements with respect to the teaching and learning of writing.

BP 8. DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

a. Integrate writing initiatives with existing learning outcomes, policies, procedures, and practices
b. Implement change at a pace that promotes success
c. Maintain a robust research program focused on writing and the teaching of writing
d. Engage faculty and staff in developing the institution's goals, programs, and resources, as well as their ability to teach others
e. Engage students in developing the institution's goals, programs, and resources
f. Embrace change as the program and institution develop

Since the 1970s, many student writing centers have thrived. In contrast, many institutional writing initiatives that were launched in the first three decades of the writing-across-the curriculum movement have atrophied (Holdstein, Townsend). A set of best practices focused on sustainability have been developed through examination of the programs that have persisted and of strategies adopted by new or revived programs. These measures include integrating writing initiatives into existing, ongoing policies, procedures, and practices regarding assessment (Townsend); implementing change at a pace that ensures faculty and staff are able to develop effective revisions so that they are able to see positive results from their efforts (*Miami, Minnesota, North Carolina State*); and maintaining a robust research program that creates an ongoing intellectual engagement with writing and its teaching (Townsend; *Duke, Miami*). Research programs can include students as researchers (J. Rose; *Miami)*. Additional ways to foster sustainability are to involve faculty, staff, and students in the program's design and

implementation and to maintain openness to change as the program and institution change (Townsend, *Miami, Missouri*).

BP 9. ASSESS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

a. Integrate writing into ongoing assessment programs, particularly of students' preparation at the point of graduation for the writing and thinking they will do afterwards
b. Assess student artifacts using authentic criteria
c. Assess other indicators of institutional effectiveness that writing impacts
d. Assess the effectiveness of the units that contribute to the writing program's goals

The best practice in assessment of any educational endeavor is to examine systematically gathered evidence to identify new opportunities for doing even better. Several assessment practices enable universities to find ways to continuously improve institution-wide writing initiatives (Huot, Re(Articulating); Huot, Defining). The first is to examine representative samples of students' written work (Anson, Paretti). Because writing and thinking are different aspects of the same activity, the writing and thinking criteria used in this examination should be fully integrated with one another (Condon, Accommodating; Condon, Assessing; Lewis). Because the goal is to prepare students for authentic writing they will do after graduation and because students' accomplishments at graduation are the aggregated result of students' entire program of study, assessment should focus on writing at the point of graduation, using criteria that will be applied to the writing graduates will do afterward their time at the university (Beaufort).

A second and supplementary best practice in assessment is to evaluate the initiatives that aim to influence the ways faculty and staff work with student writing (Bean and Earenfight). Their effectiveness can be assessed through various direct methods, such as collecting and reviewing the writing assignments given to students.

A third best practice in assessment uses indirect measures (Howe). Data from national surveys of students and faculty can indicate the emphasis put on writing and the extent to which students credit their institutions with increasing their abilities as writers. Especially helpful are writing modules of the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, which will provide fine-grained information about such factors as the extent to which faculty apply the best practices in assignment design (see BP 5). Other national or home-grown surveys also can be used.

Finally, assessment of highly valued outcomes that are not related to specific programs can be assessed. The gains students make through the writing in their courses are not limited to the specific learning outcomes linked to those assignments and activities. Writing is also associated with gains in personal, non-cognitive areas that are consistent with general values of higher education, including self-reported personal and social development (Anderson et al.), practical and professional competence, and self-confidence competence (Anderson et al., Perpignan). Examination of trends in these educational outcomes also provides insights into ways to improve institution-wide writing initiatives.

CHAPTER 6

Actions To Be Implemented

All elements of the university will address our three student learning outcomes. To provide a focus for our institution-wide efforts, we will rely on four primary actors to guide our efforts:

1. Academic Departments.
2. General Studies Program.
3. Student Life Division.
4. Center for Writing Excellence.

Taken together, the four primary actors will provide every Elon undergraduate with intensive and extended instruction related to each student learning outcome. For graduate students, primary responsibility will belong to academic departments, as described later in this chapter. All actors will have the freedom to select which student learning outcomes to work on, although we anticipate that actors will have affinities for outcomes that align with program or curricular goals. We also expect some actors to concentrate on different outcomes at different times as their work unfolds.

Figure 6.1. Matrix of Actions Benefitting Undergraduate Students

FOUR PRIMARY ACTORS	PORTION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS BENEFITED		
	SLO 1 Write to Learn	**SLO 2 Write in a Discipline**	**SLO 3 Write as a Citizen**
Academic Departments	✓✓✓ All	✓✓✓ All	✓ Some
General Studies Program	✓✓✓ All	✓ Some	✓✓✓ All
Student Life Division	✓✓ Many	✓ Some	✓✓ Many
Center for Writing Excellence	✓✓✓ All*	✓✓✓ All*	✓✓✓ All*
Cumulative Impact	✓✓✓ All	✓✓✓ All	✓✓✓ All

* All students will benefit from the support the Center provides to faculty and staff. Many will benefit from the Center's services and programs for students.

To assure that their actions produce complementary high-impact improvements, the primary actors will follow the same four-phase process. The process begins with evaluation of current practices, followed by careful planning of possible improvements. The central phase is pilot testing, which always

incorporates assessment. The process concludes with careful attention to the implementation, assessment, and refinement of the actions that pilot testing has demonstrated to be effective.

Phase 1: Evaluate Current Practice

- **Set aspirational outcomes.** While all actions will be aligned directly or indirectly with one or more of the QEP's three SLOs, each actor will articulate its own, context-specific outcomes in assessable form.
- **Describe current practices.** Actors will describe in detail what they are currently doing to help students achieve each outcome.
- **Assess the effectiveness of current practices.** Actors will evaluate the success of the current practices at achieving their aspirational outcomes.

Phase 2: Plan

- **Identify the specific actions to be taken.** Using assessment of current instruction and research related to their goals, actors will identify promising practices for pilot testing.
- **Define the forms of assistance needed for these actions to succeed.** Most of this assistance will be provided by the new Center for Writing Excellence.
- **Develop an assessment plan.** Plans will involve varying degrees of formality, depending on the situation.

Phase 3: Pilot

- **Test the plan on a small scale.** Actors will conduct pilots that test their plans in the variety of contexts that would be encountered in full implementation.
- **Assess the results.** With appropriate assistance from the Center for Writing Excellence, actors will gather and analyze relevant data concerning the pilot actions as well as the support provided.
- **Refine the plan.** Using the insights gathered through their pilots, actors will refine their plans for broader implementation.

Phase 4: Implement

- **Implement the actions.** Actors will set a pace for implementation that assures success, rapid in some cases and rolled out gradually in others.
- **Monitor implementation.** Actors will monitor implementation so they can quickly identify and address unanticipated problems and take advantage of unexpected opportunities.
- **Assess and continue to refine.** When implemented, actors will employ ongoing assessment in pursuit of continuous improvement.

The effectiveness of our process depends on fully integrated, well-executed assessment. Our plans for formative and summative assessment are described in Chapter 10.

Throughout all four phases, the university will provide needed assistance to actors, usually through the Center for Writing Excellence.

This four-phase process fundamentally is an institution-wide research project through which we will learn how to adapt the best practices described in Chapter 5 to our context. Consequently, our process is designed to be evolutionary, to foster exploration and creativity, and to rely on well-designed and

efficient assessment **[BP 8f]**.[1] The process' phases are meant to overlap, creating an iterative and generative dynamic in which outcomes and plans may be revised in light of what is learned through piloting and implementing. We will encourage and support all actors to go at their own pace, to develop and test innovative strategies, and to learn from both success and failure. By doing so, we hope that our four primary actors and our campus as a whole will discover ways to provide exceptional writing instruction for all of our students.

1. ACTIONS BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

Each academic department will contribute to the QEP in a variety of ways adapted to the intellectual and practical goals of its fields of study and to the mission of the department. However, all will pursue one focal action: progressively developing the writing abilities of its majors.[2]

PROCESS

In this effort, academic departments will adapt the general process for the Writing Excellence Initiative in the following ways. The Center for Writing Excellence will offer resources and expertise to assist departments in each phase.

Phase 1: Evaluating current practices

In Phase 1, each department will first articulate QEP-related student learning outcomes for the majors in each of its degree programs **[BP 1b]**. Whether this activity involves reviewing existing outcomes or creating new ones, departments will engage in discussions to define the writing abilities their students will develop by the time of graduation **[BP 1a, 2a]**. Departments also will create new or review existing portraits of the writing instruction they currently provide their students. Finally, departments will use rubrics that embody their student learning outcomes to assess the writing that their majors currently produce near the point of graduation **[BP 9]**.

Phase 2: Planning

In Phase 2, departments will create plans that include at least three courses that will progressively develop students' proficiency at writing in ways that align with the student learning outcomes for each of their majors **[BP 3b]**. Treating these courses as an integrated set, faculty will identify the kinds of instruction and assignments each course will provide in order to play its part in advancing students' writing abilities toward the major's student learning outcomes. The University Writing Excellence Council (see Chapter 8) will review departments' plans and provide advice.

Phase 3: Piloting

In Phase 3,the focus will be on the faculty who teach the courses that are in the departments' plans for progressively developing students' writing. In small departments, piloting (which includes assessment) will likely be limited to testing the plans in the one or two sections of courses offered each academic year. In larger departments, the pilots may occur in selected sections, possibly trying out different approaches simultaneously. The University Writing Excellence Council will review and provide advice about departments' revised plans.

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[1] **BP** is an abbreviation for "Best Practice." See Chapter 5.

[2] Throughout this section, the terms "program" and "major" include concentrations that have their own student learning outcome assessment plans. Similarly, "major" in this section also refers to areas of study in graduate programs.

Phase 4: Implementing

In Phase 4, departments will concentrate on supporting more faculty to teach with the effective piloted practices. For large departments, this might involve colleagues teaching sections of the targeted courses that were not part of the original pilot. In small departments, this may focus on faculty who may teach the course in the future. An additional goal will be to spread the best practices in teaching writing to courses that are not included in a piloted set of classes.

TIMING

Each department will proceed through these four phases on the schedule it believes will produce the highest quality results **[BP 2c]**, as long as it completes all four phases by the end of the 2016-2017 academic year (the fourth year of the Writing Excellence Initiative). Completion by this time will assure that all departments have adequate time to gather and analyze data for the fifth-year QEP report and that every department will be able to assess its initial implementation and plan revisions during the QEP period. Departments with more than one major may establish a separate schedule for each.

Some majors and programs (including, for instances, the Departments of Religious Studies and the Department of World Languages and Culture) have already asked to act as pilots for our Writing Excellence Initiative process so they can begin improving their students' writing in 2013-2014 rather than waiting another year. We will use their results as models that other departments might follow. We also will use their experiences to assess and refine the support that the Center for Writing Excellence provides to academic departments.

ACTIONS BY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Along with our undergraduate programs, Elon offers graduate degrees in Business Administration, Education, Interactive Media, Law, Physical Therapy, and Physician Assistant Studies. We aspire for writing excellence to be a signature experience for all of our graduate students as well as for all of our undergraduates.

Because graduate students do not participate in the General Studies Program and are not served in the same way as undergraduates by the Student Life Division, Elon's graduate programs, working with the academic departments that deliver each program, will have primary responsibility for pursuing all three of the QEP's student learning outcomes with graduate students. Each graduate program's curriculum addresses the first two outcomes: writing to learn and writing in a discipline. In addition, all of Elon's graduate programs have curricular or co-curricular components that cultivate the third outcome, writing as a citizen, through activities such as legal clinics at the School of Law, pro bono consulting in the MBA program, and community health efforts in Physical Therapy and Physician Assistant Studies.

The Center for Writing Excellence will develop specialized services and programs to assist faculty, staff, and students in graduate programs to achieve the goals of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

ADDITIONAL QEP ACTIONS BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

In addition to taking their focal action of creating and implementing plans for integrating selected courses to progressively develop their students' writing abilities, academic departments will support the Writing Excellence Initiative in many other ways. Examples include establishing programs to recognize outstanding writing by their majors, holding faculty retreats to discuss student writing, inviting speakers to discuss writing in their fields, developing a peer mentoring program for student writing, and developing collections of field-specific resources for use by faculty and students.

2. GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Elon's General Studies Program provides a substantial opportunity for advancing undergraduate students' writing abilities. It includes 58 of the 132 credit hours required for graduation, spread among the following components.

- **First-Year Core,** which consists of "Writing: Argument and Inquiry" (ENG 110), "The Global Experience" (GST 110), and a calculus or statistics course.
- **Studies in the Arts and Sciences,** requiring two courses from approved lists in each of four areas: expression, civilization, society, and science.
- **Advanced Studies,** defined as two courses at the 300 or 400 level in the arts and sciences outside the major.
- **Interdisciplinary Capstone Seminar,** the capstone to the General Studies Program.

There are also two additional components that may be satisfied in various ways, some of which involve course enrollment, while others do not.

- **Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR),** which includes two approved experiences that may be satisfied through an internship, practicum, research, study abroad, student teaching, service learning, leadership, or various other approved experiences.
- **Foreign Language Requirement,** which may be satisfied by demonstrating proficiency or taking courses.

As undergraduates satisfy these requirements, most will engage in writing and related inquiry practices that are related to our QEP's student learning outcomes.

The following sections describe two focal actions the General Studies Program will undertake to contribute to the Writing Excellence Initiative.

ENHANCE THE WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES

First, the General Studies Program will increase significantly the attention paid to writing in "The Global Experience" (GST 110), which already is designated as a writing-intensive course. This revision will enable students to attain more advanced writing abilities during their crucial first college year.

Changes to GST 110 involve several related elements, including an institutional commitment to reducing class size from 25 toward 18 **[BP 5e, 6a].** Smaller classes will enable GST instructors to attend more closely to each student's writing and writing process. So that faculty can take full advantage of this new instructional context, the Center for Writing Excellence and writing experts from across campus will collaborate with the General Studies Program to create intensive workshops for GST 110 faculty on best practices in writing instruction.

The positive effects of these changes will reverberate throughout the undergraduate program. According to the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement, Elon's first-year students are no more likely than their peers in three benchmark groups (Southern private colleges, engagement-focused colleges, and all NSSE participating institutions) to credit their college with helping them learn to write clearly and effectively. In the context of Elon's extraordinarily favorable results in so many other areas, this result challenges us. One cause may be that one of every four Elon undergraduates is exempted from ENG 110 because of AP credit, transfer credit, or another reason. These students will benefit immensely from taking at least one course in their first year that is enriched with extensive writing instruction. Likewise, students who take both ENG 110 and GST 110 will gain a stronger foundation of writing proficiency on which faculty can build during the students' next three years at Elon.

The changes to GST 110 will also increase substantially the effectiveness of writing instruction throughout the university. Each year, every department contributes full-time, permanent faculty to teach GST 110. The pedagogical and writing-specific knowledge and experience gained by the faculty who teach GST 110 can radiate throughout the university as they apply the best practices they learn to their other courses and share their knowledge and skills with colleagues in their home departments.

The transformation of GST 110 will follow the QEP's four-step process.

Phase 1 In 2013-2014, the General Studies Program, with assistance from the Center for Writing Excellence and writing specialists from across campus, will develop student writing outcomes for the course, develop a comprehensive understanding of the writing instruction that occurs in the course, and assess the effectiveness of current practices at achieving the new writing outcomes.

Phase 2 Based on the insights gained, the program will develop plans for new training and support for faculty **[BP 8b]**.

Phase 3 The plans will be piloted in a small number of sections.

Phase 4 From 2015-2016 through 2017-2018, student outcomes and faculty feedback will be used to refine the assistance for faculty to maximize the enhancement of writing instruction as class sizes are reduced toward our target enrollment **[BP 8f]**.

STRENGTHEN STUDENTS' PREPARATION FOR WRITING AS CITIZENS (SLO 3)

The General Studies Program's second focal action will be to improve its preparation of Elon undergraduates to participate effectively through writing in discussion of issues that are important to their communities (SLO 3). This action will involve enhancements to three of the Program's major components.

- **"The Global Experience" (GST 110).** The revised version of this first-year course will include instruction, assignments, and feedback on writing to non-specialist readers on matters of consequence to them. The workshops and other resources prepared for the instructors of this course will include relevant advice, suggestions, and other assistance.
- **Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR).** Whether students satisfy this requirement through service learning, leadership, study abroad or any of the other options, these experiences inevitably provide an opportunity for students to write on topics of importance to members of local, regional, or global communities **[BP1a, 4a, 4b]**. The Center for Writing Excellence will collaborate with the faculty and staff engaged with the ELR program to develop strategies best suited to each one.
- **GST Capstone Seminars**. Interdisciplinary and writing intensive, the Program's capstone seminars are constructed around a fundamental principle that is aligned with our third student learning outcome: "[P]ersonal and social responsibility must be fostered to encourage students to commit themselves to an intellectual life in the service of their community, country and the world beyond them" **[BP1a, 4a]**. Guidelines for proposing capstone seminars will be revised—and workshops and other faculty resources will be prepared with support from the Center for Writing Excellence—to assure that the emphasis on "writing as a citizen" will be a central feature of every capstone seminar.

The General Studies Program will employ the QEP's four-step process with its emphasis on pilot testing and formative assessment as it refines these three components of its offerings.

ADDITIONAL QEP ACTIONS BY THE GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAM

The General Studies program will advance the Writing Excellence Initiative in many other ways, including the following, which will be planned in 2013-2014 and piloted in 2014-2015.

- **Enable and encourage faculty from outside the** English Department **to teach ENG 110 [BP 8d].** This action will create a robust program that includes course-reassignment guidelines and pedagogical support for creating a vigorous, cross-disciplinary, full-time faculty for this first-year writing course.
- **Foster instruction that helps students communicate effectively using 21st century digital media and genres.**[3] The Program will enhance instruction in reading, thinking critically about, and writing in digital media and genres in all sections of ENG 110 **[BP 2d]**.
- **Emphasize the importance, centrality, and continuity of the Program's emphasis on writing to incoming and first-year students [BP 3c].**
- **Create and distribute suggestions for writing assignments based on each year's common reading that faculty across the university can use [BP 6a, 8a].** The common reading is the book chosen for all incoming students to read before arriving on campus for their first Elon classes.

As part of its regular assessment cycle, the General Studies Program will also take the following action.

- **Define or refine writing outcomes for every component of the General Studies Program**. This effort will include courses that satisfy the Program's distribution requirement **[BP 2a, 3a, 4a, 4b]**.

3. STUDENT LIFE

For over a decade, Elon's Division of Student Life has focused more intensively on developing students' writing abilities than its counterparts at peer institutions. In 2000, the Division launched the Student Writing Competency Across the Division Initiative. A division-wide committee implemented student writing activities and instruction in many of its programs, such as those in leadership, service learning, and religious life. The Division also instituted writing expectations for many of its student employees.

The Division's long-standing commitment to student writing exemplifies the best practice of supplementing the instruction students receive in their classes with writing activities, instruction, and feedback in their co-curricular activities **[BP 4c]**. These additional experiences increase the amount of writing practice students receive **[BP 3a]** and extend the range of writing situations with which they are familiar. In some Student Life contexts, students will learn writing and thinking skills they can apply in their classes and in their careers and communities after graduation. Some will provide a special opportunities for students to learn about themselves and others through writing.

After Elon selected writing excellence as the focus of its QEP, Student Life created a Writing QEP Committee to consider ways the Division could most effectively contribute to the Writing Excellence Initiative. This committee will provide ongoing leadership for the Division's QEP effort and will coordinate with the Center for Writing Excellence to provide the Division's staff with the assistance and resources needed to excel in this endeavor **[BP 2c, 4a, 4b]**.

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[3] A genre is a type of communication that has a characteristic target audience, purpose, and conventions, such an article for a scientific journal, article for a scholarly journal, and feasibility report for management.

Staff across the Division are committed to the Writing Excellence Initiative. Over the five years of the QEP period, every office and program in Student Life will create new ways or refine its current ways of contributing to the development of students' writing abilities. The Division also is committed to sharing best practices and learning among our offices and programs. Staff will work together (with the support of the Center for Writing Excellence) to collaboratively report progress, develop expertise in writing effective prompts for student reflection, invite speakers to support staff development on writing and feedback skills, and improve or draft rubrics for assessing student writing in the varied departments.

The Division will begin its QEP work in 2013-2014 by focusing on writing in three high-impact areas:

- **Student Life programs that satisfy the Experiential Learning Requirement.** Through participation in three of Student Life's primary programs, undergraduates can satisfy part or all of the Experiential Learning Requirement: leadership, study abroad, and service learning. Student Life's actions related to these programs are discussed in the preceding section on the General Studies Program. In 2013-2014, the leadership, study abroad, and service learning programs will begin the four-phase QEP process within the Experiential Learning Requirements, paying particular attention to Student Learning Outcome 3, writing as a citizen.
- **Student employment.** In response to the Student Writing Competency Across the Division Initiative, many Student Life offices and programs instituted writing expectations for their student employees. In Campus Recreation, for instance, student employees apply for student manager positions by submitting written applications. Those who are chosen write performance evaluations of the students they supervise and prepare extensive year-end reports that appraise the performance of their areas, their own effectiveness as leaders, and ways in which they and their areas can improve in the future. Beginning in 2013-2014, Student Life will begin the four-phase QEP process with a few pilots and then use what is learned more broadly, focusing on Student Learning Outcomes 1 and 2, writing to learn and writing in a discipline (in this case, in a professional employment setting). The lead departments will include Campus Recreation, Multicultural Center, and Center for Leadership.
- **Student Activities Programming.** Student Life provides an extensive range of programs where writing can simultaneously advance goals of the Division and the Writing Excellence Initiative. These include Greek Life, residential living-learning communities, Multicultural Center, Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, and New Student Programs, which include weeklong experiences for incoming students before they arrive on campus. The Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Center for Leadership will begin the four-phase QEP process in 2013-2014, concentrating on Student Learning Outcome 1, writing to learn.

Taken together, the Division of Student Life's contributions to the Writing Excellence Initiative will complement the work of the other primary actors and will enhance the writing of students across the university and across a student's time at Elon.

4. ELON CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

To provide overall leadership and coordination for our QEP, we will create the Elon Center for Writing Excellence. The new Center will integrate our student Writing Center and Writing Across the University Program **[BP 6d]**. By moving these two previously separate units into the same location, we will foster coordination of programs and generate

other synergies not possible at present. The new Center will serve as a focal point and unified source of support, collaboration, and inspiration for the Writing Excellence Initiative.

We will locate the new Center at the visual, symbolic, and practical heart of Elon's intellectual life, Belk Library. In this new home, the Center will occupy a large, open space on the first floor that it will share with reference librarians and selected services of Teaching and Learning Technologies. We will design this area as an inviting, highly functional space where we also can highlight and celebrate student, faculty, and staff writing activities and accomplishments. We eventually will develop satellite locations for Center programs and services to better serve the entire university.

The Center will greatly expand and diversify the support for writing and writing instruction offered to faculty, staff, and students. Just as important, however, the Center will act as a catalyst by encouraging and helping others to contribute their energies and talents. It will conduct research and help faculty, staff, and students conduct studies that will enhance our capacity to achieve our aspirations for our students' writing. Through the model pedagogical programs it will develop and the research it will foster, the Center will establish Elon as an important participant in national and international conversations about writing in higher education.

SUPPORT FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

The Center's support for faculty and staff will build on the strong foundation of Elon's long-established Writing Across the University Program. With the summer 2012 appointment of Paul Anderson as Director of Writing Across the University and Professor of English, Elon made a major new commitment to support faculty and staff. Before 2012 the faculty member in this position (then called Director of Writing Across the Curriculum) received two course reassignments per year and a modest budget for programming. Professor Anderson now serves as the full-time Director of Writing Across the University, and the Center's programming budget will be expanded dramatically as we begin the Writing Excellence Initiative.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, Professor Anderson worked with the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee and many others across campus to assess the needs and opportunities for the new Center's support for faculty and staff. Professor Anderson also established strong relationships with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching & Learning and the office of Teaching & Learning Technologies, both of which will partner with the Center to promote pedagogical innovation.

Because of this solid foundation, the new Center's support for faculty and staff will move quickly into stage 3 of our four-phase process, conducting and assessing the following pilot activities during the 2013-2014 academic year.

1. **Support academic departments, General Studies Program, and Student Life with QEP actions.** To assist and encourage the other primary actors as they explore ways to improve their work with student writing, the Center will pilot the following actions in 2013-2014.

    - Facilitate workshops and conversations that meet the needs of departments and programs working on any of the four QEP action phases, including special emphasis on effective writing instruction, feedback, and assessment.
    - Offer competitive grants to support integrated course and program development linked to writing.
    - Form department- or program-based learning communities focused on student writing.
    - Fund groups from departments or programs to present at or participate in conferences on student writing.

- Assist groups from departments or programs in developing conference proposals and articles on the teaching of writing.
- Assist departments and programs to prepare persuasive proposals to garner support for curricular, staffing or other changes related to their student writing outcomes

2. **Collaborate with faculty and staff to develop and use a set of terms and concepts that will help students transfer their writing knowledge to new contexts.**
   The Center will form an interdisciplinary task force to develop a common set of generative writing terms and concepts that faculty and staff across the university can use in their various courses and contexts when talking with students about writing. Use of these terms and concepts will help students transfer their writing knowledge from one context to another, thereby enabling them to become flexible writers who can readily apply past learning in new contexts **[BP 3c, 6a]**.

3. **Help individual faculty and staff supplement the work of the primary actors.**
   While the Center will focus its energies and resources on work that has the potential to have the broadest and deepest affects on student writing, it also will assist and encourage individual faculty and staff as they explore ways to improve their work with student writing **[BP 6a, 6b]**. To do this, the Center will pilot the following actions in In 2013-2014.

   - Conduct workshops and consultations designed to support individual faculty and staff in improving their writing instruction.
   - Offer competitive grants for individual course development to enhance writing.
   - Form faculty and staff learning communities focused on student writing.
   - Fund faculty and staff participation at conferences on student writing.
   - Assist faculty and staff in developing conference proposals and articles on the teaching of writing.

4. **Develop a program for Center for Writing Excellence Faculty/Staff Fellows.**
   Throughout the QEP development process, faculty and staff repeatedly recommended the creation of a Fellows program that would bring faculty and staff into the Center on a multi-year, part-time basis. These Fellows would learn about writing and writing instruction, and contribute to the work of the Center. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Center will collaborate with interested parties across campus to develop a position description, application process, and compensation structure for the Fellows. Depending on the results of those efforts, the first Faculty/Staff Writing Fellows might be appointed in 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 **[BP 6a]**.

5. **Help faculty and staff with their own writing.**
   The more successful faculty and staff are with their own writing, the more effectively they can serve as role models for students. The more secure they are in their own writing abilities, the more confidently they will be able to teach students to write well. Equally important, the more attention Elon devotes to the writing abilities of all members of its community, including staff who have little or no contact with students, the better able we will be to create an institutional culture where writing is valued by everyone **[BP 6b]**.

   Beginning in 2013-2014, the Center will pilot the following actions for faculty and staff.

   - Offer individual consultations with the Center's professional staff or, as appropriate, specially trained student consultants.

- Offer occasional writing boot camps on weekends and breaks to provide faculty and staff with an entire day solely devoted to their writing, building on the successful model of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning's annual writing residency for faculty working on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
- Collaborate with the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and other partners to support faculty writing development through, for instance, writing groups.

6. **Highlight, share, and celebrate successes.**
   One goal of the Writing Excellence Initiative is to create an institutional culture in which faculty and staff are united in their pursuit of student writing excellence **[BP 7a]**. The Center will take every opportunity to nurture the growth of this element of Elon's culture with faculty and staff, for instance, by arranging internal conferences at which Center grant recipients and others share their successes, featuring faculty accomplishments at the Center's website, and creating displays at its location in Belk Library.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

The Center's support for students will build on the strong foundation of Elon's long-established Writing Center. Under the leadership of Paula Rosinski, Director of the Writing Center and Associate Professor of English, the Writing Center has thrived. A cadre of well-trained students conducts nearly 2,000 peer consultations each academic year, working with undergraduate and graduate students from across campus. The Writing Center also partners with faculty to bring consultants into classrooms, and with programs (such as the Multicultural Center) to bring Writing Center support to the places where students write.

The Writing Excellence Initiative and the new Center for Writing Excellence space will allow for the expansion of the Writing Center's existing services and programs for students, as well as the creation of additional supports for student writing. Since the new Center is building on a strong foundation, its work will move quickly into stage 3 of our four-phase process, conducting and assessing the following pilot activities during the 2013-2014 academic year:

1. **Expand support for student writing across the disciplines.**
   The Center will take several steps in 2013-2014 to ensure that writing across the disciplines is well supported **[BP 1b, 2a, 6c]**, including:

   - Create a system to funnel information gathered from work with faculty—such as the kinds of writing they ask their students to do in different disciplines—to the director so that appropriate revisions can be made to the consultant preparation class and to ongoing consultant training.

   - Study ways to increase recruitment of consultants from across the disciplines so that new strategies can be used by the 2014-2015 academic year. Since the Center is dedicated to serving all disciplines, it is important that student consultants come from a variety of disciplines and enhance the Center with their wide range of writing experiences and abilities.

   - Supplement the Center's existing PR activities to better inform students, faculty, and staff that consultants are indeed prepared to work with students on writing from a range of disciplines, including the sciences. To do this, the faculty and student staff of the Center will experiment with new marketing strategies, such as explaining the Center's student services at faculty, department, and staff meetings, and partnering with units on campus (such as

Live Oak Communications, a student-run PR firm, and the Center for Undergraduate Publication and Information Design) to enhance marketing materials and strategies.

2. **Expand the training and mentoring that student consultants receive after completing the existing one-semester consultant preparation course.**
   The Center will offer ongoing training workshops for consultants who have completed the semester-long preparation course. Workshops will cover topics such as consulting about multimodal writing, consulting with students for whom English is not a first language, consulting with Honors or Elon College Fellows on their theses, and consulting with graduate students and the genres they are likely to bring into the Center. The Center also will explore opportunities to fund consultant travel to appropriate professional conferences and to develop a consultant peer-mentoring program to offer additional developmental support for new and continuing consultants.

3. **Provide opportunities for more in-depth consultations.**
   Currently peer consultation sessions last 30 minutes, which can be too short for discussion of a substantive writing project. Also, the Center's reliance primarily on drop-in consultations can make it difficult for students to meet with the same consultant to discuss a subsequent draft, so the student often must begin each subsequent visit by describing once again the project and his or her goals. In 2013-2014, the Center will shift to 45-minute consultations as the standard, and the Center will explore scheduling software options that would allow students to make appointments with the same consultant over time, thereby developing an ongoing consulting relationship

4. **Develop a program for Center for Writing Excellence Student Fellows.**
   After a brief yet successful experiment with Student Writing Fellows several years ago, faculty and staff have suggested the re-creation of the Student Writing Fellows program. This will provide specialized preparation for small groups of student consultants in particular disciplines so they are prepared to work with faculty to design effective assignments and visit their classrooms to help students with specific writing tasks. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Center will collaborate with interested parties across campus to develop a position description, application process, and compensation structure for the Fellows. Depending on the results of those efforts, the first Student Writing Fellows might be appointed in either 2014-2015 or 2015-2016.

5. **Take advantage of the new Center for Writing Excellence space to integrate writing consultations with technology and librarian support and to develop new approaches to consultations.**
   Relocation of the Center's student services to a more open, visible space on the first floor of Belk Library is part of a larger plan to foster collaborations between the Center, reference librarians, and selected Teaching and Learning Technology services. As the three groups plan the new space, they will also define the ways they will work together to help Elon students (as well as faculty and staff) enhance their writing abilities. During the first phase of the space transition (2013-2014), the three groups will pilot not only new approaches to using the space they share, but also their ways of coordinating with one another. Based on their assessment of these pilot activities, the Center and its partners will guide the plans for major renovations in the summer of 2014 to build a permanent, collaborative home for the Center for Writing Excellence in Belk Library.

6. **Encourage and support students' self-sponsored writing.**
   To nurture the learning that occurs when students write on their own initiative, without prompting from faculty and staff **[BP 1b 4b, 4c, 4d]**, the Center will support existing efforts and pilot new approaches to encourage students' self-sponsored writing. During the next year, these will include public readings by students of their writing, spoken word competitions, performances by student songwriters, and the use of digital signage to showcase student self-sponsored writing in the Center and across campus.

7. **Highlight, share, and celebrate student writing accomplishments.**
   To make writing highly visible as a central, prestigious, and rewarding part of the student experience at Elon, the Center will devise a variety of ways to highlight and publicize student writing activities and accomplishments **[BP 7b]**. The Center will do this by partnering with the Undergraduate Research Program, the Honors Program, *The Colonnades,* and other existing sponsors of student writing to raise the profile of this work. The Center also will consider ways to celebrate student writing that is less visible on campus, including the writing done in applications for national fellowships, in job and graduate/professional school applications, and in similar genres.

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH ON WRITING

Elon already contributes to knowledge about writing in higher education through the scholarly activity of many of its faculty and staff as well as through the Center for Engaged Learning's sponsorship of the three-year, multi-institutional seminar "Writing and the Question of Transfer," which has attracted scholars from more than a dozen institutions in five countries (www.elon.edu/writingtransfer).

The Center for Writing Excellence will seek to significantly increase writing research at Elon **[BP 8c]** by, in 2013-2014, piloting the following activities:

- Providing grants to faculty, staff, and students for writing-specific research.
- Encouraging students to conduct studies of writing through the Undergraduate Research Program.
- Helping faculty, staff, and students design research projects focused on writing and the teaching of writing.
- Assisting faculty, staff, and students across the university with preparation of conference papers and articles about the teaching of writing in college.
- Providing travel funds for faculty presenting conference papers on writing research.
- Helping faculty, staff, and students apply for internal or external funding to support writing research.

Beginning in 2014-2015, the Center will begin conducting its own studies.

5. MANY OTHER ACTORS

The previous sections of this chapter have described actions in support of the Writing Excellence Initiative that will be taken by four entities. In addition, many other departments and individuals will be active in achieving the QEP goals.

These other actors include many who have not been named earlier: Elon 101, which will provide students with their initial understanding of writing's centrality in an Elon education; Academic Advising,

which plays an important role in guiding all students to the resources that help them achieve their highest potential; the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, whose efforts to support engaged pedagogy parallel the Writing Excellence Initiative's focus on engaged writing; the Student Professional Development Center's intensive work with students on writing for potential employers; and many, many more.

As we developed the action plans described in this chapter, several groups indicated their eagerness to contribute in ways that we have yet to define. They include the Parents Council, Young Alumni Council, Student Government Association, and non-academic departments outside Student Life.

In sum, our QEP project, the Writing Excellent Initiative, will be a truly university-wide effort to increase the writing abilities and enrich the entire university experience for every Elon student.

CHAPTER 7

Timelines

As it unfolds over its first five years, the Writing Excellence Initiative will engage every element of the university. Our timelines are built around our four-phase approach. We will employ selected departments and programs to serve as pilots or first adopters of our many projects so that we can benefit from their experience as we proceed toward full implementation. Academic departments, the General Studies Program, and programs and services in the Student Life Division will be encouraged to proceed at a pace that assures success in light of their particular situations, needs, and goals, as long as they complete their implementation (Phase 4), including assessment, by the end of the fourth year of the QEP. This deadline will enable them to report on their assessment results and plans for refining their implemented strategies for our five-year QEP report to SACS.

The following figures summarize projected timelines for our four primary actors to complete their focal actions, as described in Chapter 6. Colors darken in these tables as implementation becomes deeper or more widespread.

Figure 7.1 Academic Departments Timeline: Proportion of Departments Completing Each QEP Action

Figure 7.2 General Studies Timeline: Progress toward Full Implementation of Each QEP Action

Figure 7.3 Student Life Division Timeline: Proportion of Programs and Services Completing Each QEP Action

Figure 7.4 Center for Writing Excellence Timeline: Progress toward Completion of Each QEP Action

Figure 7.1. Academic Departments Timeline: Proportion of Departments Completing Each QEP Action

Actions	Year 1 2013-2014	Year 2 2014-2015	Year 3 2015-2016	Year 4 2016-2017	Year 5 2017-2018
Phase 1: Evaluate current practices					
Establish QEP learning outcomes for writing					
Describe current writing instruction					
Evaluate current student writing against outcomes					
Phase 2: Plan revisions based on evaluation					
Phase 3: Pilot the plan					
Employ the new teaching and learning strategies					
Evaluate the results					
Plan refinements					
Phase 4:Implement the plan					
Conduct full-cycle assessment of the revised plan					
Begin additional full-cycle assessments					

Figure 7.2. General Studies Timeline: Progress toward Full Implementation of Each QEP Action

Actions	Year 1 2013-2014	Year 2 2014-2015	Year 3 2015-2016	Year 4 2016-2017	Year 5 2017-2018
Enhance writing instruction for first-year students					
Reduce size of GST 110					
Enhance writing instruction in GST 110					
Enhance instruction of writing as a citizen					
Enhance in GST 110					
Enhance in experiential learning requirement					
Enhance in GST capstone seminars					
Other actions					
Enable non-English Department faculty to teach ENG 110					
Enhance instruction in digital media					
Emphasize to students the importance of writing					

Figure 7.3. Student Life Division Timeline: Proportion of Programs and Services Completing Each QEP Action

Actions	Year 1 2013-2014	Year 2 2014-2015	Year 3 2015-2016	Year 4 2016-2017	Year 5 2017-2018
Phase 1: Evaluate current practices					
Establish QEP learning outcomes for writing					
Describe current writing instruction					
Evaluate current student writing against outcomes					
Phase 2: Plan revisions based on evaluation					
Phase 3: Pilot the plan					
Employ the new teaching and learning strategies					
Evaluate the results					
Plan refinements					
Phase 4:Implement the plan					
Conduct full-cycle assessment of the revised plan					
Begin additional full-cycle assessments					

Figure 7.4. Center for Writing Excellence Timeline: Progress toward Completion of Each QEP Action

Actions	Year 1 2013-2014	Year 2 2014-2015	Year 3 2015-2016	Year 4 2016-2017	Year 5 2017-2018
Establish the new center					
Create the new location: Phase 1					
Create the new location: Phase 2					
Support students					
Expand support for writing in all disciplines					
Expand consultant training after consultants' course					
Provide more in-depth consultations					
Develop Student Fellows Program					
Integrate with librarians and technology services					
Encourage and support self-sponsored writing					
Highlight, share, and celebrate student writing					
Support faculty and staff					
Support academic departments, General Studies Program, and Student Life Division					
Develop common terms to support writing transfer					
Help individual faculty and staff with teaching writing					
Develop Faculty/Staff Fellows Program					
Help faculty and staff with their own writing					
Highlight, share, and celebrate successes					
Support for research					
Provide grants for faculty, staff, and students					
Involve Undergraduate Research Program					
Help faculty, staff, and students design studies					
Help faculty, staff, and students prepare papers					
Provide funds for travel to conferences					
Help faculty, staff, and students apply for funding					

CHAPTER 8

Organizational Structure

To guide our Writing Excellence Initiative, we will establish an organizational structure that is integrated with our current systems for efficiency, follows our institutional traditions for sustainability, enlists the broad participation to achieve maximum impact, and provides a high level of flexibility so we can take entrepreneurial advantage of the opportunities that arise in the years ahead. This structure involves the following components:

1. Writing Excellence Initiative Leadership
2. Center for Writing Excellence Leadership
3. Local Leadership
4. University-Wide Network of Partners

1. WRITING EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE LEADERSHIP

Consistent with the centrality of the Writing Excellence Initiative to Elon's mission and educational aspirations, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Steven House will lead the Writing Excellence Initiative. He will entrust detailed implementation and oversight to Tim Peeples, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Professor of English. Associate Provost Peeples is the founding Director of Elon's Writing Across the Curriculum Program (1998-2004) and also a former Director of the Writing Center (1998-2001). As a scholar, Associate Provost Peeples is a national leader in the fields of professional writing and rhetoric and of writing program administration.

Professor Peeples will chair the new University Writing Excellence Council. The new Council will be charged by the Provost to:

1. Collect and analyze data and reports from across the University related to the Writing Excellence Initiative;
2. Provide feedback and reports on the Writing Excellence Initiative to the Provost, the campus community, and (as appropriate) to departments/programs/schools;
3. Offer guidance and make recommendations to the Provost and others (as appropriate) on policies and practices related to the Writing Excellence Initiative;
4. Provide general oversight to the Writing Excellence Initiative's implementation through the five years of the QEP.

The Council's members will include faculty and staff who are well-positioned to monitor and support the Writing Excellence Initiative. The Council will be appointed following the SACS visit to include members in the following roles:

1. Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (chair)
2. Assistant Provost
3. Director of Institutional Research
4. Assistant Dean for Student Life

5. Managing Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
6. Associate Dean of a College or School
7. Director, Writing Across the University
8. Director, Writing Center
9. Chair of an academic department
10. Faculty from a primarily undergraduate department
11. Faculty from a primarily graduate department

The Council will begin preliminary work in late spring 2013, after the SACS visit, and will formally assume its duties at the start of the 2013-2014 academic year.

2. CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE LEADERSHIP

The new Center for Writing Excellence will integrate two long-standing programs, whose directors will have expanded portfolios and resources as they pursue goals of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

Director, Writing Center. In conjunction with the QEP, the Director will be provided with an additional course reassignment annually (from two to three), and other forms of support. Dr. Paula Rosinski, Associate Professor of English, who has directed the Center for the past seven years, will continue to provide its leadership.

Director, Writing Across the University Program. For more than a decade this program has been led by a faculty member with two course reassignments per year. In anticipation of the QEP, the University added substantial new resources to the program, reconfigured the director's position into a full-time administrative appointment with faculty rank, and changed its name to Writing Across the University. After a national search, in mid-2012, Elon hired Dr. Paul Anderson as Director of Writing Across the University and Professor of English.

Both directors currently report to Assistant Provost Peter Felten, and the new Center for Writing Excellence also will do so. Assistant Provost Felten has chaired the QEP Committee since December 2011. He is the founding Director of Elon's Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning and also is the Director of Elon's new Center for Engaged Learning.

Two university-level advisory committees with broadly representative memberships will guide the Center for Writing Excellence. In addition to providing advice, members of both committees will serve as advocates and ambassadors for the Center for Writing Excellence.

Center for Writing Excellence Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee. Building on the foundation of the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee, a long-standing faculty committee, this new committee will also include staff. The committee will monitor and make recommendations concerning all aspects of the Center from the perspective of the faculty and staff.

Appointed by the Provost, the members will be drawn from all academic divisions and a variety of units in Student Life.

For 2013-2014, the committee will be co-chaired by Dr. Rosinski and Dr. Anderson, and the committee's work will focus on establishing the new Center for Writing Excellence. After that first year, the committee's charge and structure will evolve to meet the needs of the Center.

Center for Writing Excellence Student Advisory Committee. This new committee will enlist the initiative, creativity, and leadership of Elon students in providing advice concerning all aspects of the Center's activities, especially those impacting students directly. Members will play an important role in advocating for writing excellence and the Center among students.

Appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Student Life Division, Academic Deans, and others who interact with students in various contexts, the members will be broadly representative of Elon's undergraduate and graduate student body.

For 2013-2014, the committee will be convened by Dr. Rosinski and Dr. Anderson, and the committee's work will focus on establishing the new Center for Writing Excellence. After that first year, the committee's charge and structure will evolve to meet the needs of the Center.

3. LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Academic departments, the General Studies Program, the Student Life Division, and the new Center for Writing Excellence will take leadership roles in achieving the Writing Excellence Initiative's goals. The first three will use established organizational structures for communicating their plans and reports to the University Writing Excellence Council and for receiving recommendations and guidance from the Council. They will be assisted by the Institutional Research Office and the Center for Writing Excellence in gathering and analyzing relevant data.

Academic departments will continue to report their plans and assessment results to their deans, who share these with the Council. The deans will also continue to provide academic departments with guidance concerning the student writing and the teaching of writing. The Council will communicate (as appropriate) with deans, department chairs, or other leaders to provide additional guidance about writing.

The General Studies Council will continue to gather, interpret, and report plans, assessment data, and other relevant information concerning the General Studies Program, and it will receive the Council's recommendations concerning writing in the program.

Student Life units will continue to report assessment results to the Student Life Writing Committee, which will aggregate and analyze data for the University Writing Excellence Council. In turn, the Council will provide guidance to the Student Life Writing Committee, the Vice President for Student Life, other division administrators, and program leaders.

The Center for Writing Excellence will prepare annual reports on its services and programs, including both its plans and assessment results, for the Council and the Elon community.

4. UNIVERSITY-WIDE NETWORK OF PARTNERS

All of the individuals and units described above will actively engage other offices and programs in the Writing Excellence Initiative. Figure 8.1 identifies some of these additional partners, who will be joined by others as the QEP develops. These partners will engage in the QEP in ways that complement their existing goals and practices.

Table 8.1. Examples of Other Partners Contributing To the Writing Excellence Initiative

Partners	Roles
Institutional Research	Assist with design of local surveys; administer national ones; help with analysis of results
Center for Engaged Learning	Collaborate in developing research on the teaching and learning of writing
Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning	Collaborate in developing faculty and staff abilities to teach and use writing effectively
Belk Library	Collaborate in helping students with the inquiry and critical thinking required for effective writing; support faculty in designing and implementing effective writing assignments that involve research
Teaching & Learning Technologies	Help students, faculty, and staff learn to write effectively with digital technologies; help faculty and staff teach writing with digital technologies
University Communications	Publicize writing activities and accomplishment to internal and external audiences
Honors Program; Elon College, Business, Communications, Teaching, and Leadership Fellows Programs	Assist in enhancing the writing abilities of students in these programs
University Advancement	Support fundraising for the Writing Excellence Initiative
Undergraduate Research Program	Enhance writing of all students conducting mentored research, and help engage undergraduates in research about writing
Office of Cultural Programs	Help engage students in writing outside of courses
Office of Sponsored Programs	Help obtain grants for writing projects and research

Office of Academic Advising	Help students see writing as an integral and pervasive element of an Elon education; encourage use of resources for students
Isabella Cannon Global Education Centre	Help engage students in writing applications, writing during their study abroad and study USA experiences, and writing afterwards about their experiences both in and outside of courses
El Centro de Espanol	Help engage students in writing outside of courses
Student Professional Development Center	Help engage students in writing related to careers, graduate schools, and other professional opportunities
Tutoring Center	Coordinate in helping students improve writing in the broader context of their learning
Office of Admissions	Help promote writing as a feature of an Elon education to prospective students
Office of New Student Programs	Help establish writing as a central feature of an Elon education
Office of Student Conduct	Use writing as a way of helping students reflect on Elon's Honor Code and on the actions that brought them before the Office of Student Conduct
Parents Council	Help students understand the importance of writing; mentor students as writers
Young Alumni Council	Help students understand the importance of writing; mentor students as writers

CHAPTER 9

Resources

Elon University is deeply committed to the success of the Writing Excellence Initiative. Because this work aligns with Elon's strategic plan, the Board of Trustees established the Writing Excellence Initiative as one of the University's institutional priorities. The resources outlined in this chapter demonstrate that commitment. To supplement these resources, the Center for Writing Excellence will seek external funding with the help of the University Advancement and the Sponsored Programs Office.

This chapter describes Writing Excellence Initiative resources in three categories:

1. Budget to create a home for the new Center for Writing Excellence.
2. Center for Writing Excellence budget to support faculty, staff, and student writing.
3. Center for Writing Excellence budget to support student writing.

This chapter presents the budgets separately to clarify the distinct aspects of each, but the intersections and overlaps between these separate budgets and programs will be central to the success of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

This chapter focuses on new resources, but Elon has even more significant existing resources (personnel, programs, budgets) across the University that will contribute to the sustainability and success of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

1. CREATING A HOME FOR THE NEW CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

The home for the new Center for Writing Excellence in the heart of the first floor of Belk Library will symbolize the central role writing plays in an Elon education, and it will substantially enhance the Center's ability to support faculty, staff, and student activities related to the QEP. This space will be developed in two phases over the next two years through the collaborative work of the Center for Writing Excellence, Belk Library, and Teaching & Learning Technologies, under the guidance of Elon's office of Planning, Design, and Construction Management.

Phase 1. In summer 2013, the Center's student consultation area will move from the small room it now occupies into the large, open space at the center of the library's first floor, which will be the site of the Center's eventual new home. For 2013-2014,this space will be furnished with new technology, furniture, and signage designed to create an inviting, efficient area for the Center's expanding number of consultations; new programming for students, faculty, and staff; and collaboration with the reference librarians, Teaching & Learning Technologies, and Tutorial Services.

Phase 2. In summer 2014, the Center's home will be constructed and furnished on the Belk Library's first floor. The new space will visually and functionally integrate the Center for Writing Excellence, reference librarians, Tutorial Services, and certain Teaching & Learning Technologies staff. The design for this space will be based on the needs of the Center for Writing Excellence and its partners, the insights gained by observing use of the temporary activity area in 2013-2014, and examination of national models of exemplary writing centers. The Center's new home will be open at the start of the 2014-2015 academic year.

Figure 9.1 summarizes the budget for the new Center's home. Because this is a capital project, these are one-time, non-recurring, funds.

Figure 9.1. Budget for creation of new home for the Center for Writing Excellence

Project Phase	Timeline	Amount
Phase 1. Create the expanded, temporary space for the Center on the Belk Library's first floor	Summer 2013	$50,000
Phase 2. Create the Center's permanent location by redesigning the first floor of Belk Library	Fall 2013–Fall 2014	$450,000
	Total	$500,000

This new space not only will support the Center's programs and services, but also house its staff. The Center's staff at the start of the Writing Excellence Initiative will be:

1. The current director of the Writing Center, Dr. Paula Rosinski. With the launch of the QEP, this position will grow from the current support of two course reassignments per academic year to three reassignments plus one month of summer salary.
2. The current director of the Writing Across the University Program, Dr. Paul Anderson. For the 2012-2013 academic year, in anticipation of the QEP, this position changed from two course reassignments per year to a full-time administrator with faculty rank.
3. Writing Center student consultants, who, in larger numbers, will continue to provide individual consultation and other services to students.

As the Writing Excellence Initiative develops, the Center's staff will expand to include additional student consultants and, depending on need, also may grow to include faculty, staff, or student fellows, or persons in similar positions. The anticipated budget for these new positions is included in section 2 below.

2. PROVIDING FACULTY AND STAFF SERVICES AND SUPPORT

As described in Chapter 6, the Center for Writing Excellence will help faculty and staff become more effective and efficient teachers of writing by expanding the Writing Across the University Program's current services and providing new services and support. At the same time, the Center for Writing Excellence will enhance the Writing Center's existing services and support for students' writing.

The budget for the Center's faculty, staff, and student services and support (Figure 9.2) will increase substantially throughout the QEP period. The steady growth of these budgets will provide just-in-time resources for the Center as more faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students engage with its expanding programs over the next five years.

As it adapts the allocation of its budget to meet growing and changing needs, the Center will consult with its Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee and its Student Advisory Committee, as well as the University Writing Excellence Council.

Figure 9.2. Budget for faculty, staff, and student services and support

Year of the QEP	Academic Year	Budget Increase	Cumulative Total
Year 0	2012-2013	-	$97,500
Year 1	2013-2014	$65,000	$162,500
Year 2	2014-2015	$85,000	$247,500
Year 3	2015-2016	$85,000	$332,500
Year 4	2016-2017	$100,000	$422,500
Year 5	2017-2018	$100,000	$522,500

3. REDUCING GST 110 CLASS SIZE TOWARD 18

As described in Chapter 6, the Writing Excellence Initiative will enhance the foundational writing instruction that all Elon undergraduates receive in their first year. This effort, which will focus on The Global Experience course (GST 110), will require two types of resources.

1. Additional faculty development for GST 110 faculty, which is accounted for in the Center for Writing Excellence's budget described in section 2 above.
2. Additional faculty lines (Figure 9.3) to ensure that departments have the full-time, permanent faculty necessary to continue to staff GST 110 as more sections are offered each semester in order to reduce class size from 25 toward 18.

The additional faculty lines will be created through the Provost's annual process for allocating new faculty lines, in consultation with the academic deans and departments.

Figure 9.3. Schedule for creating new faculty lines to reduce GST 110 class size

Year of the QEP	Academic Year	Additional Sections Offered	New Faculty Lines
Year 0	2012-2013	0	0
Year 1	2013-2014	5*	0
Year 2	2014-2015	5	2
Year 3	2015-2016	5	2
Year 4	2016-2017	5	2
Year 5	2017-2018	5	2
Total		**25**	**8**

* During the first year of the Writing Excellence Initiative, existing resources will be used to reduce class size in pilot sections of GST 110.

CHAPTER 10

Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Well-conceived and thoughtfully executed assessment is critical to our ability to attain the goals of the Writing Excellence Initiative. Assessment provides the basis for evaluating our current practices and pilot projects. It continually renews our focus on our aspirations for writing at Elon, and it engages us in a process of continuous improvement during the QEP period and beyond.

Our overall approach is to assign responsibilities for assessment to the units whose QEP actions are being assessed. These units are in the best position to devise appropriate assessment criteria, interpret assessment data, and devise efficacious improvements based on the results. Their reports on what they have learned and how they plan to respond will be collected and examined by the University Writing Excellence Council, which will provide overall, university-wide guidance for the Writing Excellence Initiative, as described in the next chapter. To supplement local assessments we will employ additional measures, described below, to gain a university-wide gauge of our progress at achieving our Student Learning Outcomes.

To assure that our QEP assessment plans are sustainable, we will integrate them into our other assessment processes, policies, and procedures. Since Elon has been found in compliance with Comprehensive Item 3.3.1, our current assessment practices provide a strong foundation on which to build our QEP work. The Center for Writing Excellence and the Institutional Research Office will assist departments and programs in designing and conducting assessments, as well as interpreting assessment data. The Center will also assist units in developing teaching and learning strategies that build on their assessment results.

Like all other features of the Writing Excellence Initiative, our assessment strategies will evolve as we proceed. However, the overall framework outlined in this chapter will guide our assessment throughout the QEP. The following sections describe our plans for formative assessment of the following aspects of the QEP.

1. Improvement in Student Writing
2. Progress in the QEP
3. Center for Writing Excellence Actions
4. Elon's "Culture of Writing"

A final section describes our plans to establish the foundation for summative assessment that we will use to evaluate the QEP in the fifth-year report to SACS.

1. ASSESSING IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT WRITING

Our four-phase QEP process (Chapter 6) is designed to maximize our ability to conduct productive, action-oriented assessment. It incorporates three rounds of full-cycle assessment.

- **Phases 1 and 2** constitute the first round. In Phase 1, academic departments, Student Life offices and programs, and the General Studies Program evaluate their current practices by affirming, refining, or creating writing outcomes for their graduating students. After surveying their current practices for teaching students to write effectively, they evaluate samples of writing

produced by their current or recent seniors to determine how effective these strategies are. In Phase 2, they use their Phase 1 assessment results to plan refinements to their current strategies.

- **Phase 3**, pilot testing, is full-cycle assessment of the revised teaching and learning strategies developed in Phase 2.
- **Phase 4** involves implementation of the strategies refined in light of pilot testing and another full assessment cycle.

In each round, we will use both direct and indirect assessment methods.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Three of our primary actors—academic departments, the General Studies Program, and the Student Life Division—will gather and systematically assess students' writing. While they may assess students' writing in many other occasions and circumstances, they will devote special attention to the writing students produce at the point of graduation.

- **Academic Departments.** All academic departments will follow the same general assessment process, adjusting as necessary to address particular circumstances. In the last one or two semesters of a major's curriculum, students will complete a writing assignment that is designed to demonstrate their proficiency in writing related to the department's relevant student learning outcomes. This assignment (or these assignments) should build on the coordinated writing instruction that the department provides to progressively develop students' writing abilities.

  To evaluate this writing, departmental faculty will use a rubric that details the criteria and levels of student performance that relate to one of their departmental student learning outcomes. For instance, a natural science department might adopt a student learning outcome that says, "Students will be able to report on science experiments in ways that scientists do." In its rubric, the department might identify the criteria for evaluating each of the components of the report, such as the introduction, hypothesis, methods, and so on. Appendix 5 provides a sample that also shows alternative ways such a rubric might be used in lower-level courses that provide students' initial instruction and practice at writing this genre of communication.

  By applying their rubrics to samples of the writing by their graduating students, departments will be able to determine which criteria their instruction has been most successful in helping their students achieve and which offer the most substantial opportunities for program improvement. The Center for Writing Excellence will support departments in this work by, for example, helping to determine what proportion of the writing samples should be evaluated and by offering advice on developing and using a rubric to conduct the evaluation.

  The assessment cycle will continue with department faculty developing specific modifications they will make to the writing instruction in their program to better prepare their students to achieve the department's outcomes. The cycle will close with the department implementing the changes the faculty have identified. Because the goal of assessment is continuous improvement, the identification and implementation process will indicate that a department has met its assessment responsibilities.

  Departments will use current assessment reporting practices, such as the Annual Reports on Assessment Progress (ARAPs), to document their QEP-related work. The University Writing Excellence Council will review copies of department reports, providing feedback and support as

appropriate. The Council also will aggregate results from department reports to analyze writing outcomes at the division, school, and university levels. The Council will share its findings and recommendations with appropriate parties and with the campus as a whole.

- **General Studies Program.** The General Studies Program's assessment plan will closely resemble the one employed by academic departments. As part of its special focus on Student Learning Outcome 3, pilot sections of General Studies interdisciplinary seminars will ask students to write a communication in which they address a specific, non-specialist audience on an issue of local, regional, or global significance. These samples then will be evaluated by a group of faculty who teach in General Studies, using a rubric that aligns with the Program's writing outcomes but that also allows for the diversity of topics and assignments used in General Studies seminars. Results will be reported to the faculty teaching these seminars, the General Studies Council, and the University Writing Excellence Council. Based on these results, the General Studies Council will identify and make revisions to the program that will enhance students' abilities to write as citizens. The Center for Writing Excellence will provide any support needed on this assessment process.
- **Student Life Division.** The contexts in which the Student Life Division works with student writing are much more diverse than is the case for academic departments and the General Studies Program. Consequently, the Division's assessments will be more locally developed, with guidance from the Student Life Writing Committee and support from the Center for Writing Excellence. Individual units will report their assessment results to the Student Life Writing Committee, which will aggregate results to analyze writing outcomes in the Division and to share with the University Writing Excellence Council.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

To supplement the information gained through our dispersed direct assessment, the Center for Writing Excellence and Institutional Research Office will employ surveys and focus groups to gather faculty, staff, and student perceptions of our effectiveness at helping students achieve our three student learning outcomes. The Center and the Institutional Research Office will also examine responses to relevant questions from externally administered surveys, such as the question on the National Survey of Student Engagement that asks students to indicate the extent to which their experience at their college contributed to "their knowledge, skill, and personal development" related to "writing clearly and directly." By comparing student responses from different years, the Center for Writing Excellence and the Institutional Research Office will gain an approximate indicator of the impact of the Writing Excellence Initiative. They will report the results of these analyses, including both areas of notable progress and issues in need of attention, to the University Writing Excellence Council, and they will share the results with the campus.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In addition to having each department and program conduct local full-cycle assessment, we will conduct university-wide assessment. The results will enable us to detect general trends in our institutional progress, pinpoint areas needing more attention, and identify successful local practices that could be offered to others as models or for inspiration. The University Writing Excellence Council will be responsible for reviewing and communicating university-wide assessment results to the Elon community. The Center for Writing Excellence and Institutional Research Office will assist in gathering and interpreting the relevant information and data, which will have three principle sources.

- **Use of university-wide writing criteria on assessment rubrics.** During the QEP period, the Center for Writing Excellence will work with faculty, staff, and students from across the university to

identify a set of general criteria that apply to writing in all of Elon's programs. The Center then will work with departments and programs to integrate these criteria into local assessments. The Association of American Colleges and Universities' VALUE rubric for written communication (Appendix 5) suggests what some of these common criteria might include: responsiveness to the audience, purpose, and circumstances surrounding the writing task; content development; observance of genre and disciplinary conventions; use of sources and evidence; and control of syntax and mechanics. By developing and employing these common criteria, we will be able to gather and use data comparable across the university concerning these general abilities.

- **Use of university-wide surveys.** Indirect assessment conducted through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and similar instruments will also provide institution-wide perspective on our progress. For example, NSSE asks students how often they "prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in." The more frequently students write more than one draft, the more they are using writing to learn (Student Learning Outcome 1). The Center for Writing Excellence and Institutional Research Office also may create local surveys linked to our Student Learning Outcomes and aspirations for student writing.
- **Analysis of reports from individual departments and programs**. Each year the University Writing Excellence Council will receive reports from every unit that has begun its four-phase process. By the end of 2016-2017, all of the primary actors' departments and programs will have reported on at least one full assessment cycle. By examining the information provided in these reports, the Council will be able to draw general conclusions about the progress we are making institution wide.

2. ASSESSING PROGRESS ON THE QEP

In addition to assessing the results of the Writing Excellence Initiative, we will assess the work of each of the major contributors to the Initiative, examining both their progress in implementing their QEP actions and the quality of their implementations.

- **Academic departments.** In Year One of the QEP, academic departments will choose and report to their deans the schedule they wish to follow in implementing the four-phase process. Some have already asked to begin in the first year, providing us with an opportunity to pilot test our overall approach. As they complete each phase, departments will report to their deans, with a copy to the University Writing Excellence Council. As they complete each assessment cycle, they will report what they did, what they found, and what changes or refinements they will make. The Council will review these reports individually and in aggregate to detect trends; make recommendations at the division, school, and university levels; and identify ways the university can better support department efforts.
- **General Studies Program.** During Year One, the General Studies Program will report to the University Writing Excellence Council its schedule for implementing its QEP actions. As it completes each assessment cycle, it will report its results and response plans to the University Writing Excellence Council.
- **Student Life Division.** During Year One, the Student Life Division will ask each of the units that now works or will be working with student writing to report to the Student Life Writing Committee its schedule for identifying student learning outcomes, learning activities, and an assessment plan. The Committee will summarize the results for the University Writing Excellence Council. Beginning in Year Two, each contributing Student Life unit will report

annually its assessment results to the Committee, which will examine them collectively for insights into ways it can improve its support for student writing in the Division. It will provide a divisional report to the University Writing Excellence Council each year.

3. ASSESSING THE CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

Assessment of the Center for Writing Excellence will be especially important, given the central role the Center will play in supporting the other major contributors to the Writing Excellence Initiative as well as the direct role it plays in supporting student learning. Each year, the Center will establish and report to the University Writing Excellence Council its plans and goals for the coming twelve months. After the first year of the QEP, it will also report on its results from the year before. The following sections outline the assessments the Center will make, some continually, some at appropriate intervals, of its services for faculty and staff and for students.

FACULTY AND STAFF SERVICES

For the Center for Writing Excellence to have the desired impact on writing at Elon, it must engage with a significant number of faculty and departments across the University. The Center will establish and maintain a database recording these contacts and include the results in its annual report to the University Writing Excellence Council.

Equally important will be the quality of its services for faculty and staff. In addition to collecting evaluations from each of its workshops and other programs, the Center will conduct survey and focus groups to identify opportunities for improvement. The following questions indicate the kinds of data it will collect.

> Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the Center for Writing Excellence. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
>
> a. I have learned how to create more effective writing assignments and activities from the Center.
> b. The Center has helped my department or program discuss ways to improve student writing.
> c. The Center has helped my department or program take practical steps to improve student writing.
> d. The Center has increased Elon faculty's ability to help students write better.
> e. I would recommend the Center to a faculty or staff colleague.

In all assessments, faculty and staff will be asked to suggest improvements and identify additional services they desire.

Because the Center's major responsibilities include helping faculty improve the writing instruction they provide, the Center will gather and analyze data from relevant faculty and staff surveys. The new writing module created by the National Survey of Student Engagement will be particularly helpful in this effort. The new NSSE module collects information from students concerning the frequency with which faculty employ evidence-based best practices when assigning writing. The Center will also analyze responses to a parallel writing module in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, which asks faculty how often they employ the best practices. The Center will begin to gather baseline data from surveys in spring 2013 for comparison in future years, with assistance from the Institutional Research Office.

The Center will use similar methods to assess the assistance it provides faculty and staff with their own writing.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of its services for faculty and staff to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

STUDENT SERVICES

Building on the Writing Center's existing efforts, the new Center will develop enhanced processes to assess the outcomes of its student consultations and other programs. The Center will analyze these data at the end of each academic term so that the results can be used to modify offerings in the term ahead. The Center will include the results and its plans in its annual report to the University Writing Excellence Council.

The Center will ask students who use its consultation services to complete evaluations at the end of each session. In addition to being used for mentoring individual consultants, the aggregated results will be analyzed to gain insights into ways the Center can improve the training student consultants receive. Additionally, student consultants periodically will be asked to evaluate their preparation and training and to suggest improvements.

Each year, the Center will survey and conduct focus groups with students who have used the Center's services and programs in the previous terms. The following questions for students who used the consultation services indicate the kinds of survey data it will collect.

> Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
>
> a. I was able to improve the writing I came to the Center to talk about.
> b. I learned techniques that I have used in other writing I've done.
> c. I am a better writer as a result of visiting the Center.
> d. I plan to visit the Center for further help.
> e. I would recommend the Center to a friend.

The Center will also seek faculty perceptions and suggestions concerning its student services. For example, the faculty survey mentioned above will ask respondents the extent to which they agree with such statements as, "Students I know who visited the Center learned how to organize their writing more effectively" and "Students I know who visited the Center learned how to argue their positions more effectively." Analogous questions will be asked of staff.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of its services for students to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

4. ASSESSING ELON'S "CULTURE OF WRITING"

An overarching goal of our QEP is to establish a culture of writing in which faculty, staff, and students all see writing as a signature feature of an Elon education.

The Center's major assessment instrument for gauging the establishment of a culture of writing among students will be a survey constructed and administered by the Center and the Institutional Research Office. We will first administer the survey in fall 2013 in order to gain baseline data and then again in the third and fifth years of our QEP. The following questions indicate the kinds of survey data we will collect.

> Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

a. Writing ability is important to my success in my career.

b. Writing ability is important to my success in my personal life.

c. I want to be a better writer.

d. Elon faculty have helped me become a better writer.

e. Elon staff have helped me become a better writer.

f. I wish I had received more instruction at Elon in writing well.

In the faculty and staff survey described above, the Center will ask respondents about their perception of the culture of writing among students. Possible questions (phrased for faculty) include the following.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

a. Students in my classes are highly motivated to learn how to write effectively.

b. Students in my classes welcome the writing I assign.

Other indicators of the development of a culture of writing include the number, variety, and visibility of student-led events and publications as well as the extent to which faculty talk with each other and with students about their writing projects and processes.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of Elon's "Culture of Writing" to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

5. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE WRITING EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

As we begin our QEP, we will start gathering data we can use in our summative assessment in our five-year report:

- What did you do?
- What impact did it have on teaching and learning of writing?

An adequate answer to both questions requires availability of baseline data from the QEP's start to compare with data from 2017-2018. In 2013-2014, we will begin collecting and archiving the following kinds of information. (The comparisons described here will also be used in the intervening years as well as part of our formative assessment.)

- Samples of the writing produced by current students at the point of graduation. For summative assessment, these samples and ones collected in 2017-2018 will be evaluated using the same rubric to determine whether there is a difference in students' writing abilities.
- Survey results and results of other indirect measures. When interpreted in light of other possible factors, such as changes in the student body, comparison of results in 2013-2014 with those from 2017-2018 can indicate the impact our QEP has had on the teaching and learning of writing.
- Comparison of the annual reports prepared by the University Writing Excellence Council.
- Data on the usage of the Center for Writing Excellence's programs and services for faculty, staff, and students as well as on evaluations of those services by the Center's clients.

- Data on conference presentations, papers published, and awards won by Elon faculty, staff, and students as a result of their work with student writing.
- Data on the amount of self-sponsored writing produced by students, such as the number of publications, blogs, and other communications prepared by them outside of Elon's academic requirements.

CHAPTER 11

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE QEP PROCESS

August 21, 2011

Hello Elon Community!

The quality Enhancement program (QEP) folks know that six is a perfect number. There are many reasons for this (See P.S.), but the best reason is that this summer six teams have worked hard to create six program proposals, each built around one of the six big ideas we settled upon last semester: Civic Engagement, Diversity, Futures Thinking, Information Literacy, Intellectual Engagement, and Writing.

For the next six weeks, the Elon community will discuss these proposals and work towards answering the question, "Which of these Big Ideas would have the Biggest Impact on Student Learning?"

So what can you do to join in the discussion?

1) Go to www.elon.edu/QEP! At this website, the six proposals are given both in short executive summaries and the complete proposals. Along with each proposal is a discussion board where you can voice all of your thoughts, responses critiques, praises, and support for the corresponding proposal. (At this site is also an in depth reminder of what a QEP is and our timeline.)
2) This coming Tuesday (8/23) at 10:15-11:30 in Lindner 208, we will be reviewing the six proposal and all things QEP. This meeting will be repeated on Monday (8/29) at 10:15-11:30 in Lindner 208. This is a perfect place and time to fill in any holes in your QEP knowledge or get introductions to the proposals along with the authors.
3) In the next 6 weeks we will announce more discussion meetings focusing on pairs of proposals along with the authors.

The implementation of any one of these proposals would create wonder benefits to student learning; let's find the best QEP path for Elon!

The QEP First-Step Team
Todd, Pam, David, Jodean

P.S. 6 is perfect because 6 = 1*2*3 = 1+2+3. 6 is also the minimum number one needs at a party to guarantee that there are at least 3 people that all know each other or at least 3 people who all are strangers to each other. For the sake of quality enhancement, Pam has offered free lunches to the first 5 non-math/stats people at Elon that can independently (no cheating) prove this before she does! Todd will happily check proofs for her.

November 20, 2011

To: Elon Community

From: Steven House, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Mary Wise, Associate VP for Academic Affairs, 2012 SACS Coordinator

Re: Writing Selected as Topic for the Quality Enhancement Plan - SACS Reaccreditation

We are happy to announce the final selection of a topic for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which is required as a part of our SACS reaccreditation. The campus will spend the next five years implementing an intensive program to develop our students' skills in **Writing** and to assess their improvement.

The decision on this topic was reached following a lengthy and thorough process of proposing and evaluating topics proposed by faculty staff and students. We appreciate the work of our QEP topic selection committee, Pam Kiser, David Copeland, Todd Lee and Jodean Schmiederer and the two authors of the writing white paper, Paula Patch and Paula Rosinski. We also want to thank the authors of the other white papers who gave their time last summer to develop proposals for campus consideration: Tom Arcaro, Bud Warner, Brooke Barnett, Kenn Gaither, Janna Anderson, Anthony Weston, Randy Piland, Megan Squire, Katie King and Mary Knight-McKenna. While writing emerged as the direction for our QEP, the other topics, Civic Engagement, Diversity, Futures Thinking, Information Literacy and Intellectual Engagement, certainly fit into the Elon mission and we hope the attention focused on them during this process will lead to enhancements in them as well.

The QEP selection committee made its recommendation to President Lambert and Senior Staff on October 18. Before deciding on the topic of writing as Elon's QEP, President Lambert held discussions with faculty members in English, writing faculty in Communications and Business, as well as with Academic Council. All groups have reinforced the importance of enhancing students' knowledge and production of writing for their professional and personal success. We have invited Peter Felten, Assistant Provost and Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, to take the next steps in the process of QEP development. Peter will assemble a planning committee that will spend the remainder of this academic year and the summer developing goals, learning outcomes, and implementation procedures to enhance the writing skills of students throughout the institution. That committee will write the final QEP proposal which is due in the SACS office in November of 2012. The QEP will be evaluated during the SACS on-sight visit in the spring of 2013 and will be a focus of our campus agenda until the SACS Five-Year Review in 2018-19.

We want to express our appreciation not only to the coordinators of this process and the authors of these papers, but also to the entire campus community. SACS intended the QEP process to allow an institution to identify its greatest needs and to plan to meet them in meaningful ways. We believe the SACS intent was met at Elon in this selection process, and we applaud the involvement of everyone who suggested and discussed these many ideas.

September 10, 2012

Dear students, faculty, and staff,

I would like to request your help in developing Elon's Quality Enhancement Plan, the Writing Excellence Initiative. The Initiative will be a significant, long-term project that will benefit every student. I ask each of you for your input to ensure its success.

We are developing the Writing Excellence Initiative in part because Elon's accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), requires every accredited institution in its region to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a five-year project for improving its educational program. Following extensive, university-wide discussions during 2011-2012, we selected writing as the focus of our QEP because of the many ways in which writing can enrich every aspect of an Elon education.

You can help us realize the full potential of this ambitious project by reading and commenting on the attached draft plan for the Writing Excellence Initiative. All of your suggestions, questions, and feedback will help the QEP Committee revise and refine the plan. The committee will use the feedback it receives to shape a draft of the full QEP report, which will be distributed to the campus community for additional feedback in early October.

Please read and share your thoughts about the attached outline. Every aspect of the plan is open for discussion. You may post your thoughts at the Writing Excellence Initiative website (www.elon.edu/wei) or communicate them to the QEP Committee by contacting Peter Felten (pfelten@elon.edu), Chair of the QEP Committee, or Paul Anderson (PaulAnderson@elon.edu), Director of Writing Across the University.

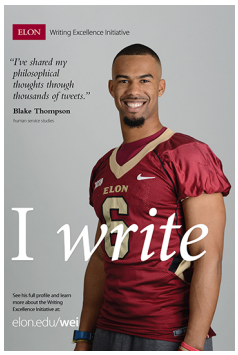
I would like to thank the students, faculty, and staff for their excellent service on the QEP Committee. Their names are listed on the last page of the attachment.

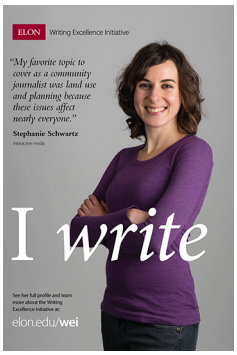
Thank you for contributing to the success of this important campus initiative.

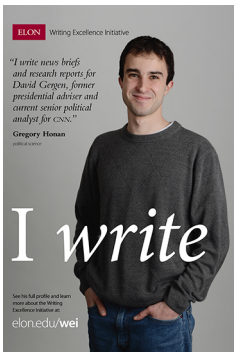
Leo M. Lambert
President

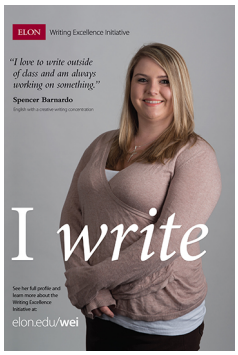
APPENDIX 2

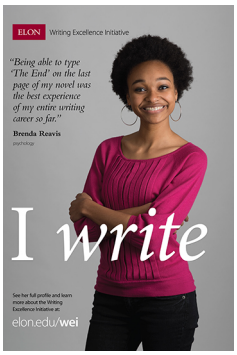
SAMPLE MARKETING MATERIALS, SPRING 2013



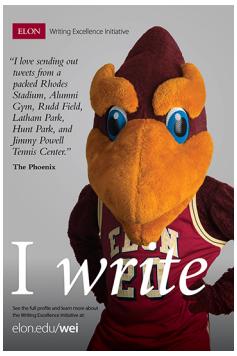


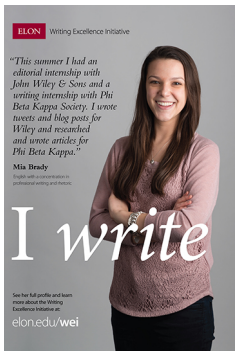


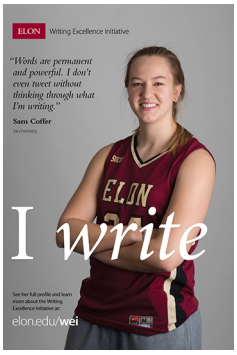


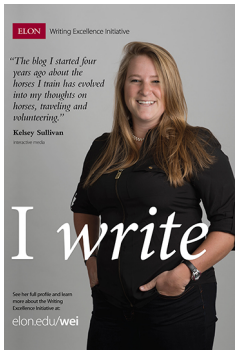


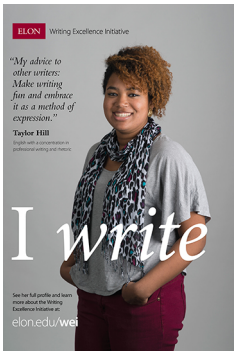
Large posters for indoor display

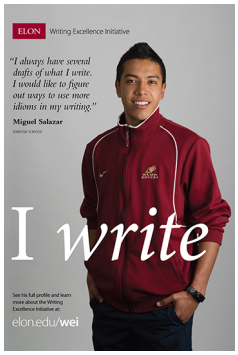


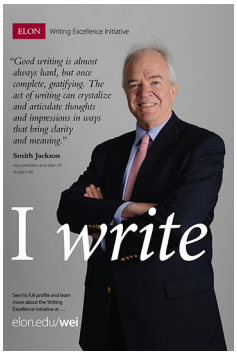


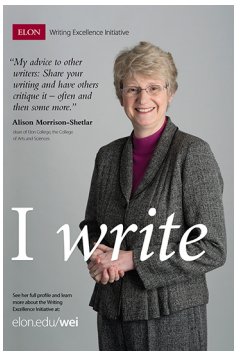






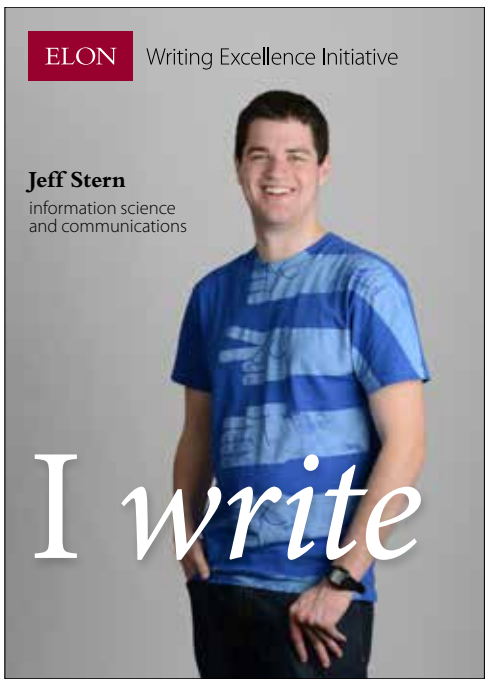






Large posters for indoor display

20-foot banners for display on major buildings



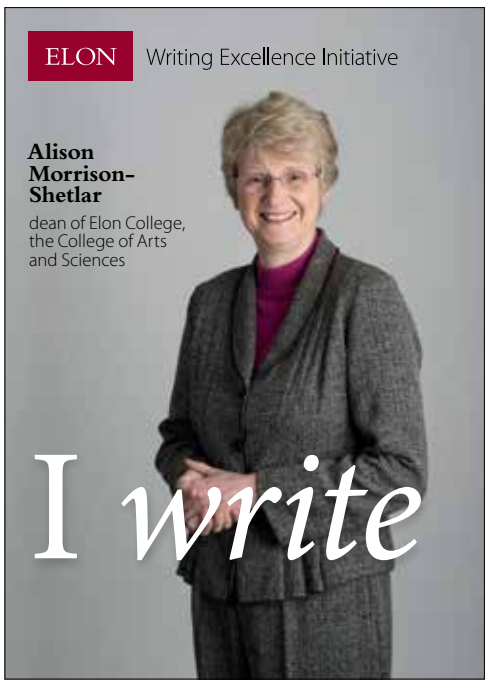
"I am proud of my writing and development work on ElonPendulum.com." – Jeff Stern

How can Elon help students improve their writing? Tell us at **www.elon.edu/wei** to be entered in a drawing to win one of 10 iPads (five for students and five for faculty and staff).

Enter for a chance to win an **iPad!**

For a second chance to win, collect all 10 of these cards and turn them in at Belk Library's circulation desk by April 18.

Writing Excellence Initiative **Card 1 of 10**



"My advice to other writers: Share your writing and have others critique it – often and then some more." – Alison Morrison-Shetlar

How can Elon help students improve their writing? Tell us at **www.elon.edu/wei** to be entered in a drawing to win one of 10 iPads (five for students and five for faculty and staff).

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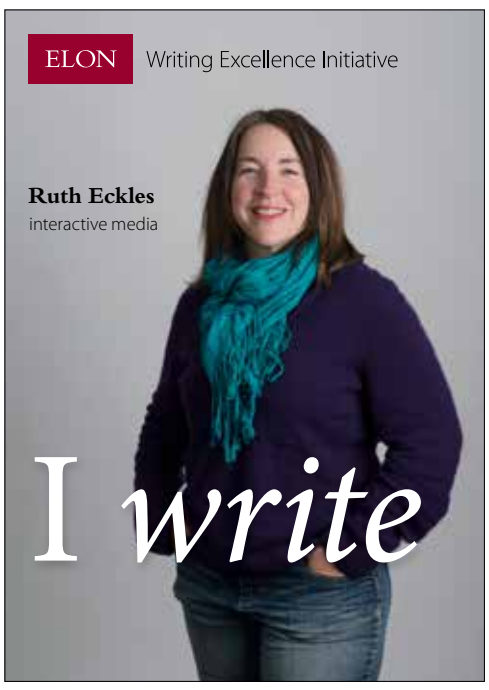
Writing Excellence Initiative **Card 2 of 10**



"I profile people doing great work in the community in my blog Durham Profiles [durhamprofiles.com]." – Ruth Eckles

How can Elon help students improve their writing? Tell us at **www.elon.edu/wei** to be entered in a drawing to win one of 10 iPads (five for students and five for faculty and staff).

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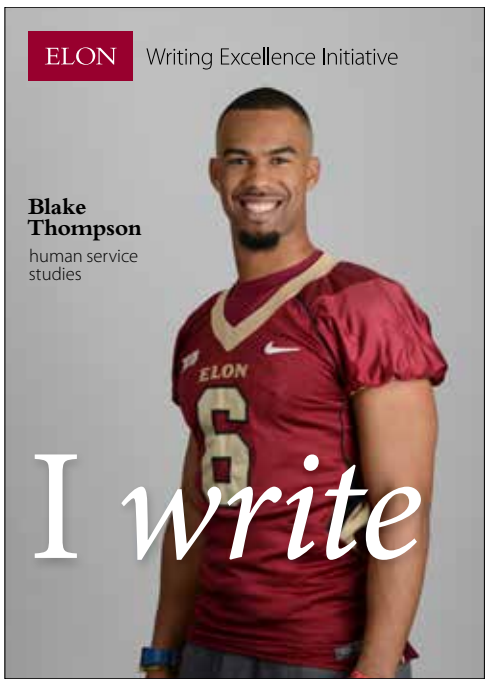
Writing Excellence Initiative **Card 3 of 10**



"I've shared my philosophical thoughts through thousands of tweets." – Blake Thompson

How can Elon help students improve their writing? Tell us at **www.elon.edu/wei** to be entered in a drawing to win one of 10 iPads (five for students and five for faculty and staff).

Enter for a chance to win an **iPad!**

For a second chance to win, collect all 10 of these cards and turn them in at Belk Library's circulation desk by April 18.

Writing Excellence Initiative **Card 4 of 10**

Sample trading cards (front and back)

APPENDIX 3

EXCERPT OF UPDATE TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES, MAY 2012

May 15, 2012

To: Board of Trustees

From: Steven House

Re: Update from the Office of Academic Affairs -- *EXCERPT*

WRITING INITIATIVES

In Fall 2011, after almost two years of research and university-wide discussion, President Lambert selected **Writing Across the University** the focus of Elon's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP is a required component of Elon's reaccreditation from SACS, mandating that the University develop a five-year plan to significantly enhance student learning. The overarching goal is to establish writing as a key characteristic of an Elon education, one that is recognized by students, alumni, graduate programs, and employers as leading to exceptional writers. With this plan, Elon commits itself to strengthen and deepen the teaching and learning of writing.

Since January 2012, a committee of faculty, staff, and students has been developing the QEP report that will be submitted to SACS in November. After SACS provides feedback on the plan in April 2013, Elon will begin to implement the plan. Annual updates will be submitted to SACS, culminating in a final report due in 2018. Additional information about the QEP is available online at www.elon.edu/qep.

Paul Anderson, a leading teacher-scholar and advocate for excellence in writing, will join the faculty in August 2012 as the first **director of Writing Across the University** and professor of English. Anderson will come to Elon from Miami University of Ohio where he currently serves as the director of the Howe Center for Writing Excellence and professor of English. In his efforts to advance the teaching and learning of writing, Anderson will support the Elon Commitment strategic plan along with the writing-focused QEP that is at the center of the university's reaccreditation process.
Anderson is the author or editor of four books related to writing and communications. He co-directs an $800,000 National Science Foundation grant on writing in computer science and software

engineering curricula and has been honored by the National Council of Teachers of English of the Society for Technical Communication for the quality of his teaching and his scholarship.

After more than three years of deliberation, Elon's faculty voted to **revise the first-year general studies curriculum**—core courses that are required of all undergraduates. Two changes will deepen the teaching and learning and writing in the first year: 1) the Writing: Argument and Inquiry course supports the revised mission and goals of the general studies program and will be taught by faculty from across the university rather than solely by English faculty, and 2) the Global Experience course has a revised description that emphasizes writing. Class size in both courses will be reduced to facilitate enhanced writing instruction.

APPENDIX 4

CENTER FOR ENGAGED LEARNING

The new Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University will bring together international leaders in higher education to develop and to synthesize rigorous research on central questions about student learning, filling an important gap in higher education.

Researchers have identified what the "high-impact" educational practices are – study abroad, undergraduate research, internships, service-learning, writing-intensive courses, living-learning communities, and so on. However, while we know what these practices are, we could know much more about three essential issues: (1) how to do these practices well, (2) how to scale these practices to many students, and (3), how students integrate their learning across multiple high impact experiences.

We know, for example, that undergraduate research has powerful outcomes, but it's very labor intensive – usually one faculty member mentoring one student over an extended period of time. If we understood more about *how* students learn and develop during an undergraduate research experience, and if we better understood effective faculty mentoring practices, then we could design *scaled* research experiences that simultaneously would be more effective while reaching far more students – at Elon and elsewhere.

The Center for Engaged Learning also will allow us to tackle a third important issue – studying how students *integrate* their learning across multiple high impact practices. Most colleges and universities treat student experiences as distinct – with separate offices and sets of evidence-based practices for study abroad, internships, undergraduate research, and so forth. At universities where students study abroad and then later complete an internship, or participate in service-learning and then conduct undergraduate research, how can we best help our students integrate across these experiences so that they reinforce each other? The Center will lead precisely that kind of research so that we can support students in integrating across their many engaged experiences.

By collaborating with local, national, and international leaders in high-impact practices, the Center will focus energy and creativity on these important questions. By conducting multi-institutional research and programs on what precisely makes certain experiences "high impact," how to scale-up those experiences for all students, and how to help students integrate their learning, the Center will not only advance engaged learning in higher education, but it also will support the deepest learning for students.

The work of the Center will include:

> Seminars: During each summer, 2011-2013, for example, Elon and the Association of American Colleges and Universities are hosting a seminar exploring a central problem in college teaching, why undergraduate students consistently struggle to transfer what they learn about writing in one setting to different contexts (from school to work, for example). This research seminar includes faculty participants from twenty-five universities in five countries. This seminar is described in more detail below.

Conferences: The Center will host large and small gatherings focused on aspects of engaged learning, ranging from think tanks on important topics to the October 2013 annual conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (www.issotl13.com).

Publications: The Center will sponsor diverse publications including an engaged learning blog to highlight emerging research and best practices, occasional papers on significant topics, and guidebooks that help faculty and institutions apply research-based practices.

Research: The Center will lead multi-institutional research projects on engaged learning, such as a study of best practices in undergraduate research mentoring and an inquiry into how students integrate their learning and development across multiple educational experiences.

More information about the Center is available at www.elon.edu/cel.

Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer (2011-2013)

Summary

From first-year composition through advanced professional and technical communication, writing curricula are constructed under a foundational premise that writing can be taught - and that writing knowledge can be "transferred" across critical transitions. First-year composition is often a required course for all students with the assumption that what is learned there will transfer to other coursework and throughout students' educational careers. Senior capstone courses often integrate writing instruction that is intended to transfer to post-graduation writing in new workplaces or graduate or professional programs. Arguably, all of modern education is based on the broader assumption that what one learns *here* can transfer over *there* – across critical transitions. But what do we really know about transfer, in general, and writing transfer, in particular? Is "transfer," and all of the assumptions that tag along with it, the best term to use to understand, enhance, and found writing education?

Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer supports multi-institutional research addressing these and related questions over a two year period. The Center for Engaged Learning has hosted two meetings on the Elon University campus, in June 2011 and June 2012, and is organizing a culminating meeting with a corresponding conference in June 2013.

Participants

The Seminar Leaders are:

- *Chris Anson*, University Distinguished Professor, Professor of English, and Director of the Campus Writing and Speaking Program, North Carolina State University,
- *Randy Bass*, Executive Director of the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship and Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning Initiatives, Georgetown University, and
- *Jessie Moore*, Associate Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Associate Professor of English, Elon University

Elon received proposals from over 150 individuals for 40 participant slots. The accepted participants represent 28 universities in the United States, Australia, Denmark, Ireland, and South Africa.

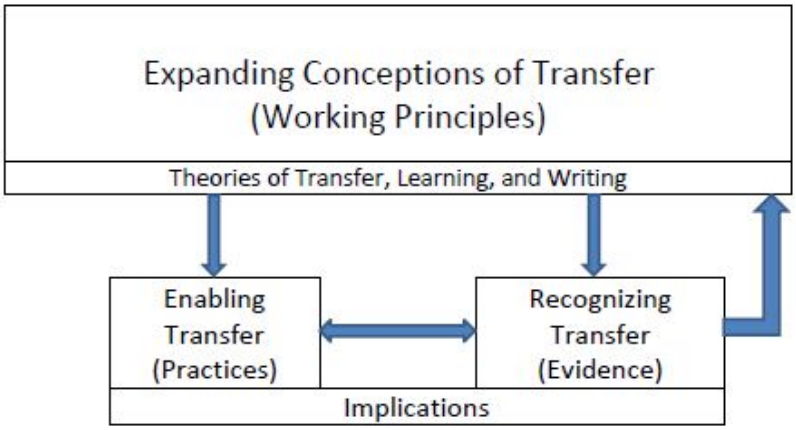
Participants include, for example, Linda Adler-Kassner (author of *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers* and Past-President of the Council of Writing Program Administrators), Elizabeth Wardle (co-editors of *Writing about Writing*), and Kathleen Yancey (author of *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* and Past President of the National Council of Teachers of English).

Outcomes

Participants already have published eight articles (most co-authored by multi-institutional research collaborators) and presented seventeen papers at national and international conferences. Many participants also are scheduled to present at the premier national conference for writing studies in March 2013.

In addition, participants will present the results of their seminar-supported research at the Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer Conference at Elon University, June 25-26, 2013. The Center for Engaged Learning received an additional 45 proposals for panels, individual papers, roundtables, and posters for the conference and accepted approximately 70% of those proposals to integrate with seminar participants' presentations. The conference will feature Etienne Wenger (*Situated Learning*; *Communities of Practice*; *Cultivating Communities of Practice*; and *Digital Habitats*) and Graham Smart (*Writing the Economy*) as plenary speakers.

Seminar Leader and Associate Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Jessie Moore, is leading work on a Center for Engaged Learning Statement on Writing and the Question of Transfer, as well as two edited collections that will showcase the seminar research. The Statement integrates the model shown below as a heuristic for organizing and synthesizing research on writing transfer. A draft of the Statement will be shared at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication* in March 2013 for feedback from writing studies scholars.



Next Steps

In addition to developing the publications referenced above, the Center for Engaged Learning anticipates hosting a Presidents' Retreat on writing as a high impact practice, sharing findings from the research seminar and connecting university presidents with leading scholars in this research and the broader discipline of writing studies.

The Center for Engaged Learning plans to continue hosting CEL Research Seminars, with the next seminar beginning in summer 2014 and tentatively focusing on mentoring undergraduate research experiences.

To learn more about the Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer research seminar and conference, please visit http://www.elon.edu/writingtransfer.

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE RUBRIC AND AAC&U VALUE RUBRIC ON WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Example Rubric for Lab and Experimental Research Reports

This rubric illustrates one way that a natural science department might choose to operationalize a student learning outcome that reads: "Students will be able to report on science experiments in ways that scientists do."

For some criteria, this sample rubric includes alterative statements to show how it could be adapted to lower-level and advanced courses. These differences demonstrate how a department might achieve progressive development of students' writing abilities by building in an advanced course on skills learned in a lower-level course.

Introduction

Background for the Experiment (based on professor-provided literature in lower-level course and on students' own literature search in an advanced course)

Excellent effectively establishes the context of the experiment by citing relevant scientific literature and showing how the literature is relevant to the experiment.	
Fair establishes the context of the experiment by citing relevant scientific literature but fails to show how the literature is relevant to the experiment.	
Poor addresses the context of the experiment by citing scientific literature that has little or no relevance to the experiment.	
Inadequate cites no scientific literature.	

Hypothesis

Excellent includes a clear, precise hypothesis that describes what the student expects to happen and predicts the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Uses language that is consistent with hypothesis testing *(hypothesize*, *predict*, *expect*).	
Fair states the hypothesis incompletely, vaguely, or imprecisely. May or may not use language consistent with hypothesis testing.	
Poor states a hypothesis that shows confusion or misunderstanding of the experiment. Uses language that is inconsistent with hypothesis testing.	
Inadequate provides no hypothesis.	

Methods

Materials

Excellent provides the details about materials (organisms, equipment, etc.) that would enable the reader to replicate the experiment. Avoids unnecessary detail for a reader with a scientific background.	
Fair provides a general description of the materials but leaves the reader guessing about some significant details OR provides unnecessary detail.	
Poor omits enough significant detail about the materials that the reader would be unable to replicate the experiment.	
Inadequate provides no information about the materials used.	

Procedure (for lower-level course)

Excellent provides enough detail about the procedure (preparation of materials, treatments, measurement procedures, calculations and statistical tests used, etc.) to enable the reader to replicate the experiment. Uses a narrative, not a list.	
Fair provides a general account of the procedure but leaves the reader guessing about some significant details or provides unnecessary detail. May use a list.	
Poor omits enough significant detail about the procedure that the reader would be unable to replicate the experiment.	
Inadequate provides no description of the procedure.	

Procedure (for advanced course)

Excellent describes the key features of the procedure needed to persuade the reader that the method would produce valid results and argues effectively on behalf of each of these choice. Omits details about practices the reader will not question.	
Fair describes some but not all features the reader might question or provides unpersuasive rationales for the choices. Includes details about practices the reader will not question.	
Poor presents no persuasive information about the procedure so that the reader could conclude that it was flawed in ways that means the results cannot be relied on.	
Inadequate provides no description of the procedure.	

Experimental design (for courses with experimental and control treatments)

Excellent identifies and fully describes experimental treatments.	
Fair identifies and incompletely describes the experimental treatments.	
Poor identifies the experimental treatments without describing them.	
Inadequate does not identify the experimental treatments.	

Results

Tables and Figures

Excellent presents all of the experiment's major results in tables and figures that are easy-to-read and properly labeled and titled so they can be understood without reading the text.	
Fair presents most of the experiment's major results in tables and figures. May present some minor results in tables and figures. The tables and figures may be difficult to read and have improper or confusing labels and titles. Readers may need to refer to the text to understand the figures and tables.	
Poor presents only a fraction of the experiment's major results in tables and figures. The tables and figures are difficult to read and have improper and confusing labels and titles. They cannot be understood without reading the text.	
Inadequate provides no tables or figures.	

Text (for lower-level course)

Excellent presents only the major results from each table or figure in paragraphs. .	
Fair presents all the findings from each tables and figure in paragraphs.	
Poor presents partial results from each table and figure in paragraphs without discriminating between major and minor results.	
Inadequate presents no results in paragraphs.	

Text (for advanced course)

Excellent presents all major results in paragraphs. Describes the results fully and precisely. Refers to all of the relevant tables and figures. Where statistical results are presented, tells whether the differences between treatments were statistically significant.	
Fair presents some major results in paragraphs. Describes the results incompletely or imprecisely. Refers to some (but not all) of the relevant tables and figures. Tells whether some (but not all) differences between treatments were significant.	
Poor fails to present the major results. Fails to refer to the relevant tables and figures. Fails to tell whether any of the differences between treatments were significant.	
Inadequate provides no text in the results section.	

Discussion

Hypothesis

Excellent restates the hypothesis and tells whether the results support or reject it.	
Fair refers to the hypothesis without restating it OR fails to tell whether the results support or reject it.	
Poor makes vague reference to the hypothesis AND fails to tell whether the results support or reject it. **OR** refers to a hypothesis not stated in the introduction.	
Inadequate provides no reference to the hypothesis and fails to tell whether the results support or reject it.	

Reasoning with regard to hypothesis

Excellent argues persuasively how the results support or reject the hypothesis. Justifies the decision about the hypothesis by explicitly relating specific results presented in the results section to the hypothesis.	
Fair makes a somewhat persuasive argument about the hypothesis. Refers to only some of the specific results that are relevant or else creates only a loose link between the results and the decision about the hypothesis.	
Poor Makes a weak argument about the hypothesis. Provides vague references to specific results or none at all.	
Inadequate provides no argument that relates the results to the hypothesis.	

Relation of findings to the previous research

Excellent provides a detailed, specific discussion of how the experimental results confirm, expand, or contradict previous knowledge. The discussion refers to the relevant articles.	
Fair provides a general, or erroneous discussion of how the experimental results confirm, expand, or contradict previous knowledge. The discussion refers to the relevant articles.	
Poor provides a vague, general reference to how the experimental results confirm, expand, or contradict previous knowledge. The discussion fails to refer to the relevant articles.	
Inadequate provides no discussion of the relation of the experimental results to previous knowledge.	

Proposal for future research (optional for lower-level course)

Excellent suggests one or more specific studies that could explain or expand the experiment's results.	
Fair suggests one or more general approaches that could explain or expand the experiment's results.	
Poor suggests one or more general or specific approaches that would not succeed in explaining or expanding the experiment's results.	
Inadequate provides no proposal for future research.	

Student's Overall Understanding

Understanding of scientific experimentation

Excellent provides evidence that the student has a full understanding of the design and logic of scientific experimentation.	
Fair provides evidence that the student has a largely complete and accurate understanding of the design and logic of scientific experimentation.	
Poor provides evidence that the student has little understanding of the design and logic of scientific experimentation.	
Inadequate provides no evidence that the student understands the design and logic of scientific experimentation.	

Understanding of the science relevant to this experiment

Excellent provides evidence that the student has a full understanding of the science relevant to this experiment.	
Fair provides evidence that the student has a largely complete and accurate understanding of the science relevant to this experiment.	
Poor provides evidence that the student has little understanding of the science relevant to this experiment.	
Inadequate provides no evidence that the student understands the science relevant to this experiment.	

Quality of presentation

Excellent uses prose that is clear and logically developed throughout.	
Fair uses prose that is generally clear and logically developed	
Poor uses prose that is only occasionally clear and logically developed.	
Inadequate uses prose that is very difficult to understand.	

Quality of presentation

Excellent uses prose that has no grammar, spelling, and other errors.	
Fair uses prose that has few grammar, spelling, and other errors.	
Poor uses prose that is has numerous grammar, spelling, and other errors.	
Inadequate uses prose that has an unacceptable number of grammar, spelling, and other errors.	

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collectios of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm)

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Content Development: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- Context of and purpose for writing: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- Disciplinary conventions: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- Genre conventions: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- Sources: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	**Milestones** 3	2	**Benchmark** 1
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

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