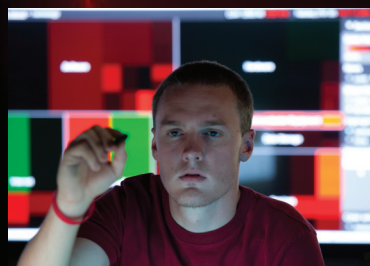


THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE AT WISE



WISE *rites* *Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)*



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Quality Enhancement Plan

The University of Virginia's College at Wise

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UVa-Wise Quality Enhancement Plan

Wise Writes

Executive Summary

Wise Writes, a plan to improve student writing at UVa-Wise, emerged as the focus of The University of Virginia's College at Wise QEP from a protracted series of surveys and conversations among faculty, staff, students, and Board members during the academic year 2013-14. Chancellor Donna Henry appointed a QEP Committee in Fall 2013. The chair is Tom Costa, Chair of the Department of History and Philosophy, and committee members include faculty from the Natural Sciences, Visual and Performing Arts, and Language and Literature as well as staff from Student Support Services, Financial Aid, and members of the Student Government Association.

Initial discussion among the QEP Committee centered on several "high impact" practices: collaborative learning, writing, experiential learning, including international experience, and undergraduate research. Discussions with faculty and faculty surveys indicated high levels of interest in improving student writing. While a separate survey of students indicated less support for a plan to address writing, subsequent discussions revealed significant concern among students about their writing skills, particularly in upper-division courses. An analysis of institutional data from the previous three years on student writing from a variety of stages also indicates the need for a program to address and assess student writing. In addition, formal and informal discussions with faculty, staff and students and local community leaders indicate that there are widespread perceptions of writing issues at the College.

Institutional data, including assessments of student writing, show that students are graduating with writing skills slightly above acceptable. The assessment process itself could be improved. There is not at present a means of connecting the assessment of lower-level writing skills with the measurement of skills required for the upper-level papers, and although faculty involved in assessing student writing do so by way of a common, well-designed rubric, different individual faculty—both within and across departments—are responsible for assigning scores to students' writing and may introduce a degree of subjectivity in terms of how rubric scores are assigned.

More significantly, data from the National Survey of Student Expectations (NSSE) administered in 2009 and 2014 indicate that our students are writing significantly less than their peers in their upper-level classes. At a public liberal arts college, teaching students to write well forms an essential part of the mission. The *Wise Writes* plan to address student writing at the upper level will facilitate the higher-level learning necessary for discipline-specific study and help prepare students to write well in a variety of occupations.

The *Wise Writes* QEP addresses both improving student learning and creating a better learning environment. The three main components are:

- The College will hire a full-time writing specialist/program administrator to direct the plan.
- The College's writing center will be re-located, expanded and improved and will serve as the center for supplemental instruction for students who need help with their writing at all levels. Most importantly,
- Faculty from all academic departments across campus will participate in special workshops to train them in teaching and assessing writing in their upper-level courses. Faculty workshop participants will be awarded stipends, and additional funds will be awarded to workshop participants who modify their upper-level courses or create new courses to incorporate additional writing.

Wise Writes calls for a comprehensive evaluation process that will assess both student writing and the plan itself. A faculty committee will be constituted to work with the QEP director to assess the success of the plan, providing for a centralized assessment process for all College writing and eliminating the subjectivity in rubric scoring. Training a wider spectrum of faculty to assess writing through the workshops will provide a broader pool of faculty eligible to serve on the committee.

The success of the plan will lie primarily in measurable improvement in student writing at the upper level. Using the common rubric, the director and writing committee will assess student writing in the upper-level writing classes. Rubric scores will be compared with baseline scores of a random selection of upper-level papers from AY 2013-15.

Other assessment measures will include direct assessment of the faculty who participate in the workshops; faculty assessment of the techniques they applied in the upper-level writing classes, and surveys of student and faculty attitudes toward writing.

In addition, the plan calls for administering the NSSE in Year 4, to compare the numbers of seniors writing long papers and average number of pages they are writing. The data will be compared with similar data from NSSE surveys in 2009 and 2014.

With a director in place, an improved and enhanced College writing center, and widespread faculty participation in modifying and developing upper-level writing courses, UVa-Wise students will become more effective and confident writers. Improvements in student writing, and the increased emphasis on writing across the College will enable the QEP to continue beyond the five-year life of the plan to become a permanent writing program for the College.

A: About The University of Virginia's College at Wise

I. Description

Founded in 1954, The University of Virginia's College at Wise is a division of the University of Virginia, the only one outside Charlottesville. A four-year public liberal arts college, UVa-Wise currently enrolls about 2200 students. A large number of degree-seeking students (57%) are first generation and many are non-traditional students. Of the total student population, 82% receive financial assistance. Minority students make up 13% of the student body. Minority students in the freshman class of 2014, which is more diverse, make up 23% of the members. This percentage has increased steadily in the last 15 years. About 55% of all students come from the multiple small towns of which far southwest Virginia is comprised. UVa-Wise has 100 full-time teaching faculty. Seventy-five percent of these have terminal degrees.

UVa-Wise is located in rural Wise, Virginia, a small town in the Appalachian region of the state about 350 miles from Washington D.C. and Richmond. It is the only public four-year institution in the region, a region with a higher than average unemployment rate and one in which the percentage of adults with a four-year degree is less than 10%. Contiguous to Kentucky and Tennessee, UVa-Wise is the institution of choice for many students in the culturally similar tri-state region. Historically, far southwest Virginia is an area that has been geographically, economically, and culturally isolated from the rest of the Commonwealth.

The mission of UVa-Wise emphasizes the College's service obligation to this Appalachian region, and also recognizes that the institution must look beyond it: "Proud of its Appalachian heritage, the College continues to honor its commitment of service to Southwest Virginia, the nation and the world." The College seeks to raise educational attainment in the region and to meet educational needs by training teachers. UVa-Wise has close ties to local schools through the Center for Teaching Excellence and provides outreach to businesses and industry through the Office of Economic Development. The College is also a partner in the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia.

The College offers 30 majors, 36 minors, seven pre-professional programs and 18 teaching licensures. Among the degrees it offers are the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. It also offers the only undergraduate degree program in software engineering in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

II. QEP Committee

Chancellor Donna Henry appointed the QEP Committee in the fall 2013. Chair is Tom Costa, Chair of the Department of History and Philosophy. Members include faculty from the Natural Sciences, Visual and Performing Arts, Language and Literature as well as staff from Student Support Services, Financial Aid, and members of the Student Government Association. (See Appendix I for full membership).

The committee met weekly during the fall and spring semesters of AY 2013-2014. Students and faculty provided input at forums held during spring semester. Committee members met with individual faculty and departments to solicit ideas for the plan. Students and student organizations, such as the SGA, Writing Center tutors, Student Support Services tutors, and students in Freshman Seminar classes also provided input.

In its initial approach to developing a QEP, the committee focused on four "high-impact" areas:

- Collaborative learning
- Writing-intensive courses
- Experiential learning, including international study
- Undergraduate research

The committee developed a variety of ways to determine which area might form the most effective focus for the plan, utilizing faculty and student surveys, data from assessments of student writing competencies, and the results of NSSE and FSSE surveys administered during spring of 2014. The committee also sought input from local leaders, through presentations to the College's Advisory and Foundation Boards, and discussions with individuals in those groups. Results from the conversations, surveys and data assessments indicated a strong desire among faculty, staff, students and the local community to focus on writing as the UVa-Wise QEP.

III. The Curriculum and Current Writing Expectations in the Disciplines

The BA/BS degree programs at UVa-Wise comprise two distinct but associated parts: a General Education curriculum required of all students, and a major program curriculum for the discipline. Explicit writing instruction in the general education portion of the curriculum consists of two semesters of English Composition, taken during the students' freshman year, and a one-semester writing-intensive course in Literature.

In addition to composition and literature, other General Education requirements include one semester of humanities, a two-semester sequence of Western cultural heritage, three semesters of social science, two semesters of natural sciences, one semester of art, many of which may incorporate writing. While the composition and literature courses provide a grounding in writing skills, 44% of entering students transfer in their composition requirement. For students who transfer in composition credit, the literature course serves as their only lower-level writing-intensive course. This course may be the last formal instruction in writing some students receive, depending on their major. The *Wise Writes* QEP will identify ways to continue and enhance writing instruction for both transfers and four-year students as they move into their majors.

As General Education is completed, students declare their major. Writing requirements in the majors vary according to discipline, with writing-intensive courses in Communication, History and Philosophy, Language and Literature, and some emphasis on writing in other majors. But there is no overarching, formal approach to writing instruction after composition and

literature. The *Wise Writes* QEP will build on the following departmental examples to offer a more organized, formal approach to writing in the majors:

| Departmental Offerings in Writing | | |
|---|--|--|
| Department | Required Writing-Intensive Courses | Writing Activities and Electives |
| Business and Economics | COM 3400, Business and Professional Communication or COM 3450, Technical Writing | |
| Communication Studies | COM 3400, Business and Professional Communication | COM 3450, Technical Writing, is a major elective |
| Education (pre-K -6) | General education courses in composition, literature and history; concentrators in Language and Literature take 24 hours of upper-level literature | Essay on candidate's philosophy of teaching |
| Education (6-12) | EDU 3590, Teaching Writing, for English candidates. | Essay on candidate's philosophy of teaching |
| Education (Health and Physical Education) | | Article reviews from scholarly literature, press releases, and a research papers |
| History and Philosophy | HIS 3000, Introduction to Historical Research and Writing; HIS 4900, History Capstone | Writing assignments in most other upper-level courses |
| Language and Literature | All upper-level English courses; LAN 4910/4920, Senior Thesis I and I for French and Spanish majors | |
| Mathematics and Computer Science | Capstone courses in Computer Science, Management Information Systems, Mathematics, and Software Engineering | |
| Natural Science | BIO 3270, Invertebrate Zoology, and BIO 3320, Advanced Ecology, have incorporated writing assignments | Technical, scientific articles and other informal outreach pieces for the general public |
| Nursing | NUR 4710, Evidence Based Nursing Practices, and NUR 4800, Healthcare Leadership and Management | |
| Social Sciences | Capstone courses in Administration of Justice, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology | PSY 4960, Writing in Psychology |
| Visual and Performing Arts | ART 3500 & 3510, History of Art I & II, junior and senior studio seminars; MUS 4531 & 4532, Music History I & II and MUS 3038, Popular and World Music; THT 3001, Theater History and Literature | Projects in playwriting or theater history; junior and senior recitals which include oral presentations which may contain writing exercises. |

As noted above, while most of the academic departments at the College list courses that may provide opportunities for writing assignments, there is no college-wide systematic approach to address the teaching of writing at the upper level. The *Wise Writes* QEP will provide a new, more systematic approach to teaching and assessing writing across the College and will encourage a more demanding emphasis on writing within the academic programs.

IV. The College Writing Center

Currently the UVA-Wise Writing Center occupies a limited space in a former lounge area in one of the College's academic buildings. There are six computer work stations, and the center employs up to six student assistants. The center offers individual consultations and assistance with written and PowerPoint presentations on an as-needed basis. Tutoring is on a referral or voluntary basis. Times of operation vary according to the schedules of the student-tutors.

Despite the efforts of the Center's director to publicize the existence and function of the Writing Center, there is a perception among faculty and students that the Center exists primarily to serve students in English courses. Data from AY 2014-15 on tutoring sessions show that of a total of 416 individual tutoring sessions, the majority (66%) involved students from English courses seeking help with writing. In addition, only 15% of the tutoring sessions involved students in non-English upper-level courses seeking assistance. The *Wise Writes* QEP will redress these imbalances by increasing the number of students from other majors, particularly in upper-level classes who use the Center's services.

The Writing Center's current director holds the rank of Instructor in the Language and Literature Department. Her original position as director of the Writing Center included added duties providing help for entering freshmen with writing deficiencies. Over time, her teaching responsibilities have significantly increased so that at present she has less time to devote to the Writing Center. The *Wise Writes* QEP will improve the College Writing Center significantly by formalizing the position of director, making it full-time. The center will also be moved to a more spacious, central campus location, and equipment and personnel, including student assistants, will be added.

B. The Need for a Plan to Improve Writing

I. Faculty and Student Surveys

Faculty and students were given the opportunity to provide feedback for the planning of the QEP through a survey administered during the fall 2013 semester. Survey responses allowed respondents to rank their choices for a QEP focal area from the following options: Collaborative Learning, Writing-Intensive Courses/Writing in the Disciplines, Experiential Learning, and Undergraduate Research. Faculty were given the option of selecting a focal area as a first choice, second choice or no rank ("N/A"), while students ranked choices on a 1-4 scale (strongly support – do not support). Additional feedback was made possible through open-ended responses on both surveys, and demographic data (gender, year of study, and major) were collected for students.

Faculty (n = 38) ranked Writing-Intensive Courses/Writing in the Disciplines as the highest first-choice category in the survey (50% of respondents), also providing the most open-ended responses (n = 22) to justify ranking the writing options as a first choice for a QEP focus. These responses emphasized the role of writing as a key skill across all disciplines at the College and as a primary component of an effective liberal arts education. Almost all respondents stressed the need to improve student writing at the College based on classroom experience across various disciplines. One faculty member stated that poor writing skills are so pervasive that they should perhaps be best addressed below the undergraduate level rather than through a QEP at the College. The remainder of respondents, however, supported this area as a primary focus for a QEP.

Faculty justification for remaining focus areas similarly stressed the need for strong undergraduate research, experiential learning opportunities, and collaborative learning both inside and outside the classroom. However, faculty continually and emphatically stressed the value of writing skills as foundational in all the academic disciplines.

Eighty-three students responded to the survey, including 53 female and 30 male students. Students from various years of study were roughly equally represented among respondents, with seniors (29.3% of respondents) and sophomores (25.6%) forming the groups with the highest number of participating students. Freshmen (19.5%) formed the least-represented group in the survey, excluding post-baccalaureate students (2.4%). Biology (n = 13) and Psychology (n = 9) students included the most respondents by major.

Experiential Learning (3.47) and Collaborative Learning (3.40) received the highest average rankings among students, with Undergraduate Research (3.28) and Writing-Intensive Courses/Writing in the Disciplines (3.22) receiving the lowest average rankings. Unlike faculty, students were not provided the option to provide an open-ended justification for each choice. Analyzing the data using the top two responses for each focus (“strongly support” and “support”) yielded a more even distribution of support for each of the categories:

- Experiential Learning—71 of 83 respondents indicated “support” or “strongly support”
- Collaborative Learning—73/83
- Undergraduate Research—72/83
- Writing—68/83

Students attending follow-up forums with members of the QEP committee in fall 2013 and spring 2014 echoed faculty concerns with writing, both in general and specific to their individual majors (see below).

II. Student Writing Assessment

In its analysis of data regarding student writing proficiency, the committee began where students begin: by looking at placement data and writing scores for incoming freshmen. The majority of new students are placed into the regular composition sequence of ENG 1010 in the fall and ENG 1020 in the spring; a few students are placed into ENG 103H, a one-semester accelerated composition course. A growing number of entering students are arriving with

English composition credit taken elsewhere, either through dual enrollment, or from a previous two- or four-year school. Since transfer students' writing proficiency is not tested when they enter, significant writing issues may not become apparent until later.

One interesting fact emerged from the committee's analysis of writing skills among incoming freshmen: using students' past performance in writing to predict achievement at the undergraduate level is problematic. For example, the committee gathered and analyzed assessment data from composition students from the Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 semesters ($n = 306$), examining student achievement in this course (ENG 1010) against past performance (high school GPA, SAT writing scores). Although high school GPA was a significant predictor of student success, this only held true for students receiving As in ENG 1010. There was no significant difference in high school GPAs among students receiving all other final letter grades in ENG 1010. In addition, student SAT writing scores were not significantly associated with final grades in undergraduate composition. These trends held even when correcting for the potential confounding influence of hours enrolled at the College.

This analysis of data for entering students indicates that they are arriving at the College with a weak background in writing. General education training in writing skills can only go so far in addressing this issue, and writing instruction must continue beyond the basic instruction in composition and literature classes.

More significantly the analysis of writing assessment data indicates that the assessment process itself could be improved. The College assesses student writing capabilities as a general education outcome, using both general education writing (composition and literature class papers) by the Language and Literature Department, and upper-level capstone assignments by the major departments as part of the assessment process. There is not at present a means of connecting the assessment of lower-level writing skills with the measurement of skills required for the upper-level papers.

Rigorous comparisons of student performance using the assessment data are therefore precluded by the College's existing system for assessment. Although faculty involved in assessing student writing do so by way of a common, well-designed rubric, individual faculty—both within and across departments—are responsible for assigning scores to students' writing and may introduce a degree of subjectivity in terms of how rubric scores are assigned. In addition, faculty assessing student writing at various academic levels may view individual assignments differently in terms of a student's class. That is, a faculty member may assess a freshman paper more leniently than the more rigorous assessment generally given to senior papers when assigning rubric scores. This tends to preclude measuring improvement in writing across the four years of study. In addition, individual departments may view the application of the rubric's measures differently. For example, a faculty member in a department that emphasizes writing may be more demanding with students in upper-level classes than a faculty member in a more "numbers-oriented" department.

While students did not earn significantly higher or lower scores across writing rubric components of thesis, organization, paragraphing, language, and use of sources, when pooled across the College, there was a significant difference in overall writing scores among

departments. Specifically, students from Biology and Education earned higher overall writing scores than students from other departments within the College, while students from History and Chemistry earned significantly lower overall scores.

These issues call into question any reliable assessment of whether and how student writing improves throughout one's undergraduate career, since it cannot be assumed that writing assessment was objective and consistent across this period. For example, the data from the 2012-13 academic year shows our students averaging a 3.95 (out of 5) overall level of writing competence, clearly an inflated number given the widespread concerns faculty have expressed about students' writing. This evidence strongly suggests that College faculty need more and better training in assessing student writing, particularly in the major programs. In particular, faculty assessing student writing should calibrate their interpretations of the rubric and its values so that it can be used more effectively to measure improvement. A smaller sample of upper-level writing was assessed by members of the QEP Committee in Fall 2015, and the results indicate a significant lowering of the overall score (3.47. See below).

Beyond the stated desire from both students and faculty to improve writing at the College, these issues also underscore the need to improve the assessment process itself. With a more objective system in place to assess student writing, the College could reliably gauge student improvement and success throughout their academic career, including assessment across the breadth of the institution and even within individual departments. The *Wise Writes* QEP will provide this unified, calibrated assessment process by the formation of a college committee to assess student writing; this will centralize the process and lead the improvement of writing across the College. In addition, the comprehensive training of faculty across the College in the use of the common rubric will provide a pool of qualified persons to serve in rotating terms on this committee and also develop departmental advocates for continued improvement in writing instruction at the higher level.

III. NSSE and FSSE Data

As a follow-up to the surveys administered during fall 2013, faculty and students at UVA-Wise were given the opportunity to complete the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) instruments during Spring 2014. Eighty-eight faculty and 117 students completed surveys. Students and faculty were asked a series of questions related to the following areas: academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, campus environment, and high impact practices. In addition, faculty and students were given a Writing Topical Module specific to writing-related issues. Faculty responses in the FSSE were tabulated according to lower-level and upper-level teaching, and NSSE responses were divided between freshmen and seniors. Several items related to the need to improve writing at the College were identified through these survey instruments and are summarized below.

Faculty Course Goals

Among 10 goal areas of student development (writing and speaking effectively, thinking critically, analyzing statistical information, etc.) writing clearly and effectively was ranked as the

second highest goal for faculty teaching lower-level classes, with 68% of respondents reporting structuring their courses in a way that emphasizes student writing. Only critical thinking (88% of respondents) was ranked higher as a goal for course structuring. Among faculty teaching upper-level courses, 70% reported emphasizing writing effectively as a key skill.

The above corresponded to student responses, in which first-year students reported that writing clearly and effectively was the second-highest category in which they had experienced personal development at the College. Seventy-seven percent of respondents ranked their experience in this category as “very much” or “quite a bit.” Again, critical thinking (82% of respondents) was the highest ranked category for personal development among first-year students. Seniors also ranked writing clearly and effectively as one of the highest areas of experience that they had gained during their time at the College [add percent]. The *Wise Writes* QEP will enhance this connection between faculty emphasis on upper-level writing in the majors and students’ expectations.

Structure of Writing Assignments

FSSE and NSSE responses from the Writing Topical Module provided further insight into how writing is taught at the College. While a high percentage (85% or higher) of faculty reported providing clear expectations and assessment criteria on all or most of their writing assignments, specific requirements for writing assignments were less common and more inconsistently applied. Approximately half of all faculty respondents (50-60%), for example, reported requiring students to prepare two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in, to argue a position using evidence and reasoning, or to summarize material from other sources. These responses were relatively consistent across upper- and lower-division courses.

Other characteristics of writing assignments were less consistently applied across responding faculty. Peer feedback – including feedback on a paper draft, outline, or idea – was reported as required or encouraged by only one-third or fewer of responding faculty. By contrast, 70%-80% of first-year students reported seeking peer feedback on all or some of their writing assignments. Other requirements, including those related to reporting methods or analyzing data from an investigative study and writing for a specific audience/discipline, were unevenly applied across course divisions. Writing in a style specific to a discipline was common (70%) in upper-division courses while rare (29%) otherwise. The only widely-used (>75% of all assignments) requirements were writing in a style specific to a discipline and analyzing information from outside sources, both in upper-division courses. While the indication is that faculty are requiring students to write in a discipline-specific style in their upper-level courses, the widely shared concern among faculty and students is that students in upper-level classes have major difficulties with these upper-division requirements.

Statistical comparisons of student responses to questions in the NSSE “Experiences with Writing” module with other participating institutions (n = 130) supported the above findings. First-year students at UVa-Wise, were significantly more likely ($p < 0.01$) to participate in peer feedback than at other participating institutions, despite the aforementioned lack of encouragement for peer feedback by faculty. Students reported that faculty explained learning outcomes for writing assignments at a significantly higher level ($p < 0.05$) and designed writing

assignments in which students addressed a real or imagined audience at a higher level ($p < 0.05$) than other participating institutions. All other student responses involving expectations of writing assignments were statistically equivalent to those from students at other participating institutions.

While several of the above findings, such as writing in a style specific to a discipline, can be explained by differing requirements between upper- and lower-division courses or across various majors, others provide potential foci for improving writing at the College. Peer feedback, for example, was reported by few faculty as a skill emphasized in writing assignments. This aspect of writing can be addressed either directly during classroom instruction or through the College's Writing Center and may have value in strengthening writing College-wide. Writing for a specific audience and analytical writing were also reported as less-emphasized skills, especially across lower-division courses, and may be additional foci for writing development.

Interestingly, student feedback provided insight into the possible success in strengthening the foci mentioned above. Seventy to eighty percent of first-year students reported seeking peer feedback on all or some of their writing assignments, even though this was reported as encouraged or required by only one-third of faculty. Similarly, more than double the percentage of first-year students reported evaluating outside sources when compared to the percentage of faculty requiring or encouraging this skill as part of a lower-division class assignment. These data indicate that the student desire or need to improve writing may already be present for these particular foci and could underscore their utility as part of a larger writing plan.

Most significantly, senior responses to the question regarding amount of writing indicate that UVa-Wise seniors are writing far fewer pages (49 pages) than their peers in the three categories, southeastern public institutions (68 pages), Carnegie schools (93 pages), and seniors from the previous year's NSSE (79 pages). In addition, data from an earlier administration of the NSSE (2009) to UVa-Wise students back this up: in 2009 only 39% of seniors reported having written four or more papers of from five to nineteen pages during the previous year, while only 47% of seniors reported writing a paper of more than twenty pages in length. These data indicate that our upper-level students are writing significantly less than their peers. The *Wise Writes* QEP will address this deficiency with a focus which will encourage and train faculty to offer more writing in upper-level courses.

IV. Discussions with Faculty, Students and Community Leaders

As the committee compiled and analyzed data from faculty and student surveys and collected institutional assessments of students' writing, members of the committee met with students and faculty in formal and informal situations, individually, and by department and organizations during fall 2013-spring 2014. These discussions indicated a wide support for a plan that addressed student writing problems, with several specific issues emerging:

- There was a clear consensus among both faculty and students that students lack sufficient training in writing at the upper-level.

- Both faculty and students indicated that students need to be informed during their freshman year and repeatedly after, that they will be expected to write during their entire college careers.
- Faculty expressed concern about students' lack of knowledge of basic mechanical skills.
- There was some indication that faculty outside Language and Literature are not familiar with the limitations of the composition classes.
- Students in upper-level programs expressed a desire for more assignments, fewer graded assignments.
- Students desired more instruction in different styles of writing in different disciplines, and suggested a resource center for information and style guides.
- Transfer students: 44% of UVA-Wise students have transfer credits in composition, either through community college or dual-enrollment high school classes. Anecdotal evidence from a number of faculty indicate that these students possess less than optimal skills in writing.
- There was some concern among students about the lack of content-driven writing assignments in lower-level writing courses.

The QEP committee considered all the information from surveys, discussion groups and assessment data and concluded that a focus on writing would serve the College and its students. While some modifications to the existing general education courses would be in order, the committee decided that the plan will put its primary emphasis on more advanced level writing in the majors. While the assessment data indicate that graduates are writing at acceptable (if inflated) levels, classroom evidence allows that significant improvement is possible. The assessment process itself is inconsistent; the College uses a common rubric, but it appears to be the case that the rubric is applied differently by different departments. Subsequent discussions with both faculty and students indicated an overwhelming concern with students' lack of preparation for writing at the upper level in their majors.

In addition, students transferring into the College or entering with dual enrollment credit for composition are not assessed at the outset. The only instruction in writing transfer students receive prior to declaring a major is in the required Literature course, supporting the need to provide these students additional writing instruction at the upper level.

Once the committee determined the focus of the plan, three additional members were added, each an expert in writing, from the Language and Literature, Communication, and History and Philosophy departments. The enhanced committee began to refine the plan to improve students' writing at the upper-level, and invited recent alumnae of the College to participate in discussions with students about the importance of effective writing after graduation. The chair of the QEP Committee solicited input and gave regular updates on the progress of the plan to the Chancellor, Dean and Provost, Faculty Senate, Senior Leadership, Chancellor's Cabinet, Council of Chairs, the Foundation Board and College Advisory Board. The University of Virginia's Board of Visitors and the President of the University were informed of the plan by the college's faculty member of the UVA Board. In addition, the chair continued to meet with individual faculty and departments to solicit input on devising the QEP. The committee sent out weekly e-mail messages ("QEP Thursdays") to all College faculty to keep them apprised of the progress of developing the plan.

In Fall 2015, as a pilot for future surveys, the QEP Committee prepared and administered a survey for freshmen on attitudes, experience, and expectations about writing. (See Appendix VIII, *Wise Writes* Freshman Survey)

There were 172 responses. Students were asked to rate a series of statements on a scale of 1-5, with 1 indicating least favorable and 5 most favorable. Overall, students ranked general attitude highest (3.45), with personal habits/experience next at 3.00, and expectations lowest (2.86). In the latter category, however, freshman rated highest by a wide margin writing as important to future careers (3.72), while giving a far lower score to looking forward to writing in their upper-level classes (3.02). By focusing on writing at the upper level, *Wise Writes* will address this imbalance in expectations and help prepare graduates to be better writers in their careers.

C. Literature Review

An abundance of research and literature supports the importance of teaching good writing in undergraduate liberal arts education. Surveys and data have shown that employers desire students who can communicate effectively in writing. A review of the literature shows the importance of and strategies for the improvement of students' writing at the composition level, continuing the assessment of and addressing students' writing at the upper-level, the importance of faculty involvement at all levels, and the efficacy of a strong college writing center with its use of peer writing tutors/mentors to help students learn how to write effectively.

As a liberal arts college, UVa-Wise stresses developing a broad range of skills rather than a narrow professional education, and writing is an important part of that. As one UVa-Wise faculty member declared, "it's the single most important thing that a college can do."

I. Composition as a Bridge to the Discourses

Although the primary focus of *Wise Writes* is upper-level writing, the College has developed its plan with composition courses as the foundation, even though doing so presents both benefits and challenges.

One benefit of laying the groundwork of *Wise Writes* with composition is that it is often the first real college-class experience that students encounter out of high school. Lee Ann Carroll supports composition as a helpful transition tool for students coming from high school because it gives them "space" for literacy development without the added responsibility of learning new subject matter (120).

Another benefit of composition courses is attention to students. Charles Bazerman states that one strength of composition is that it is a place, often the only place, where students find attention (255). Sullivan makes the point that writing instruction exacts a powerful emotional toll on writing instructors as they often spend more time and emotional energy working with, and investing in, their students, particularly the often underprepared students, than colleagues from

other disciplines (Sullivan 8). Reducing the number of students in composition classes will increase the attention paid to each individual student and help alleviate the emotional stress of dealing with large numbers of underprepared or unprepared students (Horning 19).

The benefits of building *Wise Writes* at the composition-level are clear, but doing so comes with challenges. While composition courses offer students a community in which to develop literacy tasks, engage in reflection, and build professional relationships with their professors, to be effective, the courses must also be designed in such a way that literacy skills transfer from composition to the disciplines.

Linton, Madigan, and Johnson state that most models of writing in composition classes are in the humanities, thus students are not able to transfer what they learn in composition to other discourses. The authors contend, however, that composition courses are uniquely positioned to expose students to different genres and can both inform and prepare them to write differently as they enter varying discourse communities (178). Also, the courses expose students to the conventions of structure, reference, and language and help them “understand the ways in which writing conventions reflect the values and serve the needs of specialized communities of writers, and they can begin to recognize patterns and variations in selected samples of academic texts” (Linton, Madigan, and Johnson 170-171).

Charles Hill and Lauren Resnick also claim that general writing skills instruction alone may not be adequate to train students for the rhetorical tasks they will face in the workplace (145-146). Hill and Resnick suggest that one way for improvement is “to embed the instruction as much as possible into the genuine rhetorical situations in which writers find themselves--not to ‘create’ classroom tasks that approximate such situations on a surface level” (Hill and Resnick 155-156). Barbara Walvoord supports composition as a place where students can learn transferrable skills, but insists that teachers must instruct their students on how to apply learned skills to other discourse communities (*Helping Students Write Well* 4). Similarly, Anne Beaufort contends that “we are looking to teach not similarities in the ways writing is done in different contexts, but rather, to teach broad concepts (discourse community, genre, rhetorical tools, etc.) which will give writers the tools to analyze similarities and differences among writing situations they encounter” (149).

To aid in the process of transference of skills, Linda Peterson suggests that composition instructors, in consultation with their colleagues, might incorporate into the curriculum samples of good writing in other disciplines or invite their colleagues to class to discuss the writing conventions of their fields (45-46). In composition courses, students can acquire many skills to assist them as they transition into their respective disciplines. The challenge is how to facilitate the transition beyond composition. Consultation across campus between composition instructors and faculty members in the disciplines is a critical strategy to facilitate the transition from lower-level writing to the advanced skills needed as students enter the discourses of their chosen majors.

II. Entering the Discourse Communities

Although composition offers the foundation for further development of writing skills, and can serve to introduce students to college-level writing in the disciplines, studies of college writing instruction have shown that teaching effective writing must go beyond the one- or even two-semester composition course(s) generally required at the freshman level. Teaching writing must take place over the student's entire college career (Segall and Smart 1; Linton, Madigan, and Johnson 170) and should venture across the curriculum as students learn to write in different contexts. David Russell argues that writing is not "an autonomous skill generalizable to all activity systems that use writing" and "does not exist apart from its uses" (57). Susan McLeod states "learning to write well involves learning particular discourse conventions," thus, good writing goes beyond composition into the disciplines and across the curriculum ("Writing Across the Curriculum" 4). Michael Carter writes that "doing is the key to connecting knowing and writing in the disciplines" (230). In other words, students learn to write as they engage in various discourses and subsequently develop critical thinking skills.

Students often struggle to adapt to various rhetorical conventions from discipline to discipline and must learn to communicate effectively in these new discourse communities. Problems often arise, according to Muriel Harris, when students fail to accommodate the demands of a particular audience ("What Does The Instructor Want?" 123), or as she puts it, when students fail to move successfully from "writer-based prose" to "reader-based prose," a concept from Linda Flower's 1979 *College English* article (125-126).

Writer-based prose is prose "that has not yet been transformed" (Harris, "What Does The Instructor Want?" 125), prose that is essentially a condensed personal dialogue often lacking transitions, clear organization, and standard grammar and language usage (125-129). Harris is quick to point out Flowers's assertion that writer-based prose is not to be completely dismissed but instead should be viewed as a transitional stage moving toward reader-based prose, prose with a stronger sense of audience awareness ("What Does The Instructor Want?" 130).

Often, instructors in disciplines other than English Composition or English Literature argue that writing instruction is best left to those trained to do it. Wei Zhu presents this debate on whether writing is a foundational, transferrable skill that should be left to composition faculty or an endeavor that requires a "division of labor" (42) among all faculty. Business and engineering faculty are cited. Both groups of faculty argued the importance and value of writing, particularly in the professional world (34), and both groups believe they play an integral role in helping students improve their writing skills in the disciplines, though they believed that professional/technical knowledge was primary in importance (39). Though some faculty members believed writing instruction was secondary in importance to course content, they did point out that they spend a great deal of time on editorial concerns (40). Zhu goes on to say that faculty primarily see their role in writing instruction as one that offers opportunities for writing and opportunities for feedback, mostly in the content area (43). *Wise Writes* takes the "division of labor" approach as faculty from all departments, from composition to capstone, will engage in writing across the curriculum (WAC).

Segall and Smart write about their experience with WAC at Quinnipiac and argue that their success hinges on the faculty in other disciplines accepting that students are expected to continue developing their writing skills after they complete first year composition and that writing instruction should continue through the remainder of students' college careers. Student success in writing also depends on faculty acknowledging and attending to the intersection between writing and content learning (1).

One way to strengthen the connection between writing and learning is to develop writing intensive courses. George D. Kuh, in *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* identifies ten high-impact educational practices that when linked to learning outcomes, create “purposeful pathways” that impact student persistence and engagement (7). Writing-intensive courses are identified as one of these practices. These practices are effective because they demand students devote more time to purposeful tasks, foster interaction with faculty and peers over an extended period of time, increase opportunities for contacts with a diversity of people, offer students frequent feedback, provide opportunities for students to see how what they are learning relates to different environments, both on and off-campus, and are life-changing (14-15).

An important benefit of a writing intensive curriculum is that students become more confident writers. Hilgers, Hussey and Stitt-Bergh report their findings that the most frequently used word by students describing their writing experience, consisting of several WI courses, was “confidence,” confidence in their ability to meet the writing demands of their majors and intended professions (344). J.I. Hawthorne's writing study at The University of North Dakota also cites confidence as an outcome of a writing intensive curriculum (55), and additionally that students believed that the writing intensive curriculum helped them grow both as writers and learners (58). Thus, not only do students gain confidence in their writing, but they also become competent writers.

Anne Herrington also supports the idea of writing as a way to learn. Herrington worked with faculty to experiment with ways to incorporate writing into existing courses with the goal of helping students meet course objectives. Students in these courses reported “that the writing was a powerful way of learning” and “added at least in some degree to their understanding of course material” (381).

In order to help students improve as writers and learners, faculty must offer meaningful, constructive feedback and evaluation and recognize that writing and learning are inextricably linked. Lee Odell asserts that the evaluation of writing is helpful to students and faculty in better understanding ways of knowing in academic contexts. He also states that it appears that the “formalist” view (referenced from Richard Fulkner, “Four Philosophies of Composition,” *College Composition and Communication* 30 (1979): 344) of writing is still used in many college/university classrooms, i.e. judgments about writing can be separated from judgments about content. In other words, formalists believe that good writing is more about mechanics (organization, syntax, diction, etc.) rather than content (86-87). However, writing, particularly in the disciplines, should link mechanics with the “meaning-making process,” a way of knowing, and if faculty want students to engage in this process of knowing, faculty must provide evaluations that will guide them in this process. If faculty “persist in separating ways of writing

from ways of knowing, then we shouldn't be surprised if students persist in writing well about nothing" (98).

Wise Writes will use composition, modified existing courses, and new writing-intensive courses to facilitate the transition to disciplinary writing in the majors. This approach will ensure that students have multiple opportunities to develop their writing skills during their entire college career with an emphasis on upper-level writing in their majors.

III. Writing in the Discourse Communities/Writing in the Disciplines

McLeod defines writing in the disciplines (WID) as one of two approaches to WAC ("Writing Across the Curriculum" 2). The first is cognitive, which "assumes that writing is not only a way of showing what one has learned but is itself a mode of learning—that writing can be used as a tool for, as well as a test of, learning" (3). The second is rhetorical, which is writing in the disciplines or discourse communities (3). *Wise Writes* will implement both approaches by improving students' disciplinary writing in the majors, implementing writing strategies in existing courses and developing new writing-intensive courses in the majors.

As previously stated by Carter, taking writing into the disciplines introduces students to doing and knowing as a way of learning (230). The *Wise Writes* QEP will help students learn how to become good writers in their disciplines by engaging them in writing activities that will allow them to "do" their professions. Hawthorne's study on student perceptions of the value of WAC showed that students in writing-intensive majors responded that they "learned to think, to remember, to understand, to analyze, to integrate, and to evaluate. Writing assignments became a means through which students could try on the role of a professional, learn how to apply theory to practice, and imagine themselves as full contributors within a professional community" (57). With buy-in from the entire college community, the *Wise Writes* QEP aspires to produce similar experiences for UVa-Wise students.

Wise Writes will engage faculty from all disciplines as their involvement is critical to its overall success. Susan Schorn makes the point that if faculty from all departments have a say in setting writing standards, they have a vested interest in improving student writing (334). To facilitate faculty involvement, the QEP will offer several faculty workshops on writing.

IV. Faculty Involvement

Walvoord maintains that faculty dialogue has been, and continues to be, how WAC programs begin and that "the interdisciplinary faculty workshop has been the basis of the WAC movement, providing the yeast of understanding and commitment that leavens the curricular and programmatic elements of the WAC program" ("Getting Started" 15). Thus, the heart of *Wise Writes* will be faculty training for the development of writing-intensive courses in the majors. Faculty often hold the opinion that writing instruction ends after students complete their composition sequence. Discussions with UVa-Wise faculty revealed that while they use writing assignments in their upper-level classes, these assignments are often presented without any significant instruction to help students complete them; faculty assume that students possess sufficient skills from their general education to complete upper-level writing assignments

without needing any additional instruction in writing. As discussed previously, writing instruction must go beyond one or two courses at the composition level and continue into the discourses and faculty training is critical to this process.

Wise Writes recognizes the importance of faculty involvement in implementing a College-wide plan to improve students' writing. Experts attest to the value of faculty training workshops in broadening the approach to teaching writing at the upper level. Faculty in departments that already place a heavy emphasis on writing (Language and Literature and History and Philosophy, for example) will engage in dialog with faculty across departments to develop writing-intensive course in their majors. These faculty training workshops will form the core of *Wise Writes*.

This approach is widely supported in the research. McLeod states that faculty workshops are the heart of WAC programs and should be designed so that faculty members have opportunities to talk to each other about writing. After all, faculty cannot not be expected to teach in ways they themselves have not been taught. She also suggests workshops that model both writing to learn (student-centered and reflective) and writing to communicate or WID (reader-based) pedagogies ("The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum" 64).

To model these approaches, Fulwiler shares five specific types of workshops to introduce WAC to faculty: 1) *Exploring* – its primary purpose is to get people talking about problems with student writing; 2) *Journal Writing* – demonstrates the importance of writing to oneself to help clarify, interpret or reflect; 3) *Theory* – theoretical discussions on the value of expressive writing (based on James Britton's work *The Development of Writing Abilities*, 1975); 4) *Responding to Writing* – participants respond to student writing and then share responses in small groups; 5) *Composing* – participants engage in their own writing and the peer-evaluation process. The result of these workshops is that teachers become students again having to write on demand and to submit to an evaluation process (Fulwiler 115).

According to Cross and Willis, experiences in faculty workshops not only help faculty incorporate new activities into their courses, like 'workaday' writing assignments, journals, and peer workshops, but also help them to learn more about their students. These 'workaday' writing assignments pair learning objectives with writing activities such as short, impromptu writings that benefit the writer and do not require extensive grading (Cross and Willis).

These strategies will form the basis for the faculty workshops. *Wise Writes* will incorporate these and other strategies to engage faculty in workshops that will facilitate the accomplishment of the QEP's objective to increase and enhance writing overall, especially in the disciplines.

V. The Role of the Writing Center and Tutors

The *Wise Writes* QEP will expand its current Writing Center to offer training and increase resources for tutoring in the disciplines. Historically, writing centers pre-date WAC/WID programs and serve a complementary function to them (Robinson and Hall 30). So,

too, will the *Wise Writes* QEP work collaboratively with Wise's Writing Center to accomplish the objectives of the QEP concerning enhancing writing in general and in the disciplines.

Three important considerations to take into account when creating or enhancing writing centers are training tutors to assist with discipline-specific writing, providing adequate resources, and maintaining open lines of communication between faculty in content courses and WAC administrators (Harris, "The Writing Center and Tutoring" 116). While there is debate as to whether it is preferable to have tutors in a writing center who have disciplinary knowledge (opposed to those who do not), even tutors without knowledge of discourse conventions, with proper training, can be effective in WAC/WID. In "Rethinking the WAC/Writing Center Connection," Pemberton argues that tutors without knowledge of specific discourse conventions can assist students with cognitive tasks that help them break from conditioned patterns of writing (375-376). In regard to adequate resources for writing centers, Harris refers to Besser's work, "The Writing Center: A Center for all Disciplines" to provide guidance as to what those resources might include: instructional handouts on writing in different disciplines, dictionaries, style manuals, and sample assignments and papers ("The Writing Center and Tutoring in WAC Programs" 118-119). In addition, Robinson and Hall discuss the benefits of Discipline- and Assignment-specific Tutoring Tools (DATT), tutoring prompts that encourage collaboration between tutor and student and facilitate the process of interpreting and breaking down the assignment for the student (29). Finally, the Writing Center will have the full support of the College community. The effectiveness of the QEP will be contingent upon open lines of communication among the Writing Center Director, the Director of the College Writing Program, the Faculty Writing Committee, and the Director of Assessment.

VI. Student Writing Specialists

In addition to having tutors in the Writing Center who can assist with writing in the disciplines, the *Wise Writes* QEP will employ student writing specialists (often referred to as writing fellows or mentors) attached to each writing-intensive course in the majors.

Tori Haring-Smith states that the goal of a writing fellows program is to bring to light the way writing can impact curriculum and to link it to learning (130). Writing fellows are instrumental in this process.

Joan Mullin et al. contend that writing mentors help both students and faculty. For students, these mentors help facilitate learning and the transfer of knowledge by "rhetorically reading the classroom and in learning how to speak more effectively within that community." For faculty, they "project and amplify the difficulties that face a novice engaging in the community of practice. They embody and give voice to the internal dialogue in which students are engaged, uniquely articulating for instructors what students and mentor are experiencing" (Mullin).

The QEP's goal in linking student writing specialists to writing-intensive courses in the majors is to prepare students to write effectively overall, but especially in their disciplines.

Student writing specialists will facilitate the process through which students will successfully engage and communicate in their respective discourse communities.

VII. Assessment

Assessment of student outcomes in both composition and discipline-specific courses will be key in determining the overall effectiveness of the *Wise Writes* QEP. Rubrics for both course types will be revised, as necessary, to accomplish this purpose.

Bean, Carrithers, and Earenfight discuss how a discourse-based approach to developing assessment outcomes impacted writing in the disciplines at Seattle University. Key in that process was the implementation of course-embedded assignments, rubrics created by departments, and faculty discussion about how to improve curriculum and instruction based on students' performance (6-7). These assessment procedures yielded positive results leading the authors to conclude that "a rigorous program in writing in the disciplines may be the best way to produce students who know their disciplines' concepts and procedures but who can also use this knowledge in complex rhetorical environments where arguments have stakes and where professionals-in-training must take responsibility for the solutions they propose" (Bean, Carrithers, and Earenfight 20).

D. QEP: Improving College Writing: *Wise Writes*

I. Philosophy:

The plan to improve writing (instruction and assessment) at UVa-Wise will focus on bridging the gap between general education courses and writing in the disciplines (entering the discourse) through the development of more intensive writing instruction at the upper level. Faculty participation is the critical element to the success of the plan. The College administration will provide necessary support for the plan by offering monetary incentives for faculty to participate in a planned series of workshops to educate faculty in teaching and assessing writing at the upper level. Through these incentives, faculty in all departments will be engaged with the goal of educating all students in how to become an effective writer. Further awards will be given to faculty who choose to implement the lessons learned in the workshops into their existing courses or to develop new upper-level writing-intensive courses. Faculty who have participated in the QEP workshops will become leaders within their departments in developing departmental guides to good writing.

Wise Writes will build an awareness among students that writing in classes beyond their general education composition experience forms a key element in their learning the subject. Incoming freshmen will be introduced to the importance of writing in both general education courses and their majors during their introduction and orientation to college life, and they will be given surveys measuring their attitudes toward writing. Recent alumni will be engaged to speak to them about the importance of writing in different fields of employment. The College Writing Center will be moved and expanded to offer a more visible presence for students seeking help

with writing, and its services will be enhanced as detailed below. New and adapted courses in all majors that emphasize writing will reinforce for students the importance of writing in all majors. Students will write during their entire college careers, in all disciplines.

The *Wise Writes* QEP will provide for significantly more instruction in writing within the majors. Its guiding principles will be that:

- improving students' writing must include more than instruction in the mechanics of writing
- learning to be an effective writer is a long-term process, extending throughout a student's four years
- advanced writing is best taught and learned at the upper level of students' studies, when they are engaged actively in the acquisition and analysis of knowledge in a major field of study
- writing in a student's major is an indispensable tool in learning the subject

Students often believe that writing ends when they finish their composition courses. When approaching writing exercises in their major courses, students will often fail to appreciate the level of writing that is expected, thinking: "It's not a composition class, therefore the professor will not grade the writing." One objective of the *Wise Writes* QEP will be to develop a culture and expectation of writing at the College among students and faculty. Faculty too will learn to become more intentional in teaching and encouraging better writing in the majors. Faculty will better understand that students cannot learn everything they need to know about writing in their general education courses, and that students do not learn how to write by simply submitting writing assignments.

Writing in the disciplines requires a different level of reasoning, analysis and synthesis. In discussions with faculty and students, the committee learned that upon declaring a major students do not necessarily possess these higher-level skills. The *Wise Writes* QEP will help students learn the expectations and skills demanded in upper-level writing. Students and faculty will also learn that writing is a process that requires continued application, and students will develop the ability to self-correct their writing through a guided process of writing and re-writing.

In addition, a particular problem expressed among UVa-Wise faculty and students is that students entering into their major courses do not have the sufficient knowledge of the different styles each discipline uses. While students are aware of MLA, Chicago, and APA styles, they often lack enough knowledge to feel comfortable in the transition from basic writing to the more specialized subject-specific writing. In particular, students in the natural sciences and social sciences, many of them among the best UVa-Wise students, often have early trouble in their majors with the writing requirements. The *Wise Writes* QEP will encourage each department to develop a guide to its writing expectations including matters of style.

II. Specific Elements of the Program:

Before the implementation of the *Wise Writes* QEP, during Year 0, faculty will participate in college-wide discussions on the way writing is taught, the relationship between general education-level writing and upper-level writing, and the ways departments and faculty within departments can improve writing instruction in their courses. During Year 0 a national search for a director of the QEP will also be conducted. Having a director to oversee the elements of the plan and to work effectively with faculty and departments is critical to the plan's success.

During Year 0 the administration and members of the QEP committee will also study the feasibility and needs of relocating the Writing Center to a dedicated location in the new library (scheduled to open in Fall 2016). This review will comprise fixing the location within the library, assessing the amount and types of new equipment needed, surveying staffing needs, and developing a plan for increasing the number and the training of student writing assistants.

During the plan's implementation (Years 1-5), the key elements of the *Wise Writes* QEP will include:

- training faculty in teaching and assessing writing across the curriculum and in the disciplines through a series of focused workshops
- appointing a newly constituted Faculty Writing Committee that will work with the director to implement and assess the plan
- implementing the planned expansion and enhancement of the College Writing Center to serve as a focus for helping students and faculty improve their writing
- developing supplemental instruction avenues for students to augment their writing courses

III. Student Outcomes

As a result of the implementation of the *Wise Writes* QEP, UVa-Wise graduates will be able to write more effectively. Through the reinforcement of the general education competencies, they will be able to:

- employ the basic rules of grammar and standard language usage
- write in a clear, concise manner

The focus on writing in their upper-level courses will enable UVa-Wise students to:

- state and argue a thesis appropriate to the specific discipline
- have sufficient research/reasons to support thesis statements
- express findings from research appropriate to the discipline
- employ the relevant style and language and theoretical framework appropriate to the discipline
- demonstrate through their writing an understanding of the discipline

These student outcomes will be assessed by the QEP Director and College Writing Committee, using the common rubric developed by the College to assess student writing. Placing it in the hands of a college committee, this common approach to assessment will yield more accurate data than previous assessments. The committee will take results from student writing assessments during the life of the plan and compare them to baseline data compiled from student papers (2014-15) that have been assessed by members of the QEP committee using the same rubric. This baseline was determined by members of the QEP committee using the College rubric. This duplicates the assessment planned for in the QEP.

For the initial assessment, 53 upper-level papers from ten departments across the College (constituting a random sample) were submitted to be assessed by specially trained members of the QEP committee. The results of this assessment show that overall scores were significantly lower than the data from 2013-14. (3.47 compared to 3.95. See above). Although the sample was small, indications are that developing such a unified objective assessment process will provide more useful data.

Most significantly, when broken down into the separate parts, the initial assessment reveals that upper-level students scored far lower in the proper use of sources and documentation (3.04). Writing in the disciplines demands the ability to find, use and properly cite sources. With its focus on upper-level writing, the *Wise Writes* QEP will address this issue.

During Year 0, there will be an opportunity to assess more student papers from these and other departments to provide a larger sample. This continuous assessment process will establish a baseline against which improvements in student writing may be measured and will also establish the precedent for the unified, objective assessment process for all college writing.

Based on the preliminary baseline assessment, it is a reasonable outcome to expect an improvement in the overall average score of .2-.3 on a 5-point scale. This would move the overall score from 3.47 to 3.67 to 3.77. The rubric also allows for a more detailed analysis of the specific areas in which students may need additional help, as shown by the deficiencies in use of sources and documentation, and the greatest increase will be in that area.

IV. Implementation

- i. Discussion
- ii. Director and Writing Committee
- iii. Workshops and Courses
- iv. Writing Center Impact
- v. Timeline
- vi. Assessment

i. Discussion

During Year 0 of the *Wise Writes* QEP faculty from all disciplines will participate in campus-wide discussions about how faculty teach writing. These discussions will resemble discussions during the earlier phase of deciding a QEP topic, but will be focused and

concentrated on actual techniques of the writing plan itself. These discussions will generate faculty interest in participating in the workshops, in developing writing-intensive courses, and in the College's approaches to teaching writing in general. Instructors in composition and literature will join faculty who teach in departments that emphasize writing, along with faculty who teach in departments where writing is less of a focus. Data from the 2015 freshman surveys and the initial writing assessments will be shared with faculty.

Discussions will focus on these questions:

- What are freshman experiences and expectations about writing?
- What do students learn in ENG 1010 and 1020?
- What other courses (introductory courses) can we designate as threshold courses to provide additional help for students before they declare their majors?
- What are the specifics of writing in each discipline?
- How can we develop an effective assessment process that will provide accurate, uniform data across disciplines?

As a result of these discussions, each department will develop a set of priorities for effective writing and set its own goals for teaching effective writing in the disciplines. The discussions will help generate a "buzz" about the writing plan, and individual faculty will be encouraged to participate in the faculty workshops and to develop writing-intensive courses in their disciplines. (See Appendix IV, Timeline for Implementation.)

ii. Director and Faculty Writing Committee

During Year 0 a national search for a director of the program will take place. The role of director is critical to the success of the plan. The director should

- be of sufficient seniority to understand how to attract faculty to participate in the plan.
- have experience in overseeing a writing program, including working with the writing center, faculty from multiple disciplines and the administration.
- understand the principles of assessing student writing across the curriculum.
- have experience in grant-writing.
- help ensure the continuation of the writing emphasis beyond the five-year length of the plan.

The Dean and Provost will advertise and appoint a search committee for the position of Director of the QEP. The director will report to the Provost and serve as chair of the Faculty Writing Committee that will be appointed on a rotating basis from among College faculty. The director will oversee all aspects of the QEP, including working closely with the Department of Language and Literature, and assisting the Writing Center to formalize referrals, develop, and schedule workshops for students. The QEP Director will develop and schedule the faculty workshops and will sample and assess students' writing at the upper level, assisted by the Writing Committee and the Director of Assessment, an *ex officio* member of the committee.

The QEP Director and Faculty Writing Committee will meet on a regular basis during the implementation of the plan. Committee members will be awarded a stipend each semester. The director will be responsible for writing an annual progress report on the plan and will provide written and verbal updates to the Provost and Academic Dean at the end of each academic year. The report will analyze data from each year's implementation schedule and recommend adjustments and modifications to the plan based on the findings from the data. The report will be shared with all faculty.

The *Wise Writes* Faculty Writing Committee appointed by the Academic Dean and Provost will initially include three faculty from three different departments who have some experience in teaching and assessing writing at the upper-level. The members will serve three-year terms, with two of the initial members serving longer than three years to provide a measure of continuity during the five-year life of the QEP. Through the faculty workshops, the number of faculty interested in and trained to serve on this important committee will increase.

The Writing Committee will work with the QEP Director and the Director of Assessment to assess the examples of student writing from assignments in the writing-intensive courses in the majors. These courses will be developed by faculty participating in the workshops.

The QEP Director and Faculty Writing Committee will also oversee the assessment of College upper-division writing. They will collect and assess papers from capstones and upper-division course that are currently being assessed at the departmental level. This process will provide a consistent and unified assessment of College writing and produce data from both workshop courses and the non-workshop courses that include writing assignments. The combined upper-division assessment data will be used to assess the effectiveness of the new or modified upper-level writing courses (workshop courses) and make adjustments if necessary.

iii. Workshops and Courses

The QEP Director will develop and oversee the implementation of workshops to train faculty to develop courses within the majors (upper-level) that use effective instruction in writing at the upper level to build upon the general education experience.

The *Wise Writes* QEP faculty workshops will form the core of the plan. The workshops will provide opportunities for faculty to discuss writing and teaching writing, and help identify "early adopters." These early adopters are faculty who are interested in adding or modifying writing-intensive courses and who are willing to work with the QEP Director in advocating the importance of teaching writing in their departments.

Two workshops to train faculty in all departments to teach and assess writing will be held each year for the first three years of the plan. UVa-Wise faculty who are already trained in teaching and assessing writing will lead the workshops, although outside experts may be needed. Stipends will be available for faculty who lead the workshops, and for all participants. Additional funds are designated for faculty who agree to modify existing courses within their disciplines to incorporate a writing-intensive approach, or to develop new courses.

The workshops will offer opportunities for faculty to learn from one another what approaches each discipline and faculty within each discipline take in teaching writing to students. The faculty workshops will familiarize faculty with what is taught in composition courses, review the principles of good writing, and address how writing exercises can be incorporated into courses in each major or broad discipline. Faculty participants will also learn how to offer students constructive criticism to help students improve their writing. The workshops will facilitate the development of a community of writing teachers, and will help foster the campus-wide discussion of writing and the teaching of writing.

Eight to twelve faculty will participate in each two-day workshop. These workshops will help faculty develop writing exercises for their upper-level courses by addressing issues that have tended to discourage faculty from adding writing to the curriculum, including:

- How to add writing while preserving content
- How to familiarize students with the particular style of the discipline
- How to add effective writing exercises to any discipline
- How much writing is required for a writing-intensive course
- How to properly assess writing across the curriculum using the rubric
- How to evaluate new writing courses which are developed (creating a rubric for faculty self-assessment of the new or modified courses)

Faculty workshop participants will be scored on their mastery of these specific activities discussed in the workshops to enable the continuous improvement of the training. Specific writing-intensive courses, or modifications to existing courses will emerge as products of the workshops. Faculty participants will teach these courses in the major using the ideas developed from the workshop. Faculty will also continue to engage in discussion with their fellow workshop participants to further develop ideas and best practices. (See Appendix V for sample workshop syllabus.)

Each course developed out of the faculty training workshops will have a clear set of student outcomes aligned with the writing rubric. In these courses student outcomes will be assessed using the College rubric, at the beginning (pre-assessment) and at the end (post-assessment) of the semester. Clear outcomes and expectations expressed at the beginning of each class will help students take the writing assignments seriously, and they will perform better.

Student writing specialists, skilled writers chosen by faculty in their departments, will be designated for each writing-intensive course. These students will be trained writing tutors, working in the College Writing Center. Student writing specialists will be charged with working with students in workshop courses who have trouble completing the writing assignments. Student writing specialists will also offer supplemental instruction if needed in the form of tutorials for the advanced courses. Students with weak writing skills as revealed by the pre-assessment, will be required to attend these supplemental instructional programs. Supplemental instruction will be organized under the auspices of the College Writing Center.

General principles for Writing-Intensive Courses:

- The special writing courses (workshop courses) in each major will result from the faculty workshops.
- Given the nature of disciplinary differences, the plan will NOT adopt a “one size fits all” mentality, although certain general principles will apply.
- These courses can be designed as introductory writing courses for each major, or may serve as capstone, or senior-level courses.
- Writing courses will be capped at 17 students.
- Although these courses may include lessons in the writing style of the discipline the course covers, they are not intended as basic grammar and mechanics courses; required supplemental instruction through the College Writing Center will address those deficiencies.
- A pre- and post-assessment of student writing will be required in each of the writing-intensive courses in the major.
- There will be a set number of writing exercises or total pages students will write.
- The instructor will assign grades; however, it is encouraged that the more weighty grades be scheduled toward the end of the semester.
- A student writing specialist from the College Writing Center will be assigned to each course.
- Using a specially designed rubric, faculty will complete an assessment of the effectiveness of the workshop by scoring the skills they learned as applied to each writing course.

Student writing from each course developed out of the training workshops will be assessed by the Writing Committee using the College rubric. In addition, faculty teaching the writing courses will assess the effectiveness of the course using a different rubric developed in the faculty workshops. This information on the strengths and weaknesses of the writing courses will be shared in subsequent workshops. As the students and courses are assessed, adjustments can be made to practices developed during the first stages of the plan.

Compensating faculty will demonstrate the high value that the College places on the plan to teach students advanced writing skills. Faculty who teach the workshops will receive a stipend of \$3000. Faculty who attend a writing workshop will receive a stipend of \$800; faculty who incorporate ideas from the workshop to modify an existing course will receive an additional \$800; faculty who create brand new writing courses in their subjects will receive an additional \$1200. Faculty who perform well in the workshops and show their students' improved writing in their courses, will be invited to offer workshops for subsequent years.

The ultimate outcome of training our faculty to become more effective writing teachers, and developing more writing-intensive courses at the upper-level, will be that UVa-Wise students will become better writers. Samples of student writing from the new or modified writing-intensive courses will serve as the basis for the assessment of the efficacy of the plan. These assessment scores will be compared with baseline scores derived from samples of upper-level writing from 2014-15. The scores will also be compared with student writing from non-workshop courses taught during the same years.

Wise Writes will increase the number of faculty who are interested in teaching writing in their upper-level courses; departments will develop standards and objectives for teaching writing in their upper-level courses. As a result, a long-term emphasis on writing at the upper level will become a permanent part of the College.

iv. Writing Center Impact

The College Writing Center will serve as the physical locus for the *Wise Writes* plan. At present the writing center occupies a limited space, with limited resources in equipment and personnel. Its director, a junior faculty member, has significant teaching responsibilities in the Department of Language and Literature in addition to directing the Writing Center. The Writing Center employs five part-time student assistants who provide writing help for students at all levels, but work primarily with lower-level students on an as-needed basis. The plan calls for expanding the role and visibility of the Writing Center on campus.

The Writing Center will be relocated to its own dedicated space in the new College library (currently under construction). Its location will be a visible, comfortable, appealing place. There will be ample room for class, individual instruction, and meeting space. Six new computer workstations will be added, phased in over three years, and additional equipment and resources, including white boards, manuals, and dictionaries, will be purchased. The Writing Center will develop and maintain an active website linked to the QEP website that will feature style guides and links to other writing resources.

Collaborating with the QEP Director, a full-time, salaried director will oversee operations at the new Writing Center. While the Writing Center Director will continue to teach in the Language and Literature Department, her teaching salary will be supplemented from the QEP budget, and the primary duty of the position will be the day-to-day operation of the Writing Center. (See Appendix III, Writing Center Director Job Description) Among other duties, the Writing Center Director will supervise and assess the training of student mentors/tutors in all disciplines. This expansion of the number and training of student mentors will create a cadre of student writing experts, who will also help raise level of overall writing ability and experience at the College.

The new and improved Writing Center will offer help to writers at all levels—both students and faculty. Writing Center staff and students and the QEP Director will engage with faculty and students in workshops and discussions of College writing and connect with QEP writing initiatives through the assignment of student mentors to upper-division writing-intensive classes.

Faculty, staff and student advisors in the College Writing Center will receive additional training in offering assistance in teaching writing, particularly at the upper level. The Writing Center will offer supplemental instruction to students at all levels.

v. *Timeline* (See Appendix IV for full timeline of implementation.)

The following represents the narrative of the schedule for the implementation of *Wise Writes*:

Year 0

A national search for a director of the QEP will be undertaken. Criteria for the hire will include multi-year experience in teaching writing, working with faculty teaching writing, and administering a college writing program. (See Appendix II, QEP Director Job Description)

Faculty from all disciplines will participate in campus-wide discussions about how to teach writing. Instructors in composition and literature will join faculty who teach in departments that emphasize writing, along with faculty who teach in departments where writing is less of a focus. Faculty do not necessarily understand what composition expectations are, and these discussions will enable faculty to learn what lower-level writing emphasizes and the different approaches to teaching writing at the upper level.

As these discussions continue, at the behest of the administration, each department or major program will be encouraged to develop a set of standards (or guide) for effective, accomplished writing within their discipline(s). These departmental standards will form a valuable aid in the assessment of student writing by the QEP Director and Faculty Writing Committee.

These discussions also will help generate interest in participating in workshops to develop writing-intensive courses in the majors. In the second semester of Year 0, the Faculty Writing Committee will be appointed.

During Year 0, an assessment/study of the needs for the relocation of the College's writing center to the new library will be undertaken.

Year 1

Freshmen will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. The QEP Director and Writing Committee will develop supplemental instruction for students as needed. Two two-day faculty workshops will be offered, one in fall and one in spring. Selected faculty from workshops will agree to modify an existing course or create a new writing-intensive course in the major. The Writing Center will extend operating hours to cover daytime and some evening availability, and additional student writing mentors and additional equipment will be purchased.

The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess capstone and upper-division writing, and the QEP Director will produce the first annual report.

Year 2

Freshmen will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess writing courses from Year 1; two faculty workshops will be held; faculty will create additional course modifications and add new writing courses; additional students will be hired and additional equipment purchased for the Writing Center; and supplemental instruction for students will be offered as needed.

The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess capstone and upper-division writing, and students in writing courses will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing.

Year 3

Freshmen will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess courses taught during Year 2; two faculty workshops will be held; faculty will develop additional course modifications and add new writing courses; additional students will be hired and additional equipment purchased for the Writing Center; and supplemental instruction for students will be offered as needed.

The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess capstone and upper-division writing, and students in writing courses will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing.

Year 4

Freshmen will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess courses taught during Year 2; two faculty workshops will be held; faculty will develop additional course modifications and add new writing courses; additional students will be hired and additional equipment purchased for the Writing Center; and supplemental instruction for students will be offered as needed.

The QEP Director and Writing Committee will assess capstone and upper-division writing, and students in writing courses will be surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing.

The NSSE and FSSE will be administered.

Year 5

Five-year report to SACS-COC

vi. Assessment

The assessment of the writing QEP will incorporate several approaches. The faculty workshops and courses will be assessed as will student outcomes. The QEP Director and Writing Committee will employ both direct and indirect measurements to assess the overall effectiveness of the plan. As assessment proceeds annually, the Director and Writing Committee will recommend adjustments if necessary to improve the plan.

Student Outcomes

The primary measure of the success of *Wise Writes* QEP will be an improvement in student writing at the upper level. A direct measurement of this improvement will be an increase in the overall writing assessment score of .2 to .3 as determined from comparison of College writing rubric scores from baseline to scores from students in workshop courses. The preliminary baseline assessment of upper-level student writing shows an overall score of 3.47; an improvement of .2 to .3 would therefore result in overall scores from QEP writing courses of 3.7 to 3.8 range. In addition, the baseline data indicates that UVa-Wise students perform particularly low in use of sources and documentation (3.04). Upper-level writing courses from the *Wise Writes* QEP will significantly increase this score as part of the overall improvement. In addition to comparisons to the baseline 2014-15 rubric scores, scores from rubrics in new or improved

writing intensive courses will be compared to scores from students in non-workshop upper-level courses during the same years, with similar differences indicating the success of the plan.

Measures

- Student Papers (scores from rubrics in writing-intensive courses compared to scores from papers collected 2015-15, and compared to scores from papers in other upper-level courses during 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19), assessed by Writing Committee using College writing rubric
- Faculty evaluation of student success in WIC, assessed by teacher of course using College writing rubric, comparing initial assessment with assessment of final paper
- NSSE and FSSE Data
- Surveys of student attitudes toward writing

Writing Center Enhancement

The Writing Center will be relocated to a more visible attractive location. As an indication of the success of the *Wise Writes* QEP, usage of the Writing Center will increase; the number and training of student mentors will increase; and supplemental instruction sessions will be offered as needed. The number of tutoring sessions from departments other than Language and Literature will increase.

Measures

- Number of student mentors added to Writing Center staff (target is to hire six additional student mentors)
- Number of new computer work stations added (target is to add six additional workstations)
- Increase the number of tutorial sessions in the Writing Center in disciplines other than English (AY 2014-15 numbers are 419; 66% (277) were from English courses; 15% (64) were from upper-level courses in subjects other than English). (target is an increase to at least % of sessions coming from departments other than English, and an increase to 30% of sessions in non-English upper-level classes)
- Number of supplemental instruction sessions
- Student mentors and supplemental sessions assessed by Writing Center Director using rubric parallel to faculty workshop instruction
- Surveys of students using writing center to indicate level of satisfaction with Writing Center.

Workshops and Courses

Faculty workshops and courses form the core of the plan. The plan envisions a total of six faculty workshops to be held over three years; serving a total of from 48 to 72 faculty who will learn how to teach and assess writing in their upper-level classes. A total of 12 to 18 new or modified courses in the majors will be developed from the workshops. Each course will be

capped at 17, meaning up to 350 total students will be taking the initial offerings of upper-level writing-intensive courses. As each writing course is repeated, additional students will be exposed to writing courses. As more faculty participate in the writing workshops, they may incorporate additional writing in other upper-level courses, which will serve even more students.

Measures

- Surveys of faculty participating in workshops
- Assessment of faculty learning in workshops (workshop director will score how well each participant has learned the different strategies)
- Student evaluations of writing-intensive courses
- Pre-and post-writing assessments in writing-intensive courses
- Faculty evaluations of writing-intensive courses (scoring from a rubric how effectively each of the strategies learned in the workshop worked)
- Surveys of student attitudes toward writing from students in workshop courses

E. Conclusion: Beyond *Wise Writes*

The *Wise Writes* QEP features a clear plan to address writing deficiencies among students in discipline-specific upper-level classes. The QEP includes hiring a director who will oversee the plan and work with a faculty committee to plan, conduct workshops and assess the plan. UVa-Wise has committed to moving the Writing Center and enhancing its ability to help students improve their writing. Most importantly, the plan calls for increasing faculty attention to and participation in improving student writing through incentives to learn and implement teaching writing strategies in their upper-level courses. During the five-year life of the plan, the College will see a marked increase in the amount of attention given to teaching writing in upper-level courses and programs, and an overall increase and improvement in levels of student writing.

Should the *Wise Writes* QEP accomplish its objectives, as measured in the improvement of student writing, its real impact will lie in what happens after the five years of the plan. The plan contains elements that will facilitate the continuing emphasis on upper-level writing at UVa-Wise. This emphasis includes:

- The Director and Writing Committee will become a permanent part of the College.
- The College Writing Center will continue to offer help to students and faculty engaged in learning and teaching writing.
- Faculty who participate in workshops will continue to emphasize writing not only in the courses that were explicitly tied to the workshops, but in other courses they teach.
- Faculty who participate in workshops will continue advocate to their departmental colleagues for increased emphasis on writing in their program curricula.
- Each department will feature at least one (or more than one?) faculty member involved in teaching writing.
- Every department and major program at the College will offer a required writing-intensive course.

- The College will gain the reputation of producing high-quality writers among the students who graduate, regardless of the degree.

The QEP Budget

The administration of the College has authorized a budget that indicates its support for the *Wise Writes* QEP. Funds will be allocated for the hiring of a director, enhancement of the Writing Center, including hiring and training additional student writing tutors, and offering levels of stipends to faculty who agree to participate in the plan.

The director will receive a salary in the range of \$84,000 to \$88,000 per year (12 month), with fringe benefits of 28%. The QEP Director will have a travel budget of \$2,500 per year of the plan. The total amount allocated for the director's position is roughly \$113,000 per year, or \$565,000 for the five years of the plan.

An estimated total of \$86,000 is allocated for the improvements to the College Writing Center, just over \$17,000 per year. This allocation includes adding six new computer work stations and hiring six additional student mentor (two additional student mentors per year @\$800 each). A sum of \$5000 per year will be provided to train the Writing Center personnel.

For the faculty workshops and courses, the heart of the plan, a total of \$102,000 has been allocated over three years. This includes \$800 for each faculty workshop participant, an additional \$800 for each modified course, and \$1,200 for each brand new course resulting from the workshops. In addition, presenters of each workshop will receive \$3,000 for each presentation.

The built-in assessment of the plan requires a five-year total of \$63,600 in direct costs. This comprises an annual stipend and benefits of \$4,000 to be paid to each member of the Faculty Writing Committee. Indirect costs of assessment total \$179,000, computed as a portion of the salaries of the QEP Director and the College's Director of Assessment.

The total budget for the *Wise Writes* QEP amounts to \$813,000. (see specific breakdown below)

**QEP Budget
Fiscal Year 2017**

| | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| Director: | Yearly | Total - 5 Years |
| Salary | 86,000 | 430,000 |
| Fringe Benefits* | 23,908 | 119,540 |
| Total Salary and Benefits | 109,908 | 549,540 |
| Travel | 2,500 | 12,500 |
| Total Director | 112,408 | 562,040 |
| Writing Center: | Yearly | Total - 5 Years |
| Director | 8,000 | 40,000 |
| Director Fringe Benefits* | 480 | 2,400 |
| Total Coordinator Wage & Benefits | 8,480 | 42,400 |
| Student Wage | 1,600 | 8,000 |
| Equipment | 2,000 | 10,000 |
| Training | 5,000 | 25,000 |
| Total Writing Center | 17,080 | 85,400 |
| Faculty Workshops: | Yearly | Total - 3 Years |
| Presenters 2@ \$3,000 p/a | 6,000 | 18,000 |
| Workshop 20 participants @ \$800 | 16,000 | 48,000 |
| Course Modification 4 @ \$800 | 3,200 | 9,600 |
| New Course 3 @ \$1200 | 3,600 | 10,800 |
| Total Faculty Workshops | 28,800 | 86,400 |
| Assessment: | Yearly | Total - 5 Years |
| (indirect) | | |
| (Dir. Assessment @ .10 FTE) | (6,500) | (32,500) |
| (Dir. Assessment Fringe Benefits)* | (1,820) | (9,100) |
| (Dir. QEP @ .25 FTE) | (21,500) | (107,500) |
| (Director QEP Fringe Benefits)* | (5,977) | (29,885) |
| Total Directors Salary & Benefits | (35,797) | (178,985) |
| (direct) | | |
| Faculty Wage | 4,000 | 20,000 |
| Faculty Wage Fringe Benefits* | 240 | 1,200 |
| Faculty Wage | 4,000 | 20,000 |
| Faculty Wage Fringe Benefits* | 240 | 1,200 |
| Faculty Wage | 4,000 | 20,000 |
| Faculty Wage Fringe Benefits* | 240 | 1,200 |
| Total Faculty Wage & Benefits | 12,720 | 63,600 |
| Total Assessment | 12,720 | 63,600 |
| Grand Total | 171,008 | 797,440 |

*Projected fringe benefit rates for FY 16 used for calculations & are subject to change in FY 17.

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Appendices

- I. The QEP Committee
- II. QEP Director Job Description
- III. Writing Center Director Job Description
- IV. Timeline for Implementation
- V. Faculty Workshop Sample Syllabus
- VI. Sample Writing Course Syllabus with Assessment
- VII. Writing Rubric
- VIII. Freshman Survey on Writing

I. QEP Committee

2013-15

Tom Costa, Chair, Department of History and Philosophy

Rebecca Huffman, Director of Financial Aid

Amelia Harris, Academic Dean and Associate Provost

Joshua Justice, Director of Residence Life

Sheila McNulty, Department of Language and Literature

Marcia Mitchell, Director of Student Support Services

Walter Smith, Department of Natural Sciences

Donnie Sorah, Department of Visual and Performing Arts, Coordinator Music Division

Student members:

Dakota Hill, Jordan Viers, Nathan Rasnake

In fall 2014, three additional members were appointed:

Amy Clark, Chair, Department of Communication

Marla Weitzman, Department of Language and Literature

Cindy Wilkey, Department of History and Philosophy

II. QEP Director Job Description

Director, Writing QEP: The University of Virginia's College at Wise seeks applications for a full-time tenure-track position as Director of the College's Writing QEP.

Duties will include:

- Implement the institution's 2015-20 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Wise Writes* in collaboration with institutional representatives.
- As part of the QEP, direct the establishment of a college writing program, incorporating the College Writing Center, and workshops and supplemental instruction for faculty and students.
- Direct development and advancement of QEP objectives.
- Supervise the activities of the QEP, including budget and staff.
- Chair the institutional College Writing Committee and serve as a resource to all college-level writing initiatives.
- Work closely with college representatives and other major stakeholders to oversee the learning outcomes assessment process for the QEP.
- Prepare and submit annual QEP progress reports.
- Prepare results and findings for a five-year QEP evaluation report to SACSCOC.

Required Qualifications:

- Doctoral degree from an accredited higher education institution in Rhetoric and Writing or related field
- Minimum 5 years full-time college/university teaching experience, with at least 3 years' experience coordinating or managing projects and/or institutional endeavors
- Experience working successfully with Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID) or other similar broad-based initiative
- Program evaluation experience in a higher education setting
- Demonstrated ability to work with diverse populations both in formal classrooms and other settings
- Strong leadership and interpersonal communication skills
- Ability to work independently as well as collaboratively with different constituent groups; in particular, a successful record of working with faculty to promote good assessment practices
- Strong record of research/publication in area of expertise

Preferred Qualifications:

- Strong record of classroom success in interdisciplinary initiatives or across the disciplines
- Experience with learning assessment
- Experience with establishing and/or implementing faculty development initiatives
- Strong record of collaboration with key campus programs (such as Housing, the Library, a Writing Center, Student Activities/Student Affairs, ROTC, etc.)

- Experience working successfully with undergraduate students
- SACSCOC accreditation or QEP experience

The University of Virginia's College at Wise, a division of the University of Virginia, is a four-year public liberal arts college located in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. Wise is a small town in a rural coal-mining region with a rich labor and environmental history. Interested candidates should apply online at jobs.virginia.edu. Along with completed candidate profile, please submit a letter of application, a current vita, a statement of teaching/educational philosophy and areas of teaching interest, unofficial transcripts and contact information for three references.

III. Writing Center Director Job Description

The Writing Center Director will be responsible for managing, coordinating and implementing all writing center activities, to include

- day-to-day direction to carry out objectives, including maintaining and managing the Center to insure maximum availability to students, faculty and staff
- scheduling and conducting training sessions and workshops for students and faculty at all levels
- working with the Language and Literature Department to develop and conduct supplemental instruction for composition classes
- assisting the QEP Director in working with upper-level QEP writing courses
- working with the QEP Director to promote the Writing Center to College departments.
- developing advising materials for faculty and students
- on occasion to provide one-on-one tutoring of writing center clients
- training and supervising Writing Center student mentors/tutors.
- keeping up with current trends in the teaching of writing and the administration of college writing centers.

The Writing Center Director will report to the Chair of the Language and Literature Department and may teach classes in his/her field for the Language and Literature Department. The Writing Center duties are the priority, and the teaching load will be limited to a 2/1 or 2/2 rotation at the discretion of the Chair of the Language and Literature Department.

IV. Timeline for Implementation of Wise Writes QEP

| YEAR | IMPLEMENTATION PHASE |
|-------------------|---|
| Year 0 2015-16 | National search for Director of Wise Writes Campus-wide faculty discussions Departments create writing objectives and standards Needs study for Writing Center relocation |
| Year 1 2016-17 | Freshmen surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. Director of Wise Writes chairs Writing Committee Hire Writing Center Facilitator 2 additional student tutor/mentors for Writing Center 2 additional computer work stations for Writing Center Develop supplemental instruction for students as needed Offer paid faculty workshops (2) Modify 3 or 4 major courses in different majors Develop 2 or 3 new WI major courses (taught 2017-18) |
| Year 2 2017-18 | Freshmen surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. Teach and assess WI major courses 2 additional student tutor/mentors for Writing Center 2 additional computer work stations for Writing Center Develop supplemental instruction for students as needed Offer paid faculty workshops (2) Modify 3 or 4 major courses Develop 2 or 3 new WI major courses (taught 2018-19) Students in writing courses surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. |
| Year 3 2018-19 | Freshmen surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. Teach and assess Year Two courses 2 additional student tutors/mentors for Writing Center 2 additional computer work stations for Writing Center Offer paid faculty workshops (2) Modify 3 or 4 major courses Develop 2 or 3 new WI major courses (taught 2019-2020) Students in writing courses surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. |
| Year 4 2019-20 | Freshmen surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. Teach and assess Year Three courses Administer NSSE and FSSE Students in writing courses surveyed on their attitudes toward and abilities in writing. |
| Year 5 2020-21 | Teach and assess Year Four courses Overall evaluation of Wise Writes by the Director and Writing Committee Total additional student tutor/mentors for Writing Center = 6 Total additional work stations for Writing Center = 6 Total Faculty participating in workshops = 48-72 Total new or modified WI courses = 15-21 |

V. Faculty Workshop Sample Syllabus

Schedule

Day 1:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 9:00-9:30 | Welcome and Introductions |
| 9:30-11:30 | Designing effective writing assignments: from goals to implementation |
| 11:30 | Lunch |
| 12:30-2:00 | What have your students have learned ENG 1010 and ENG 1020 and Literature Courses? What do they already know? |
| 2:00-4:00 | Specific strategies for teaching writing |
| | Homework: Choose a course you teach and devise assignments according to what you discussed. |

Day 2:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 9:00-10:30 | Presentation and discussion of homework |
| 10:30-12:00 | Grading writing assignments (including holistic scoring guides) |
| 12:00 | Lunch |
| 1:30-3:00 | Rubrics and Assessment |

Designing Effective Writing Assignments Using General Principles (from Margaret Soven's *Write to Learn*)

1. Assignment should be related to course objectives:
For example, understanding relationships, becoming familiar with new terminology or concepts, applying concepts to particular problems
In a theory course, one objective may be for the student to demonstrate an understanding of the theory and apply the theory—two separate, short papers? They cannot do the second unless they can do the first—do not assume they have mastered the necessary skills
2. Assignment should require original thinking
If finding out if your students know certain information, is an essay/report appropriate? A writing assignment is appropriate if you can answer yes to the following question, Does it ask them to think in new ways?
3. Assignment should specify a purpose and audience
Instead of an assignment: “Compare WWI to WWII,” ask them to “Compare WWI to WWII for a group of high school students who don’t know much about either war”
4. Should specify format/genre (upper-level students should know this, but don’t assume they do)
5. Specify evaluation criteria
Show them the guidelines you use to evaluate; what are the major objectives of the assignment. This saves time later, and takes the mystery/subjectivity out of the assignment for them
6. Leave room for student choice
Motivation! Especially in upper-level classes, students should have a degree of freedom to choose their topics.

What do Students Learn in Composition?

Introduction to rhetorical strategies (also called patterns of development) leading up to argument

Narrative
Description
Exemplification
Process
Cause and Effect
Comparison and Contrast
Division and Classification
Definition

Typically, students write a research paper which is an essay of definition at the end of ENG 1010.

Grading

What not to do:

1. Editing the essay
2. Telling them too many errors (writing or otherwise) to address—better to choose one or two, explain them and ask them to address next time
3. Conference only—combination better

Holistic scoring: there are scoring guides you can develop when you develop a writing assignment.

Preventative measures:

1. Reading drafts
2. Asking students to turn in one of the sections—one or two body paragraphs—in advance of the paper's due date; you can catch focus, support, and style errors that way
3. Early identification of writing problems; referring students to Writing Center

Soven's advice:

1. Develop a limited set of criteria
2. Criteria should reflect the special characteristics of the particular assignment
3. Criteria should include general qualities required for all assignments regardless of content or form
4. Develop a grading scale
5. Distribute criteria to students
6. Respond to student writing: use clear jargon-free language, encourage self-sufficiency, offer some positive feedback, indicate that you are interested in their final product

Homework

Develop a subject-specific writing assignment(s) using Soven's criteria and what you learned. Include a clear set of objectives and a scoring scale.

VI. Writing Class Sample Syllabus with Assessment

Course Title: HIS 3950: Poland in World History and Politics

Description: This is a course on the significance of Poland in World History and Politics and an examination of the place of Poland in contemporary geopolitical affairs. Students will read and discuss selected texts and articles on Polish history and politics and will develop policy statements and positions on contemporary issues from a Polish perspective. They will conclude by writing a major research paper on Polish history and politics.

Texts: There are five texts totaling 1500 pages of reading. Students will read, be prepared to discuss, and write on one of the texts every 2 weeks. In addition there will be a number of journal articles assigned, totaling approximately 250 additional pages of reading.

Davies, *God's Playground*, 2 volumes
Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*
Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*
Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History*

Assignments: Students will write a total of five papers, for a minimum total of fifty pages of writing. All students will be graded on their ability to write clearly and effectively. Depending on the specific assignment, students will also be graded on the ability to understand a historical argument, the ability to describe and analyze cause and effect in history, the ability to understand all of the factors involved in developing a policy position, how to argue that position. Finally, students will be graded on their ability to research and write about a historical or political problem as it relates to Poland in contemporary or historical geopolitics, including the collection and use of relevant sources. In addition to grades, selected student papers will be assessed using the attached rubric. Students will also be expected to actively participate in classroom discussions.

Paper 1: journal article analysis (3 pp., comparison and contrast)
Paper 2: review of text 1 (4 pp. book review)
Paper 3: historical perspective (7 pp. history paper using text 2, historical cause and effect)
Paper 4: position paper (8 pp. policy analysis)
Paper 5: research proposal (8 pp. identification of argument and sources to be used)
Paper 6: Research capstone (20 pp., argument, cause and effect)

Grading:

Paper 1: ungraded
Paper 2: book review 10%
Paper 3: historical perspective 20%
Paper 3: position paper 20%
Paper 4: research proposal 20%
Paper 5: Research capstone 30%

While class discussion is not specifically included as a percentage in your course grade, points may be added or subtracted from the totals based on discussion or lack thereof.

Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction and Background

Writing Assignment 1: Journal article analysis comparing different viewpoints of the importance of Poland in World History and Politics (graded or ungraded; assessed using rubric; deficiencies assigned supplemental work with student mentor).

Week 2-3: Discussion of text 1:

Writing assignment 2: Book review of text 1.

Week 4-6: Discussion of text 2:

Writing assignment 3: Paper on History of Poland

Week 7-8: Discussion of text 3 and 4:

Writing assignment 4: Paper on political policy

Week 9-10: Students develop research topic:

Writing assignment 5: Research proposal

Week 11-13: Students writing research paper:

Writing assignment 2: Research paper (graded and submitted to Writing Committee; instructor also assesses separately and compares rubric to rubric on initial writing assignment).

Assessment:

In addition to the assessment of the student capstone papers, which will be compared with the 2014-15 benchmark and with student writing from non-writing-intensive upper level courses, the Writing Committee will review the instructor's assessment of student progress based on the instructor's assessment of the initial and final papers, the instructor's assessment of the techniques from the faculty workshop applied to the course, the student evaluations of the course, and the student surveys of attitudes toward writing.

Assessment instruments:

1. Assessment of initial paper by instructor (may also be used to refer student for supplemental instruction)
2. Assessment of capstone paper by Writing Committee
3. Assessment of capstone paper by instructor (compared with assessment of initial writing assignment to measure student progress in course)
4. Instructor completes rubric from workshop on effectiveness of techniques learned in workshop.
5. Students evaluate course and instructor.
6. Students complete separate survey of attitudes toward writing at conclusion of course.

VII. Writing Rubric
(used to assess student writing)

Evaluation of Writing Competency Rubric
The University of Virginia's College at Wise

Definition: Competent writing conveys ideas/information in a clear, ordered, and well-supported fashion; uses a style and sources appropriate to the purpose; and employs well-structured paragraphs, correct grammar, and appropriate language

Please complete the following form for each student in (course) _____

Scale: 5=Excellent 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Below Average 1=Far Below Average

A Thesis: essay has a strong unifying thesis that adds to the disciplinary discourse

- 5 Aim is clear; introduction states thesis to be defended; conclusion revisits thesis thoughtfully
- 4 Aim is clear; introduction states thesis; conclusion is strong
- 3 Aim is fairly clear; introduction attempts to explain thesis; conclusion may be somewhat vague
- 2 Aim is vague; introduction states no clear thesis; there may be no conclusion
- 1 Essay is without apparent aim or purpose; neither introduction nor conclusion are evident

B Organization: writing is effectively structured according to the conventions of the subject

- 5 Development is logical, competent, thoughtfully addresses the complexities involved
- 4 Development is logical and competent; essay addresses more than one of the complexities inherent
- 3 Development is logical and competent; may be a few organizational problems/argumentative weaknesses
- 2 Development is weak, with problems of logic and flow, though topic is still addressed
- 1 Development is seriously flawed or illogical

C. Paragraphing: paragraphs are well-developed, have clear topics, and support thesis

- 5 Paragraphs well-constructed; flow logically; transitions felicitous
- 4 Paragraphs well-constructed; flow is logical; transitions are solid
- 3 Paragraphs are adequate; some transitions weak
- 2 Paragraphs tend to be weak and vague; transitions unclear
- 1 Paragraphs poor; transitions vague or nonexistent; flow is illogical

D. Language: Writing is grammatical and use of language is effective and appropriate to purpose

- 5 Grammar consistently standard; diction excellent; stylistically mature and free from error
- 4 Grammar largely standard; diction appropriate; largely free from usage error
- 3 Grammar/diction adequate, though occasionally weak and unimaginative; some errors of usage evident
- 2 Grammar and diction errors frequent; many errors of application
- 1 Grammar and diction inappropriate to task and consistently unacceptable

E. Sources and Documentation: sources are appropriate & documented according to discipline style

- 5 Evidence/detail judiciously-chosen and enhance thesis; documentation is impeccable
- 4 Evidence/detail support thesis; documentation is solid
- 3 Some supporting evidence/detail provided; documentation largely adequate
- 2 Evidence/detail trivial or inappropriate; errors of documentation evident
- 1 Evidence/detail inappropriate or nonexistent or no documentation provided

VIII. *Wise Writes* Freshman Survey on Writing

Please take some time with the following survey. We would appreciate your honest answers to the questions. The scale indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement. A score of 5 indicates strongly agree/very likely, and a score of 1 indicates strongly disagree/very unlikely. This is completely anonymous. We are not interested in individual answers, only in the aggregate data.

For the purposes of this survey, the term “writing” means written school assignments and papers, letters to friends and relatives, even a diary. It does not mean texting, tweeting, or social networking such as posting on Facebook.

General attitude toward writing

1. I enjoy writing.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

2. Writing has always been easy for me.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

3. I have always made good grades in writing

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

4. Writing is a better means of communicating clearly and effectively than speaking.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

5. Formal writing is still very important, even though electronic media has made communication faster and easier.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

6. Writing helps me clarify my thoughts on a subject.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

7. Reading extensively helps me be a better writer.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

Personal writing habits/experience

8. I wrote papers of more than two or three pages in many of my high school classes.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

9. I keep or have kept a diary.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

10. I enjoy writing stories and/or poems.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

11. I often write down notes when I am reading.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

12. When I write I often use a dictionary or Thesaurus to find the exact right word to use.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

13. I often ask others to look at my writing and correct it/make it better.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

14. I write many versions of a paper in order to make it better before I turn it in.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

Expectations

15. I look forward to writing in my composition courses this year.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

16. I already have dual enrollment or transfer credit for at least one composition course.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

17. After completing my composition courses, I look forward to taking courses here that feature extensive writing.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

18. Because of my intended major, I expect to write several long research papers of more than 12 pages.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

19. Learning to write well is important to my career plans.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree

20. I expect in the future to publish something in a book, article, or newspaper.

strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 strongly disagree