

QEP IMPACT Report (Revised 9/3/21ed)

I. Background:

In 2013, Chancellor Henry appointed a multidisciplinary QEP Committee (Tom Costa, Chair) to consider possible campus quality improvement plans. After reviewing the College's mission and vision; facilitating conversations among and gathering information from all campus constituencies; and reviewing pertinent student data, they developed Wise Writes, a program focused primarily on improving upper level writing in the disciplines and assessment at UVA-Wise. The Wise Writes plan was endorsed as a QEP by SACS in October 2015.

QEP Director Emily Dotson was hired in Fall of 2016 to implement Wise Writes, which began with faculty workshops in Fall of 2016 and concluded in Spring 2021. A Writing Committee, which including multidisciplinary members of the original QEP committee as well as other faculty, the Dean of Academic Affairs, and our SACS Liaison, was formed and met regularly throughout the plan to advise the Director and guide program progress. Regular reports were provided to the Foundation Board, the Council of Chairs, and the Academic Affairs Team and publicly on the Wise Writes web site. Anonymous surveys and focus groups with students and faculty in and out of the Wise Writes program were also done yearly to assess and guide the plan.

II. GOALS AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The goal of Wise Writes, the writing in the disciplines QEP, was 1) improve writing instruction and student writing quality, 2) create a culture of writing excellence, and 3) improve writing assessment.

A. IMPROVE WRITING INSTRUCTION AND THE QUALITY OF STUDENT WRITING

The UVA Wise quality enhancement goal was improve writing instruction and writing quality by creating and offering a series of multidisciplinary faculty workshops, what was called a Faculty Fellows Program, focusing on different topics related to the best practices in the teaching of writing. The workshops would be deemed successful if they were created and offered regularly, faculty participation rates were high and diverse, surveys of participating faculty and students were positive, and assessment numbers of writing increased.

The plan also set a goal of providing increased support for the teaching of writing through enhancements to the Writing Center, the creation of discipline specific peer Writing Specialists to work in faculty classes, and additional training and resources. We hoped to see an outcome of increased creation and usage of support resources and improved attitudes toward writing through campus writing surveys.

B. CREATE A CULTURE OF WRITING EXCELLENCE

The QEP plan does not list or recommend any specific means to reach this important goal aside from "activities" so the QEP Committee had the freedom to develop a plan of service and outreach on campus and in the community. The number of activities offered outside of

workshops as well as the rates of participation in activities would be an important measure of reaching this outcome.

C. IMPROVE WRITING ASSESSMENT

The QEP hoped to improve the assessment of writing by creating a new way to collect and prepare samples, select and train raters, review and rate samples, and report scores. The process, which was assessed each time, and the resulting data would be shared with the Council of Chairs and Academic Affairs to establish a clear statistical picture of existing conditions over the QEP life and to offer the precise traits as well as holistic guidance needed to continue writing improvement beyond the QEP.

III. QEP CHANGES

We made three changes to the initial plan: we extended the program length, added more topic options as demand increased for training beyond writing, and we made the workshops and activities more collaborative. The initial QEP plan proposed was a weekend workshop for faculty. However, the Writing Committee, determined that this plan was not workable with faculty schedules and that a full year plan of multiple shorter workshops would be more effective in establishing and reaffirming new teaching practices and pedagogy. In addition, surveys in the first year showed that there was a 100% demand for “advanced” workshops from first year participants and 92 % demand campus wide for workshops that would be one-time-only rather than part of the larger Wise Writes Faculty Fellows. We added advanced workshops, what we called Faculty Learning Communities, an extended writing boot camp for faculty projects, and began offering frequent short workshops open to anyone on campus.

During the height of the pandemic, surveys indicated 100% of faculty campus wide wanted online teaching resources so all workshops were shifted not only to Zoom meetings, but also to include online delivery methods for each topic. For example, instead of in person conferences, we discussed how to use podcasts or videos to provide feedback safely to students. In the last two years, we were surprised to discover from surveys that 88% of faculty in 2019 and 98% of faculty in 2020 wanted to learn about topics in addition to writing issues and in the final year. As a result, Wise Writes doubled the workshop offerings to accommodate those needs. Finally, the plan initially intended the QEP Director to work for the most part independently of other faculty or campus organizations, but the Writing Committee recommended collaborations so Wise Writes actively sought partnerships from multiple disciplines and campus organizations to support writing improvement efforts and help build a culture that celebrates good writing.

IV. IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING/ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES

A. The Wise Writes QEP improved writing instruction and the quality of student writing. The impact, achievements and outcomes can be seen in the following ways:

1) Wise Writes created and offered multiple faculty workshops on the best practices in the teaching of writing that were offered bi-weekly every year of the program. Faculty Workshops were set up in a Faculty Fellows Program in which participating faculty agreed to 1) attend ten 50-minute workshops over a year, 2) to increase the page count of writing in their

course by one full page to bring us up to national page count averages, 3) to develop a new course, try a new practice, or revise some existing material or plan, which they would workshops with the multidisciplinary group they worked with over the course of that year, and 4) to complete program surveys. Although workshops changed some as new materials became available, workshop topics (listed in Figure 1 below) remained consistent.

2) In addition, in years four and five of the QEP, campus wide surveys indicated a request for online teaching (100%) and information about general teaching resources (88% in 2019 and 98% in 2020). As a result, some thirty additional campus wide workshops outside the Wise Writes Faculty Fellows program were offered to meet these needs. Many of these topics like Increasing Student Engagement, Zoom Teaching and Online Best Practices became a part of a mandatory faculty orientation in 2020-2021. Records show that 62 faculty, who were not enrolled in the Faculty Fellows Program or required to attend as part of faculty orientation, attended these additional workshops. At the request of faculty, the Director also regularly presented in capstone and equivalent courses in Nursing, Theater, Psychology, Freshman Seminar, and English and was also invited to speak to several student organizations including the student newspaper, two sororities, and a pre-law group about writing issues.

3) Faculty participation rates in workshops was exceptionally high with participation across multiple campus disciplines which clearly indicates not only a strong support for the program, but also program success as participation was always voluntary. From 2016-2021 there were a total of sixty five total faculty participants, a full 51% of all College faculty, participating in Wise Writes with some level of participation from every Department. A full participant list is available on the Wise Writes web site.

4) Anonymous surveys from participating faculty and the students in their courses indicate great program success. Anonymous surveys were done after each workshop (averaged scores provided below for all five years) and at the end of each year with faculty and students (averaged scores by year below). Faculty Surveys of Individual Workshops (Figure 1) shows the average for all workshops from 2016-2021. Success can be seen in the consistent rating of **“very successful” or “successful”** in all categories: time management, providing useful or practical tips, providing new pedagogy, increasing knowledge, and increasing confidence. Ratings also show that while faculty increase their knowledge, confidence is still a challenge we can work on going forward. An accomplishment of the workshops is not only seen in faculty satisfaction, but also in the report that 100% of faculty tried something new in their courses and faculty participants created three entirely new writing in the disciplines courses in Music, Sociology and Psychology.

Figure 1: Faculty Surveys of Individual Workshops (Average of 2016-2021)

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate Program Success in the Following Areas: 5= Very Successful; 4=Successful; 3= Moderately Successful; 2= Unsuccessful; 1=Very Unsuccessful

	How Successful	How successful	How successful	How successful	How successful
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	was it in managing time	was it in providing useful or practical tips	was it in providing new pedagogy	was it in increasing your knowledge about the topic	was it in increasing your confidence in teaching writing
Writing a Syllabus and Assignments that Stress Writing	5	5	5	5	5
Teaching Grammar and Disciplinary Style	5	5	5	5	4.8
Developing Rubrics and Giving Feedback on Writing	5	5	5	5	5
Peer Review and Team Writing Strategies	5	5	5	5	5
Creative Writing Ideas	5	5	5	5	4.8
Inclusive Writing Classrooms	5	5	5	5	5
Teaching Writing Online	5	5	5	5	4.5
Writing Anxiety	5	5	5	5	4.9
Literature Reviews and Short Writing Reflections	5	5	5	5	4.8
Avoiding Plagiarism (Teaching MLA, APA and Chicago)	5	5	5	5	4.9
Faculty Learning Communities (Advanced Wise Writes)	5	5	5	5	5

5) In addition to surveys about individual workshops, we also conducted anonymous end of year surveys to determine holistic satisfaction rates among faculty (See Figure 2 below). This provided additional positive feedback about the program success. Faculty reported feeling “very knowledgeable” about best national practices and either “very confident” or “confident” in teaching writing. They were also “very likely” or “likely” to recommend the program to colleagues and to try something new in teaching as a result of the program. Faculty reported that 100% increased the writing in the class and 100% felt that student writing had improved. Finally, 100% of all faculty participants said the program was “very successful.” Faculty comments were uniformly positive stressing the benefits of the program to teaching and writing quality in classes.

Figure 2: End of Year Surveys Satisfaction (2016-2021)

INSTRUCTION: Please rate the following aspects of the Wise Writes faculty Fellows Program.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
How Knowledgeable do you feel about best national practices in Writing	100% Very	100% Very	100% Very	100% Very	100% Very
How confident do you feel about teaching writing?	100 % Very Confident	100 % Very Confident	98 % Very Confident 2% Confident	96% Very Confident 4% Confident	100 % Very Confident
How likely are you to recommend Wise Writes to a colleague?	100% Very Likely	100% Very Likely	100% Very Likely	100% Very Likely	100% Very Likely
How likely are you to try something new in teaching as a result of Wise Writes?	100% Very Likely	100% Very Likely	88% Very Likely 12% Likely	82% Very Likely 18% Likely	100% Very Likely
Did you increase the page count for writing in your class?	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
Are students writing better in your classes?	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
How successful do you feel this program has been?	100% Very Successful	100% Very Successful	100% Very Successful	100% Very Successful	100% Very Successful

Selected Faculty Comments:

“I gained more confidence and assistance in teaching and grading writing.”

“The program inspired me to follow through on all the ideas I have had about improving writing in my classes.”

6) We also conducted student surveys (Figure 3) that also indicate program success. A full 100% of students report writing more in the Wise Writes faculty course and most report that writing instruction was very effective. In addition, 100% of students felt their writing and their confidence improved.

Figure 3: Student Surveys in Wise Writes Faculty Courses (2016-2021)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions about your course.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Did you write more in this course than in other courses this semester?	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
How effective was writing instruction?	100% Very	100% Very	92% Very 8% NA* Did Not Answer	89% Very 11% NA* Did Not Answer	100% Yes
Do you feel your writing improved?	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
Do you feel more confident about writing?	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes

7) While we are pleased that workshops were successful, it is also important to note that writing assessment scores did in fact also improve over the QEP plan period in spite of the global pandemic forcing all classes and workshops online for almost two full years. The writing assessment numbers in the College Wide Assessment Chart (Figure 4) indicate that the quality of student writing improved in multiple ways. The writing rubric is available on the Wise Writes web site and is summarized in Figure 4.

a) First, there is evidence of significant holistic improvement. As a campus, we started with a holistic score of 2.91 for upper level writing in the 2016-2017 year. We increased to 3.19 in the second program year, 2017-2018. As the pandemic hit and classes moved online in Spring, we dropped to 3.01 in 2018-2019, the third year. In the fourth year, 2019-2020, when all classes and even the assessment was conducted online, we again dropped to 2.74. Finally, as we provided more online resources for faculty and ultimately mandated certain teacher trainings conducted by the QEP Director as part of an all faculty orientation, scores improved and in the 2020-2021 year, we peaked at 3.40, which is a 17% increase in student writing quality.

b) We saw additional overall growth in the strength of student writing traits in the QEP plan years as well. Students improved their ability to understand purpose (frames a topic and /or implies or states a unifying thesis/purpose) by 23%, jump from 2.95 in 2016 to 3.62 in 2021. They also improved their organization (organized clear sequence of ideas, unified/complete

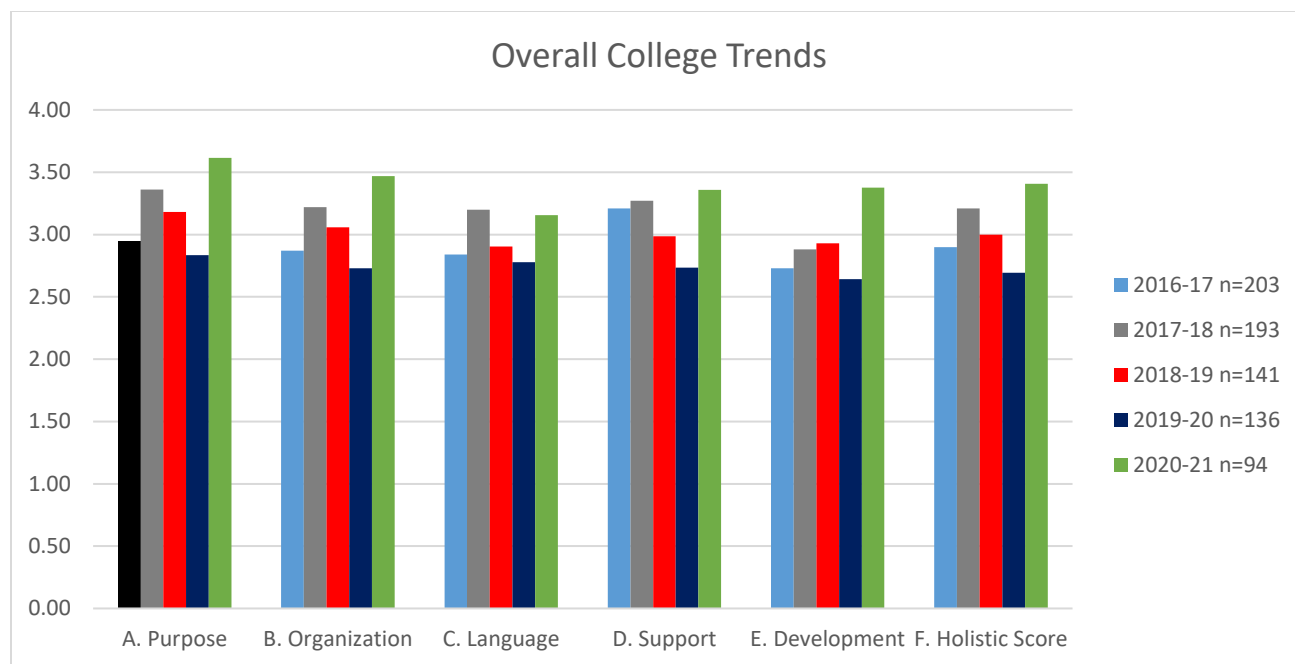
paragraphs, and effective transitional devices as required by discipline) by 21 %, jumping from 2.87 in 2016 to 3.47 in 2021. Language (precise, clear, and grammatically correct, reflecting appropriate tone, diction, or style for the rhetorical strategy and audience) also saw a gain of 11%, a jump from 2.84 in 2016 to 3.16 in 2021. Students scored 5 %, higher, moving from 3.21 in 2016 to 3.36 in 2021, in SUPPORT (research, visuals, or support sources are clear, relevant, credible, and labeled/documented as needed). Finally, assessments show a 24% gain, moving from 2.73 in 2016 to 3.38 in 2021, in development (use logic or analysis to develop ideas that are complete and complex or deep). The chart of Overall College Improvement (Figure 5) visually shows the dramatic dips caused by the pandemic, but also ultimately the gains in every trait and in holistic scores. We are hopeful that our future assessments will continue to prove our improvement in writing instruction and in the quality of student writing as we move back to in person instruction.

Figure 4: COLLEGE WIDE WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES 2016-2021.

2016-17(n= 203), 2017-18 (n=193), 2018-19 (n=141), 2019-20 (n=136), 2020-21 (n=94)

Areas	College-Wide Average N=203	College-Wide Average N=193	College-Wide Average N=141	College-Wide Average N=136	College-Wide Average N=94	$\Delta\%$ AY 19-20: 20-21	$\Delta\%$ AY 16-17: 20-21
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21		
<i>Purpose</i>	2.95	3.36	3.18	2.83	3.62	28%	23%
<i>Organization</i>	2.87	3.22	3.06	2.73	3.47	27%	21%
<i>Language</i>	2.84	3.2	2.90	2.78	3.16	14%	11%
<i>Support</i>	3.21	3.27	2.99	2.73	3.36	23%	5%
<i>Development</i>	2.73	2.88	2.93	2.64	3.38	28%	24%
<i>Holistic Score</i>	2.9	3.21	3.00	2.69	3.41	26%	17%
<i>Overall Average</i>	2.91	3.19	3.01	2.74	3.40	24%	17%

Figure 5: OVERALL COLLEGE GROWTH



8) Another significant accomplishment of the QEP is the increase in resources for writing instruction and enhancements to writing support, which also played a part in improved writing instruction and writing quality. Wise Writes <https://www.uvawise.edu/academic-affairs/wise-writes> became a popular web site with an average of 22 hits a day and many of the resources there were also shared on the College's FIRST page, a pandemic teaching resource site. The Writing Center was enhanced in a number of important ways. It was moved to more centralized location, equipped with a full computer lab and software, offered funding for equipment, reference materials, supplies, promotional events, conferences for the Director and salary increases for the Director and tutors, and provided recommendations for hiring and training protocols as well as an assessment plan. Writing Center usage increased by 30% in the first year of the QEP. In addition, Wise Writes also hired and trained twenty-two undergraduate Writing Specialists from multiple disciplines to assist faculty teaching in Wise Writes. Faculty surveys described these specialists as "indispensable" and "a life saver."

B) CREATE A CULTURE OF WRITING EXCELLENCE

Wise Writes has promoted and sponsored events and activities to create a culture of writing excellence. This included founding the campus's first undergraduate research journal *Lux and* sponsoring talks by nationally recognized authors including a Pulitzer Prize winner, four Poet Laureates, a Grammy award winning songwriter, a Tony award winning playwright, the Editor of *Oxford American*, and multiple discipline specific authors on the recommendations of faculty. In coordination with other campus organizations including Career Services, the Registrar's Office, Student Affairs, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the National Day of Writing, The Appalachian Writing Project, National Poetry Month, Jimson Weed, Highland Cavalier Newspaper, Hoo's Well Book Club, Wise Writes has been a part of over fifty major cultural activities. It is estimated that over 400 people from the College and Community have attended a Wise Writes activity or event since 2016.

C) IMPROVE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Assessment Goals: The primary assessment goal was to provide an independent evaluation of the quality of student writing in Wise Writes upper level courses. Prior to the QEP assessment of writing was done by faculty in the departments who assigned the writing so scores were inflated and there was little sense of objectivity in the process according to the QEP document. Wise Writes developed a plan to follow best national practices in writing assessment to solve many of these issues.

Paper Selection and Preparation: Chairs in each Department were asked to identify faculty teaching upper level writing capstones or equivalent courses and request they submit writing samples. Faculty were allowed to choose the assignment type for sample with the understanding that most papers would be 3+ pages of formal edited writing ideally involving some form of research. Roughly 200 writing samples per year were collected from faculty teaching all upper level writing courses. Our compliance rate was high. All identifying student data and instructor comments were removed and samples were labeled with a numerical identifying number. Papers were distributed in randomized sets to prevent comparisons among raters. All papers were read and scored at least twice by two different raters. Papers were assessed using the campus wide rubric summarized in Figure 4. Faculty raters were not given samples from their own courses or department.

Raters and Training: Different raters were chosen from different departments for each assessment who had participated in Wise Writes. They had discussed multidisciplinary writing issues for over a year so they had experience with multidisciplinary writing. The assessment protocols and rubric were discussed prior to each scoring session. Raters were trained each year using a grade norming activity and papers submitted, but not used in ratings, for the assessment in that academic year. Faculty used the campus rubric to score the anchor paper, a paper which was chosen to represent writing issues they might encounter. They shared feedback and worked collaboratively to establish a common score for each rubric trait and a holistic score for that anchor paper. Disciplinary style differences were discussed as part of anchor training using the rubric criteria. We trained three times each day after each long break. After training sessions, silent reading sessions were timed with breaks at 1.5 hour intervals.

Scoring: In the first stage of scoring, two raters independently reviewed the essay and assigned scores in a 1-4 scale that identified the level of development for each of six feature as well as a holistic score for the entire essay. If the two ratings agree within one point (ex: 1 and 2) then the scoring is complete for that essay. In the case of disagreement, more than one point below or above the prior score (ex: 1 and 3) or a failing score (1), an expert rater, who was aware of scoring discrepancies, completed a blind assessment using the same rubric and all scores were then averaged. We reviewed score for rater reliability including both interrater reliability, the consistency of scoring by individual raters across each day of the assessment (external factors), and interrater reliability, the consistency between raters on the same paper (internal or individual differences). In 2016, we conducted an additional demographic analysis of multiple factors from class rank, gender, age, race, distance from home, transfer status, and dual enrollment history and found that only high school GPA and standardized test scores were predictors of later writing success in the assessment. Beginning in 2017, at the request of SCEV, we also began assessing critical thinking as part of the process with a second rubric developed for that purpose. We

shared College Wide Reports on the Wise Writes website, with the QEP Writing Committee, the College Foundation Board in a Third Year Report, in the Council of Chairs. We also shared Departmental score privately with Department Chairs and in some Department meetings as requested.

REFLECTION ON LEARNING PROCESS

The QEP process was beneficial and successfully executed. We have improved writing instruction and student writing quality. We have created a culture that celebrates writing. Finally, we have improved our assessment process and gained useful data from which to make continuous improvement plans. It is so successful, that the College has permanently institutionalized Wise Writes as part of the Center for Educational Excellence and Innovation with the QEP Director now serving as the Faculty Director (<https://www.uvawise.edu/academic-affairs/center-educational-excellence-innovation>). The Center is continuing to offer workshops in writing, but as surveys also indicate a need (88% in 2019 and 98% in 2020) for additional resources, it will expand to cover topics outside of writing. The Center offers drop in one-time workshops on a variety of topics and continues to provide Faculty Learning Communities to allow faculty more in depth study and training. 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 and continue to advocate to their departmental colleagues for increased emphasis on writing in their program curricula.

The Center will continue to offer events and activities that build a culture that celebrates good writing. The Center will continue to build partnerships and collaborations, especially with the Writing Center, whose Director is still partially funded by the Center budget.

As a result of the assessment, we have a plan in place now for unbiased and systematic assessment that the Director of Assessment can now use as a model for future writing assessment. strong data to take to Departments to suggest plans for continued writing improvement. We also now have at least one faculty member from each Department involved in teaching writing and we had three entirely new writing courses created in Music, Sociology and Psychology as a result of the QEP. We are confident that our improved writing scores show that the College has gained a reputation of producing high-quality writers among the students who graduate, regardless of the degree.