



## **2010-2015 Quality Enhancement Plan**

### **Tennessee State University**

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## I. Summary

The QEP component of the SACS-COC accreditation reaffirmation process presents colleges and universities with an opportunity to build on a vital institutional strength or address a significant institutional challenge. In developing a QEP focused on improving the writing skills of our graduates, Tennessee State University's faculty has very notably chosen to do both.

Like other Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tennessee State University recognizes among its greatest strengths an enduring commitment – recently reaffirmed in our 2008-2028 Academic Master Plan – to a socially transformative vision of public higher education. This vision of college-level education for all students distinguished the University from its peers through its early history and continues to guide its mission in an expanded scope as it looks toward the future.

Tennessee State University's proudest legacy and ambition, however, are also closely linked to our greatest challenge because the educational "value added" in this context can never be optional. Assessments in the last decade of both general education and major field competencies among graduating seniors have consistently demonstrated a critical need to enhance the quality of learning at the University, and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis informing our Academic Master Plan has identified "an uneven academic reputation" as the primary "threat" facing the institution.

Tennessee State University's QEP – entitled WRITE (Write→Reflect→Integrate→Transfer→Excel) – confronts this challenge with respect to student writing through the insights and best practices of integrative learning, applying faculty development, student support, and e-portfolio technology toward the achievement of a cumulative learning experience for our students. The plan is the result of a two-and-a-half year development process that narrowed its focus first to upper-level general education transfer, then to writing, and finally to a set of specific learning outcomes and strategies to achieve them.

The choice of writing as the focus of Tennessee State University's QEP reflects the vital importance of this competency to our faculty, our students, and employers of our graduates and, more fundamentally, its centrality to learning. Even as "Writing Across the Curriculum" and "Writing in the Disciplines" pioneered integrative learning in higher education nationally, the broader vision of WRITE is to provide in our own institutional context a model of connected, visible, reflective, and goal-directed learning beyond individual courses that our faculty can adapt for other competencies and extend to all academic programs at the University.

The development of Tennessee State University's first QEP has coincided fortuitously and constructively with a larger planning process, on a scale unprecedented in our recent history, of which it is also a vital part. The QEP represents the first strategic goal of our 2010-2015 Strategic Plan as well as the first among five "cross-cutting focus areas" of our twenty-year Academic Master plan, expressing a commitment to the SACS Quality Enhancement process extending beyond our current QEP. Most importantly, however, the QEP has promoted a comprehensive faculty-led, student-centered approach to planning at a critical juncture in the University's history as we enter our second century in 2012. We strongly commend this process, are proud of its result, and look forward to realizing its potential on behalf of our students.

## **II. QEP Development Process**

### **Overview**

Tennessee State University's QEP has been developed over a period of two and a half years in an open, recursive process initiated by the University's SACS Leadership Team from August 2007 through August 2008 and led subsequently – following the selection of a QEP topic – by a QEP Development Committee representing all of the University's colleges and schools.

In accordance with SACS principles to which the University is also committed more broadly, the QEP development process has been focused on student learning, led by the faculty, guided by best practices in higher education nationally, and integrated within a larger context of institutional self-assessment and strategic planning.

Integration of the QEP development process with the concurrent development of the University's 2008-2028 Academic Master Plan and 2010-2015 Strategic Plan has been achieved in part through significant overlap among the membership of responsible committees.

Faculty leadership has been assured primarily through the composition of the QEP Development Committee as well as the presentation and discussion of the QEP's development in online forums and at our biannual Faculty Institute – the forum in which the development process was also initiated.

### **Selecting a QEP Topic**

The process of selecting a topic for Tennessee State University's QEP began at the August 2007 Faculty Institute, where the QEP concept was explained and faculty members were invited to propose topics collaboratively in ten cross-disciplinary discussion groups. Twelve potential topics generated from these discussion groups were then posted in an online forum for review by the faculty, deans, and directors during October 2007.

Based on the results of this review, the University SACS Leadership Team narrowed the range of potential QEP topics to three, for which compensated faculty teams were charged with the development of full prospectuses.

The titles of these were:

- "Building on a Culture of Achievement: Prospectus for a Quality Enhancement Plan";
- "Engaged Learners: Out of the Classroom into the World"; and
- "Global Awareness: Prospectus for a Quality Enhancement Plan."

The prospectus titled "Building on a Culture of Achievement" emerged from both the general online review and a separate review by academic deans and directors as the clear first choice among these potential QEP topics.

While the University maintains a strong commitment to both service learning and international education, the prospectus selected – with its emphasis on expanding, creatively integrating, and improving support for the University's general education mission – boldly and imaginatively confronted the University's most critical challenge.

For over ten years, standardized tests administered by the University to its graduating seniors, supplemented by the testing of “rising juniors” upon completion of the General Education Core, had consistently demonstrated relatively poor performance in all skills measured (critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics) and across all general education contexts (social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities). (See the analysis of test results for 2004-2008 in Appendix 4.) As the primary institutional measure of general education learning outcomes, these test results argued compellingly for a QEP focusing on general education quality.

As reflected in its title, however, the selected prospectus also built consciously and creatively on Tennessee State University's fundamental identity and historic achievement. This distinctive promise of the University's HBCU heritage was perhaps best captured in one of the tentative QEP titles suggested within the selected prospectus: "Meeting You Where You Are, Taking You to Where You Want to Be." An unconditional commitment to higher education for all students, although now widespread throughout colleges and universities in the United States, is a vision reflected in the very existence of Tennessee State University, and our ongoing commitment to meet students "where they are" in recognition of their intrinsic worth and full intellectual potential is a succinct and eloquent expression of its relevance in the flexible, customer-centered higher education market of the twenty-first century.

Even among its supporters, however, one concern regarding this QEP focus was the risk of falling back into older paradigms of general education emphasizing basic skills and lower-level courses. Where international education and service learning as QEP topics connote engagement of advanced students with the world beyond the university, general education at Tennessee State University, as elsewhere, is unfortunately often misunderstood as a program of service courses rather than the four-year preparation of students for career success and versatility, civic responsibility, and the enjoyment of lifelong engagement and learning.

Clarifying this broader vision of general education, the title of the QEP prospectus was expanded following its final selection by the SACS Leadership Team in the summer of 2008 to read: "Building on a Culture of Achievement: Transfer and Reinforcement of General Education Competencies in Upper-Level Coursework."

Although the content of the prospectus, which already included this potential emphasis, was completely unaltered by this change, the new subtitle accentuated the forward-looking vision of the prospective QEP, the role of academic majors and major faculty, and the importance of integrative learning. The focus on transfer and reinforcement also helped to ensure that the QEP would complement, rather than duplicate or create confusion with, important separate initiatives already underway in lower-level general education assessment and the redesign of developmental studies.

## **QEP Focus and the Selection of Learning Outcomes**

In September 2008, the SACS Leadership Team charged a faculty-led QEP Development Committee (Appendix 1) with the completion of the University's QEP.

The charge to the committee (Appendix 2) specifically included:

- narrowing the topic of general education transfer to a "single competency or set of competencies that is manageable, assessable, and significant to student achievement and preparation for the world of work"; and
- developing a QEP consistent with SACS-COC requirements.

Much of the QEP Development Committee's initial work during the fall 2008 term was devoted to internalizing the QEP concept – including the range and limits of its scope – discussing models of integrative learning in the context of general education, considering divisions of labor based on expertise and interests, and moving toward a more focused topic selection and the identification of specific learning outcomes.

The committee's early discussions and decisions were informed from the beginning by a number of models from other institutions, including the examples of other QEPs. Dr. Rudolph Jackson, Vice President of the SACS-COC, had conducted an on-site QEP workshop in August attended by members of the committee as well as the University's SACS Leadership Team, and the committee sent a delegate almost immediately after its formation to the annual conference of the Association for General and Liberal Studies in September. The chair of the committee also attended the annual SACS-COC conference in December.

A consensus toward the selection of writing as the specific topic for the QEP was evident from the first meetings of the QEP Development Committee and became clearer as its work progressed. The common General Education Assessment Plan of the Tennessee Board of Regents – in 2008-2009 already in its second year of implementation at TSU – had identified oral and written communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking as the "vital few" among its common general education learning outcomes, and the main issue confronting the committee was less a question of which of these areas was most "vital" than a question of how many the QEP could address and the extent to which they could be combined.

For reasons discussed more fully in the following section, the QEP Development Committee selected writing as the general education focus by the end of the fall 2008 semester with a tentative commitment to a set of learning outcomes – derived from the common General Education Assessment Plan of Tennessee Board of Regents – significantly linked strongly to critical thinking. (See Section III for a detailed presentation of QEP learning outcomes.)

## **Assessing Needs, Reviewing Best Practices, Developing Strategies**

Beginning with the January 2009 Faculty Institute, the QEP Development Committee embarked on more focused discussions, internally and with the larger faculty, regarding the current state of writing and writing instruction on campus, the writing needs of

students in academic majors, and optimal strategies for ensuring that the University graduates confident and capable writers.

To facilitate these discussions, the committee launched a QEP website that remains active as a resource for QEP promotion and development at [www.tnstate.edu/qep](http://www.tnstate.edu/qep). Based on the QEP prospectus and the work of the committee during the preceding fall semester, the website listed four potential strategies for improving the achievement of writing learning outcomes among the University's graduates:

- the integration of progressively sequenced writing standards, tasks, and assessments in selected sophomore, junior, and senior-level courses;
- substantial faculty development resources, programs, and incentives to support sustained, focused attention to writing instruction and assessment in these courses;
- enhancement of the Writing Center with an emphasis on supporting advanced writing at the upper level; and
- the introduction of appropriate learning technologies for students including online writing evaluation and campus-wide adoption of an online portfolio system.

With the decision to proceed with a writing-focused QEP, the membership of the QEP Development Committee was expanded to include the director of the University Writing Center and the coordinator of the University's First-Year Writing Program, both of whom were principal authors of the original QEP prospectus. Joining a member of the languages and literature faculty who had already served on the committee in fall 2008, these colleagues brought invaluable expertise and experience in the teaching and scholarship of rhetoric and composition to the committee.

Although the committee generally met as a whole on a weekly basis throughout spring 2009, subcommittees were also formed for:

- the promotion of campus awareness of the QEP and the selection of a QEP title;
- the review of scholarly literature and best practices;
- the consideration of alternative e-portfolio systems; and
- the development of the QEP's assessment plan.

The committee also considered dividing among individuals and subgroups the design of the QEP's student support component, its faculty development plan, and an application process for participating major programs, but these areas were ultimately developed in meetings of the whole committee.

In support of the QEP Development Committee's work, the University's Faculty Support Center independently conducted a related pilot project during the spring 2009 semester

by supporting two cross-disciplinary faculty learning communities focusing on two QEP-related topics: (1) writing instruction and (2) the use of rubrics in the assessment of oral communication.

Although the learning communities were not a formal part of the QEP development process, a representative of the QEP Development Committee participated in each group, and their work significantly informed the faculty development plan of the QEP, both by modeling the benefits of this faculty development approach and, through the candid reflection of participants, by pointing to areas for improvement. (See Section VI.)

During spring 2009, the QEP Development Committee pursued two principal strategies for ensuring broader faculty input into the design of the QEP: a QEP Development Survey and the creation of an online QEP forum.

The QEP Development Survey (see Appendix 3) – distributed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to all academic units – requested information on the writing outcomes and writing curricula of major programs as well as feedback on the appropriateness of proposed QEP learning outcomes and strategic initiatives. Although the University's schools and colleges were not evenly represented in the rate of response to the survey, the value of the results for the QEP Development Committee consisted principally in the almost entirely positive evaluation of the QEP in the responses received.

The committee's initial experience with an online QEP forum was considerably less successful because of persistent technical problems, including the hacking of the site. This setback, however, was significantly offset by the University's attention to planning integration, which resulted in the full incorporation of the QEP outline at this stage of development into a draft of the University's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, which was presented for review in a functioning online forum at approximately the same time that the QEP Development Survey was distributed in April. The earlier presentation of the developing QEP strategic initiatives at Faculty Institute was thus followed by two wide disseminations of the developing QEP outline for comments during the spring 2009 semester.

Concurrently with these efforts, the QEP Development Committee and its subcommittees continued to work toward completing an initial draft of the QEP for review during the fall 2009 semester. The draft was published online at the end of November, and members of the University community were invited to submit comments and recommendations to the committee by email. The draft was also discussed at two open forums for the faculty in December.

The final presentation of the QEP draft to the University faculty occurred at the January 2010 Faculty Institute, followed by additional revisions during the first weeks of the spring semester. The plan was presented on February 1 to the President's Cabinet for final approval with the goal of submission to the SACS-COC by Friday, February 5.

### III. Identification of the QEP Topic

The capital letters of Tennessee State University's QEP title – WRITE (Write→Reflect→Integrate→Transfer→Excel) – denote an acronym but are also intended to connote, communicate, and promote a larger, expansive vision of writing on our campus.

SACS guidelines emphasize that the topic chosen for a QEP should be "creative and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning." WRITE meets this standard by embracing a holistic understanding of a fundamental academic skill that honors the highest aspirations of our faculty and the full intellectual breadth, maturity, and potential of our students.

While recognizing and certainly addressing a definition of "writing" that includes spelling, punctuation, and grammar, WRITE aims to create a transformed culture of writing in a much larger sense at Tennessee State University. As discussed more fully in Section V, this aim is informed by the insights of the "Writing Across the Curriculum" and "Writing in the Disciplines" movements of the last three decades but also links out from these to new technologies, the specific needs of our students, and the larger vision of integrated learning that has guided the development of our QEP.

Although not insights unique to the Tennessee State University's faculty or our QEP, WRITE redefines, reconceptualizes, and reenvision "writing" in the following ways:

- **Write**

*Write*, both grammatically and metaphorically in the context of the QEP's vision, is a verb. Good writing or bad writing is not something that students "have" but rather something that they – and their faculty mentors with them – do. Writing is active, expressive, collaborative, and formative.

Writing is the answer, not the problem.

- **Reflect**

Writing is inseparable from learning itself and indeed provides arguably the primary visible, permanent evidence that learning is occurring at all. Writing is indispensable to the faculty in honestly evaluating the effectiveness of their own teaching, to students in understanding their own learning, and also to institutional assessment, which relies too exclusively on standardized, psychometric instruments with limited immediate bearing on the work of the faculty and students in the classroom.

Writing allows students, the faculty, and the institution as a whole to see themselves.

- **Integrate**

Writing is a higher-order thinking skill involving the ability to engage creatively and critically with information from multiple sources – in many cases across multiple disciplines – for a range of potential audiences. Writing brings all of



these factors together and is also shaped by personal values, commitments, and interests. It is foundational to success in all academic majors, cumulative, and intrinsic to the intellectual and personal growth of students.

Writing is construction of knowledge. All faculty members write and share a responsibility for teaching writing.

- **Transfer**

*Course* and *curriculum* are English and Latin variants of the same word describing a continuous academic journey. The modern university has divided this course into *courses*, at times resulting in broken intellectual connections for students that need to be bridged and healed by a common effort of the faculty.

A common weakness of university curricula, at Tennessee State University and elsewhere, is that the nurturing of writing drops off between the First-Year Writing program and the senior capstone, where expectations for writing and critical thinking reemerge on a much larger scale. WRITE's emphasis on progressive sequencing of writing instruction and its electronic portfolio component are intended to ensure that writing skills are transferred seamlessly throughout a student's journey at the University – with the more important goal of ultimately encouraging students to internalize this transfer of learning as a normal practice.

Writing holds the university experience together.

- **Excel**

A strong commitment of WRITE is to define writing and writing instruction in terms of authentic audiences and real-world contexts. Although there will always be a sense in which students write for their teachers, WRITE encourages the faculty to work creatively in the design of assignments to minimize the limitations imposed on students – in authority, motivation, and purpose – by this narrower imagination of audience.

One initially proposed QEP title – "Future Tense" – captured well its vision of preparing students for the varieties of writing – including significant online composition – that they will encounter in their later lives and careers.

The primary audience of writing is a world beyond the university.

#### IV. Desired Student Learning Outcomes

The student learning outcomes governing WRITE are:

1. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.
2. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.
3. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, and definition) in response to their specific rhetorical situation.
4. Students are able to employ standard diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
5. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.

These competencies follow from:

- the April 2000 Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA);
- the common communication learning outcomes, corresponding closely to the WPA statement, of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) General Education Program begun in fall 2004; and
- a modified and narrowed list of the TBR outcomes adopted, with TBR approval, by the TSU composition faculty for its pilot of a General Education Assessment Plan (Appendix 5) beginning in 2008-2009.

The University is committed to these competencies as the learning outcomes for WRITE primarily because of their strong foundation in the scholarship of composition pedagogy and their consistency with the larger vision of writing promoted by the QEP (see Section III). The learning outcomes apply to virtually all kinds of writing including the argumentative essay, lab reports, capstone projects in academic majors, briefs, policy statements, online composition (including website design), and a range of other academic and nonacademic writing contexts.

In addition to these more important considerations, the adoption of these learning outcomes also allows close integration of WRITE with the General Education Assessment Plan of the First-Year Writing Program supported by electronic portfolio technology. From the perspective especially of students but also of the faculty, this integration ensures that specific competencies introduced and assessed in first-year composition are expanded and reinforced throughout the WRITE curriculum.

The most important result of the QEP Development Survey distributed to the University's academic departments in April 2008 (see Section II) was the validation of these learning outcomes as meaningful and appropriate for more extensive and ambitious writing at the

Tennessee State University QEP  
WRITE (Write→Reflect→Integrate→Transfer→Excel)

upper level in major programs. Given the strong scholarly grounding of the competencies, the importance of this aspect of the survey was largely to affirm their resonance among the faculty. The QEP Development Committee remained continually cognizant of the specific nature of writing within academic disciplines and the need for major programs to make these learning outcomes their own among a larger set of learning goals for their students. The QEP Development Survey was an important initial step in this process, but the articulation of the WRITE learning outcomes with respect to specific assignments and assessment artifacts will continue during preparations for implementation as well as comprising a part of the program itself. (See Timeline in Section VII and Assessment Plan in Section X.)

## **V. Literature Review and Best Practices**

### **Overview**

The strategies of the WRITE program are informed by a review of:

- an extensive and developed literature on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID);
- a closely related but more recent body of work on integrative learning, higher education assessment, and electronic portfolios; and
- recently completed QEPs focusing on writing and general education transfer at other colleges and universities.

### **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID)**

Although Tennessee State University has lacked a sustained WAC program, many of its faculty members are broadly familiar with its concept and philosophy as well as its successes and setbacks at other institutions. Drawing on a vast literature of well-documented experiences with WAC across the country over three decades, the WRITE plan has attempted to incorporate its most important insights while avoiding some of its limitations.

Since its emergence as a pedagogical movement in the 1970s, WAC has transformed college teaching with its emphasis on writing as a site of active, visible learning. Responding to the question most famously articulated in the 1975 *Newsweek* article, "Why Johnny Can't Write," composition faculty built – largely "from below" – one of the most notable educational reform movements of the previous century. In classrooms and on campuses where it was implemented, WAC helped to redefine not only writing – from a basic skill to an intellectual activity – but also teaching and learning – from the transmission and reception of information to the critical and creative analysis and construction of knowledge.

In addition to fostering a more accurate understanding of writing, WAC also promoted a larger, as yet only partially realized, vision for higher education. With its challenge to simplistic assessments of students and its recognition of the contextual complexity of knowledge, WAC supported the democratization of higher education. WAC's active conception of learning reaffirmed not only the teaching vocation of the university faculty but also their place as experts of assessment and its primary audience. Finally, WAC's successful invitation to faculty to make connections through their students "across the curriculum" represented a beginning, expanded in recent years, toward reintegrating a university experience divided among courses and between general education and the academic major.

WID – within which the WRITE program is more specifically located – is both a continuation of WAC and a reform impulse reflecting its limitations in practice. Although writing "in the disciplines" has always been implicit or even explicit in the vision of writing

"across the curriculum," WID has emerged as a term emphasizing the particularity of academic discourses and the greater motivation of students writing within their major fields.

WID programs typically take truly integrative approaches to writing with the understanding that it must be specifically contextualized and responsive to a specific audience in order to be effective. WID programs focus on integrating critical and analytical writing and writing-to-learn in departments, disciplines, and classes throughout a university. Proponents of WID emphasize that writing skills can only be fully realized when transferred from general education writing courses and into the rhetorical situations of a student's matriculation through her or his chosen major.

A more programmatic consideration in the transition from WAC to WID has been the importance of leadership by academic departments and faculty outside composition programs. In the 2002 edition of *Writing in the Disciplines: A Curricular History*, David Russell wrote:

Unfortunately, there has been relatively little development in the past decade of departmental approaches to WAC. This is due perhaps to several factors. WAC programs have made little attempt to involve departments and disciplines, per se, as historically the WAC movement has focused on individual faculty in interdisciplinary workshops or WI [Writing Intensive] courses centrally administered. Moreover, the WAC movement grew out of composition, primarily, where disciplinarity has not been a central concern, and out of general education programs, which attempt to transcend disciplines. (319)

In an article for *Peer Review* the following year, Jonathan Monroe similarly observed:

To the extent that it has remained an administrator-driven and administrator-identified movement, WAC has only partially realized its best aspirations. If the goal of WAC is to cultivate a sense of the importance of writing in all fields, WID is, in effect, WAC's proper realization. The success of WAC has depended on the often remarkable energy and investments of WAC directors. By contrast, WID suggests that primary responsibility for and ultimate authority over writing rests with individual faculty situated in particular fields. While the scope and coherence of the curriculum as a whole is necessarily a central concern of college and university administrators, individual disciplines remain the sites of the faculty's primary investments in research and teaching. As such, they are the vital link between an institution's vision of undergraduate and graduate education and the role writing plays, or ought to play, in the full realization of that vision. ("Writing and the Disciplines" 4)

Although informed primarily by the WID concept, the WRITE program recognizes it, in Monroe's words, as WAC's "proper realization" and draws on a much larger range of WAC experiences and insights in the best practices informing its strategies. WID programs informing WRITE's development include those at Texas A&M, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the John S. Knight Writing in the Disciplines Program at Cornell University.

### **Integrative Learning, Electronic Portfolios, and Higher Education Assessment**

In the context of its larger mandate to develop a QEP addressing the transfer and reinforcement of general education competencies, the QEP Development Committee began reviewing recent literature on integrative learning and electronic portfolios even

prior to the selection of writing as a QEP topic. In many respects, however, the current emphasis in higher education on integrative learning represents a logical development of the WAC and WID movements described above, including a remarkable continuity of program leadership and scholarship.

The most succinct argument for integrative learning is perhaps the recent suggestion by Andrea Leskes that it represents, along with breadth and depth, the third "hallmark of a quality undergraduate liberal education" (iv). The ability of students to make connections between the general education core and the major, among courses in these programs, between the curriculum and the co-curriculum, and beyond their university experience is a longstanding educational goal, but evidence of this commitment is generally lacking in the structure and curricula of universities. In a 2003 article for *Peer Review* titled "An Integrated Approach to Liberal Learning," Jan Czechowski writes:

To clarify the problem, we must begin by recognizing that most institutions make no cogent and transparent connection between the curriculum and their stated learning outcomes. We also must recognize that most current curricular practices and structures include no intentional internal integration within core requirements. In the core, for the most part, there is no progression, inter-connection, or logical laddering – certainly not as applied to majors. The value of such an integrative approach, of course, lies in the coherence and meaning it gives to the entirety of a student's course work; most would agree that such coherence already exists in major curricular structures. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, most current practice provides no intentional integration between core requirements and the major. Yet if we are going to educate the whole person, the curriculum had better be organized around some philosophy of holistic learning.

Recent efforts to enhance integrative learning include a wide range of initiatives (notably learning communities and service learning, which tend to integrate the curriculum and co-curriculum horizontally), but WAC and WID arguably represent the most sustained and widespread model for integrating the learning outcomes of the core and the undergraduate major in the vertical "logical laddering" suggested in the excerpt above. The philosophy of integrative learning, moreover, is entirely consistent with the WAC movement, with which it shares an emphasis on metacognition and active knowledge. As learning connected thoroughly "across the curriculum," integrative learning presents at once the most expansive expression of WAC's vision and the most compelling context for its realization.

The growth of integrative learning as a higher education paradigm is attributable to a number of factors including innovative educational research and the need for creativity and flexibility in the workforce. Among the most compelling explanations for its current attraction and promise, however, is technology. The electronic or digital portfolio, although sharing some of the limitations of its print predecessor, presents new opportunities for curricular integration that are already changing the learning environment on many campuses. Citing a 2008 study by the Campus Computing Project, J. Elizabeth Clark and Bret Eynon observed last year that the use of electronic portfolios in higher education had tripled since 2003 and that the number of public and private universities and public four year colleges offering them to students had grown to over 50% (18).

Electronic portfolios present new integrative possibilities for students, for the faculty, and for academic administration. The plasticity of the electronic portfolios allows students

continually to imagine and reimagine connections in their own learning across the curriculum, and the best applications invite the same creativity students experience in online composition outside the university. As Clark and Eynon observe,

At their best, e-portfolios are not simplistic translations of text to screen. Students respond enthusiastically to the digital medium, eagerly experimenting with the aesthetic look and feel of their e-portfolios, the potential for multimodal authoring that moves fluidly between text, image, and audio components. Visual rhetoric is an emerging area of interest in composition studies, recognition that imagery and visual design signify a change in the nature of thinking and writing. Through e-portfolios we have an opportunity to harness the power of imagery and digital media to advanced cognitive processes. (21)

Perhaps even more importantly, there is at least persuasive anecdotal evidence to suggest that the growing use of e-portfolios is helping students to make precisely the kinds of connections between general education and the major envisioned by proponents of integrative education (Miller and Wende 9).

For the faculty and university administrators, electronic portfolios represent a breakthrough in longstanding efforts to integrate and evaluate their work at the level of visible student learning as opposed to merely programmatic integration. The advantage of electronic over print portfolios in this context is largely a matter of the stability of the data and the ease of access and use, but the implications of this difference are revolutionary. Against the background of almost a century of contested standardized testing, the application of rubrics to electronic portfolios potentially represents a radically new approach to higher education assessment, affording efficiency while also valuing faculty expertise, recognizing complexity, and providing meaningful, useful information to multiple assessment audiences including the faculty and students.

The benefits of e-portfolios to students, the faculty, and university administrators are not identical, and the purposes and priorities of these groups must be balanced to some extent in their use. The interests of these constituencies, however, converge considerably in a truly student-centered integrative approach to learning. In a 2007 article on e-portfolios and "folio thinking," Barbara Cambridge writes:

Often we lament that tests are only snapshots of limited learning at a single point in time, whereas electronic portfolios offer a continuous account of life-wide learning with the potential for life-long representation as well. At various points the portfolio may be graded or rated for a certain purpose like completing a course, graduating from one academic level to the next, or ranking the student within a class. But, the real value is the practice of self-assessment that goes into a student's choice of artefacts [sic], reflection on those artefacts, and demonstration of awareness of meeting learning goals or competencies. Students who practice folio thinking and eportfolio keeping are prime for the 21st century when they need to be flexible and adept at knowing when they need to change and when they need to know more. Assessment becomes part of the learning process. ("Learning, Knowing, and Reflecting")

WRITE's central commitment to e-portfolios thus reflects their location at the intersection of WAC and integrative learning literature as well as their potential for focusing meaningful faculty development, student support, and assessment across the university.

## **Writing-Focused Quality Enhancement Plans at Other Colleges and Universities**

The significant number of institutions implementing QEPs comparable to WRITE became evident to the QEP Development Committee only with the publication of QEP titles for the 2008 cohort of SACS-accredited colleges and universities. These plans, most of which the Literature Review Subcommittee was able to obtain in full, proved to be an invaluable resource in affirming the developing concept and strategies of the WRITE program, providing models and inspiration from our peer institutions, and pointing to the distinctive priorities, needs, and assets of our own campus.

Although QEP titles and summaries from the SACS-COC 2007 reaffirmation cohort of colleges and universities had provided some guidance in the early stages of WRITE's development, the titles of the 2008 cohort strongly confirmed that WRITE, in the words of one member of the committee, was "tapping into the national zeitgeist." Within this group, Albany State University, Auburn Montgomery University, Georgia State University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, Virginia State University, and Wayland Baptist University all submitted QEPs addressing writing in its relationship to critical thinking in the larger college or university curriculum.

These QEPs, as well as those from Guilford College and the University of Texas at Arlington for the previous year, vary significantly in the set of courses emphasized (general education or the academic major) and their negotiation of the balance between the QEP concept's vision of institutional transformation and its focus on measurable outcomes among a specific cohort of students. Their initiatives, however – including the strengthening of writing centers, faculty pedagogical development, the use of electronic portfolios, and the assessment of capstone courses – are remarkably consistent with those of the WRITE program, and the QEP of Virginia State University, titled "Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success," directly inspired WRITE's commitment to maintaining a close identity between its student support and e-portfolio components.

The distinctive challenges of WRITE evident in comparison with the QEPs at other institutions consist primarily in the University's lack of teaching center for pedagogical development, a dedicated office for general education, or an existing interdepartmental writing program. The WRITE program is itself an initial step toward filling these gaps in the academic infrastructure of the University both through the creative use of existing resources and in its ultimate goal of building longer-term institutional support for a more ambitious and integrated general education program.

### **Best Practices**

Based on the review of WAC and integrative learning literature described above as well as the models provided by other writing-focused QEPs, the design of the WRITE program is informed by the following best practices:

- intentional affirmation of students' intellectual and creative potential;
- the promotion of affectively positive and meaningful language about writing and the avoidance of affectively negative or abstract institutional language;



- the unique motivational and practical value of students' writing in their major disciplines;
- the support of a genuinely interdepartmental (rather than content-interdisciplinary) writing program, including the involvement of entire academic departments in addition to individual members of the faculty;
- an open and sustainable faculty development model recognizing faculty members as scholars of discipline-specific writing and pedagogy;
- the value of collaborative learning and peer and mentor tutoring, as opposed to exclusively teacher-centered pedagogy, for encouraging formation, creativity, and confidence in authorship;
- an integrated model of student support linking tutoring and technology as closely as possible to the classroom experience and specific writing tasks;
- awareness of the positive and negative potential of information technology in developing writing, including its subordinate relationship to pedagogy;
- a consistent focus on evidence of student learning in all faculty development activities and programmatic decisions; and
- the creation of a climate of writing excellence within the institution, including the publication of excellent writing, other rewards for student achievements in writing, and the recognition of superior writing pedagogy among the faculty.

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**Quality Enhancement Plans**

Albany State University, Albany, Georgia	"Writing Realized: Developing Writing Literacies in a Technological Age"	2008
Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama	"Writing for Success"	2008
Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia	"Critical Thinking through Writing"	2008
Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina	"Enhancing Student Writing through Writing in the Academic Programs"	2007
Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, Florida	"Think for Yourself, Write for Others"	2008
University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas	"Active Learning: Pathways to Higher Ordering Thinking at UT Arlington"	2007
Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia	"Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success"	2008

## VI. Actions to Be Implemented

### Principles

In accordance with SACS QEP guidelines, the literature and best practices discussed above, and Tennessee State University's own institutional values, the strategic vision of WRITE is based on the following principles and commitments:

- **Focus on Student Learning**

The initiatives of WRITE are designed to have a measurable effect on the learning of students, and support for the continuation of these strategies is linked to a demonstration of their effectiveness. The goal of WRITE initiatives is not an infrastructural "quality enhancement" of the University for its own sake but rather an enhancement of the quality of student learning.

- **Faculty Support**

WRITE initiatives are intended to invigorate, rather than burden, the teaching responsibilities of the faculty at the University. WRITE initiatives related to teaching are intended to be "new" rather than "additional" and even to ease, in many instances, the teaching load of the faculty by providing additional support, leveraging collaborative potential, and encouraging more productive pedagogical strategies.

- **Scope**

The SACS QEP concept balances the aspiration for institutional transformation with the need to focus on a specific cohort of students with reference to a specific set of learning outcomes, strategies, and assessments. In developing WRITE, the University has therefore combined initiatives with immediate benefit for all of its students with other initiatives allowing for more specific target groups and manageable assessment.

- **Impact and Sustainability**

WRITE initiatives are structured with the goals of sustainability beyond the five-year period of the QEP and an indirect impact beyond its immediate objectives. This larger goal of WRITE is to promote a more flexible, collaborative, integrated, and effective approach to the teaching of writing at the University. Toward this end, WRITE is deliberately designed with the intention of allowing its own innovations and those that emerge from the faculty at later stages to become "viral," and the WRITE assessment plan (see Section X) also includes an evaluation of this larger impact.

- **Flexibility**

WRITE initiatives balance the need for detailed and thorough planning with confidence in the wisdom, vision, scholarship, and reflective practice of the program's faculty leadership in the five-year period of its implementation. Implementation of QEPs at other institutions has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and openness to self-criticism and improvement within the context of a sustained institutional commitment. The WRITE plan shares these values as a matter of both practicality and fundamental institutional philosophy.

### **Overview of Initiatives**

The strategic initiatives of WRITE derive from the best practices reviewed in Section V above and a campus-wide discussion over several months regarding the most effective approaches to helping our students become better writers. Although intentionally overlapping and closely integrated, they can be generally divided into the following three categories:

- **Strengthening Transfer Within the General Education Core**

One of the strongest sentiments among the University faculty in reflecting on the quality of student writing in their courses is simply that they need better-prepared students. Although WRITE is obviously based on pedagogical dispositions and an understanding of writing that point to the limitations of this viewpoint, the plan does recognize as legitimate the concern for quality, integration, and transfer *within* the General Education Core as well as reinforcement at the upper level.

- **Faculty Development in the Major Disciplines**

A second set of WRITE initiatives comprise a faculty development plan including general education courses but focused primarily on selected upper-division programs. Many members of the faculty, as reflected in the wish simply for better-prepared students, feel that they lack the time and expertise to teach writing effectively in the context of major courses with other learning goals.

The WRITE faculty development program is designed to provide many of these faculty members with the time and resources to explore collaboratively the broader vision of writing presented in Section III above as well as introducing practical strategies for maximizing the learning potential of writing in their classes. Focusing on sequenced core courses in selected majors, the goal of the faculty development program is to ensure effective reinforcement of writing skills in the sophomore, junior, and senior years.

- **Resourcing, Mentoring, Advising, and Tutoring**

The third category of WRITE initiatives addresses the need for more extensive and effective tutorial resources to assist the faculty at all levels in motivating and nurturing better student writers. Even with sufficient time and resources for a strong faculty development program, an exclusively teacher-centered model of writing pedagogy fails to provide the benefits of an environment in which students can develop their writing skills in creative independence with the support of writing mentors, advisors, or tutors. Like other writing programs, WRITE recognizes the unique value of this kind of writing support as distinct from the relationship of authority that exists between students and their instructors.

Following on an awareness that these resources must be linked as closely as possible to the classroom, WRITE initiatives in this area proceed from a concept of course-embedded support – already modeled very effectively by partnerships with the University's librarians – that brings writing mentors, advisors, and tutors into the WRITE classroom and introduces the importance and purpose of the University Writing Center in the WRITE course syllabus.

### **First-Year Composition: Introducing the WRITE E-portfolio**

As elaborated above in Section II, the design of WRITE has intentionally focused on writing beyond the University's First-Year Writing Program, where the teaching of writing is addressed attentively and where significant initiatives – including assessment of learning outcomes, the use of grant-funded technology, and faculty development projects – are already underway.

WRITE nevertheless does begin with First-Year Writing – because of the strong leadership in writing instruction provided by its faculty but, more importantly, because this is where students begin their journey through the University.

The principal WRITE enhancement of the First-Year Writing Program is the introduction of an electronic portfolio, prospectively funded by the WRITE budget.

The larger purpose of the electronic portfolio within the WRITE curriculum is to undergird its emphasis on reflection, integration, and transfer; to focus student support and other initiatives on visible, connected evidence of student learning (artifacts); and to provide a more meaningful means of assessment at the end of the senior year through a longitudinal view of the progress of students' writing across their university experience.

Within the First-Year Writing Program itself, however, the WRITE E-portfolio will offer the faculty and students a flexible, paperless environment for writing and the evaluation of writing – including potential practical advantages for simplifying the faculty's participation in the University's General Education Assessment Plan.

In introducing students to the concept of artifacts, rubrics, and the goal of developing a permanent writing collection, moreover, First-Year Writing faculty can impart a renewed sense of purpose and importance to the course as the visible foundation of the undergraduate curriculum.



### **The History Survey: Sophomore-Level Transfer**

The American History Survey, with a rare alternative option for Tennessee History, is currently the only two-semester sequence of sophomore courses required for all students at Tennessee State University.

For this reason and because of the prominence of writing in the common syllabus for these courses, HIST 2010 (American History I), HIST 2020 (American History II), and HIST 2030 (Tennessee History) are envisioned in the WRITE plan as the program's principal sophomore-level courses. As a field distinct from "English" but closely related in its emphasis on writing, sources, and texts, moreover, history provides an ideal transition from the First-Year Writing Program to the practice and conventions of writing in different academic disciplines.

In addition to providing the WRITE E-portfolio to support the reinforcement of WRITE learning outcomes in the American History Survey, the planned program budget includes funds to support two full-time faculty appointments in history at the instructor level to reduce the size of HIST 2010 and 2020 sections to a maximum of 25-30 students. This reduced student/instructor ratio – combined with WRITE's mentoring and student support program – is intended to maintain, or even ease, the current teaching and grading load associated with these courses while also enriching the value of the course for both faculty members and students.

The primary responsibility of American History Survey instructors with respect to WRITE is participation in faculty development opportunities related to this component of the program and the demonstration of students' achievement of WRITE learning outcomes through an appropriate portfolio artifact or artifacts. Assessment of common learning outcomes in the American History Survey is currently conducted primarily through common midterm and final examinations. The evaluation of a significant portfolio artifact may therefore help to provide more meaningful information for the participation of these courses in the General Education Assessment Plan.

### **The Upper Level: Selection of WRITE Undergraduate Degree Programs**

Both the limits of the WRITE budget and WRITE's design as a focused institutional research project require the focus on specific academic majors for its upper-level component.

The selection of WRITE undergraduate degree programs is governed by the following:

- **Participation Benefits**

Majors selected as WRITE major programs will receive support to enhance writing instruction in their major courses – typically three or four gateway, core, and capstone courses – through funded faculty development and course-embedded, supplemental writing instruction and mentoring.

The primary benefit of successful participation in WRITE is the quality enhancement of the major, including its reputation within and beyond the University and, most importantly, the academic preparation and career placement of its graduates.

- **Selection Process**

Undergraduate degree programs wishing to apply for designation as WRITE programs will submit a letter of intent to the chair of the QEP Development Committee by **March 31, 2010**, briefly presenting or describing: (1) the role of writing in the official learning outcomes for the program, (2) the current philosophy and practices characterizing the best teaching of writing in the program, (3) courses – typically three or four, including core gateway and capstone courses – that the program intends to propose as its WRITE curriculum, and (4) specific goals for the program's participation in WRITE.

The QEP Development Committee will work with interested programs to prepare a full application by **April 30, 2010**, with reference to the selection criteria below. Final selection decisions will be announced by **May 15**.

- **Selection Criteria**

Following from the principle of "Impact and Sustainability" described on page 21, the QEP Development Committee will seek a broad representation of the University's schools and colleges among WRITE major programs. WRITE recognizes writing as vital across the full range of academic majors and disciplines, and its goal is not to strengthen one or two colleges but rather to provide a sustainable model for enhancing learning throughout the University.

Within this general goal, the primary selection criteria for WRITE major programs are a demonstrated commitment to WRITE's vision of writing, which should be evident in the published, official learning outcomes for the program; a curriculum supporting writing outcomes; the teaching philosophies of the program's faculty; and its evaluation, tenure, and promotion process. For assessment purposes, the program must meet the University's requirement of a capstone course. To the extent that any of these criteria are not in place, the program must show evidence of significant progress toward these requirements in its final application.

- **Budgetary Considerations**

Current projections of the WRITE budget (see Section IX) suggest the possibility of supporting up to eight major programs at the upper-level

graduating an average of 30 students annually. Because no linear correlation exists between the number of graduates in an academic major and the faculty development and student support resources necessary to support it as a WRITE program, these numbers necessarily represent a general estimate.

### **The WRITE Faculty Development Plan**

Faculty development, although arguably the single most vital WRITE initiative, is necessarily and appropriately the most contingent and open with reference to the principle of "Flexibility" described on page 22. The WRITE program recognizes the faculty not as employees who need to be "trained" but rather as scholars who need to be supported in their teaching scholarship, reflective practice, and collaboration.

For these reasons, the WRITE faculty development plan consists primarily in the investment of the WRITE Director and an advisory committee (see Section VIII) with the tools to sustain a meaningful, adaptable program of faculty development. These include a budget to support released time, workload flexibility, travel, workshops, a newsletter, and stipends.

The WRITE faculty development plan outlines principles with illustrative practices and a series of proposed topics linked to WRITE's goal of nurturing an expanded vision and understanding of writing and writing instruction at the University.

WRITE's **faculty development principles** include:

- **Scholarship**

WRITE faculty development activities will generally involve faculty members in self-directed, literature-based research on writing pedagogy in their disciplines. In collaboration with the faculty, the WRITE program should build library and online resources to support this practice.

- **Collaboration**

WRITE faculty development will build a community of dedicated writers and writing instructors for the promotion of a larger writing culture on campus. Two faculty learning communities formed during the development of the WRITE program, focusing on writing and assessment respectively, served as a pilot for this approach and demonstrated the potential of sustained faculty collaboration.

- **Recognition and Evaluation**

Participation of an academic department or program in WRITE includes a commitment to value the improvement of student writing as a central priority of the program faculty. Faculty workload assignments and the faculty evaluation process within WRITE undergraduate degree programs will reflect this commitment.

- **Sequencing and Integration**

WRITE faculty development activities will be targeted and linked specifically to the plan's implementation timeline. For example, the WRITE Director should coordinate sustained faculty development initiatives emphasizing electronic portfolios for the members of the faculty beginning to use these in fall 2010, fall 2011, and thereafter.

- **Student Involvement**

In contrast perhaps even to most faculty development programs, WRITE faculty development initiatives will involve students – both directly as participants where possible and indirectly in the focus of development on the quality of student work. One insight from the faculty learning community pilot project referenced above was the importance of centering faculty development on evidence of student learning as opposed to exclusively programmatic or pedagogical topics.

Perhaps the single most important asset of the WRITE electronic portfolio is its potential to bring together continually all of its initiatives at the point where its effectiveness or ineffectiveness is most evident.

- **Engagement of the University**

The benefits of WRITE faculty development opportunities, even and perhaps especially where funding limits participation, will be public. In addition to supporting stipends, released time, and workshops, WRITE also provides for the video and audio taping of workshops and guest lectures, an online newsletter, and a website to publicize WRITE faculty activities, share teaching and learning insights, and present examples of quality student work. This principle has already been modeled on a small scale by the two faculty learning communities formed during the spring 2009 semester, both of which produced websites for wider faculty development.

The results of WRITE faculty development should continually inform ongoing decisions about other strategies of the program.

Based largely on the literature and best practices reviewed in Section V, priorities for WRITE **faculty development topics** include:

- **Course Planning for Formative Writing**

WRITE will assist the faculty in planning courses to maintain a manageable grading workload while encouraging revision as a fundamental part of the writing process. Related faculty development topics include the use of ungraded writing, writing for classroom learning, student peer review, effective use of the tutoring resources, judicious and effective editing comments, the design and application of rubrics, and assuring the conscientious use of revision opportunities by students

- **Design of Writing Assignments to Advance Critical Thinking**

WRITE faculty development will support the faculty in the creation of writing assignments designed to develop, demonstrate, and assess critical thinking with reference to disciplinary learning goals. A central emphasis of WRITE faculty development is the encouragement of the University faculty as a whole in moving beyond the assignment of paper "topics" toward the construction of assignments that make learning in a specific course or discipline visible.

- **Student Writing for Authentic Audiences**

WRITE faculty development will assist the faculty in designing writing assignments that imaginatively subvert the intimidation of professorial authority and develop the student's voice with reference to simulated audiences beyond the university and/or actual authentic contexts.

- **Effective Use of Models**

WRITE faculty development will explore the effective use of examples and models as a best practice in the teaching of writing. Faculty members participating in the program will develop or identify models as a part of writing assignment design, discuss appropriate uses of writing models, and apply these in their teaching.

- **Faculty Writing and Student Learning**

Faculty members are writers, and their effectiveness as teachers of writing is influenced by an understanding of their own writing process and a willingness to share and critique this process in the context of other approaches. The WRITE faculty development program will include the promotion and exploration of this self-understanding of faculty members as teaching writers and writing teachers.

- **Revision and Editing**

WRITE will support participating faculty members in addressing sentence-level errors as a final stage of the revision and editing process rather than the substance of "writing" and to develop consistent language for communicating effectively with students about grammar and mechanics

- **Plagiarism**

Writing as a QEP focus emerged not least from a widespread awareness of plagiarism as a symptom of confusion about writing at the University, and WRITE addresses this issue in both its faculty development and student support components. In addition to promoting strategies in teaching and the design of writing assignments to limit plagiarism, WRITE's faculty development program will also support faculty collaboration toward a more comprehensive response to this issue on campus.

- **Development and Use of Rubrics**

WRITE faculty development will assist faculty in developing rubrics which include the desired learning outcomes in writing and also integrate course and assignment expectations. Faculty will work together to achieve inter-rater reliability when using rubrics to evaluate samples of students' work.

- **E-portfolio Goals and Best Practices**

A significant component of WRITE faculty development will focus on the optimal use of the program's e-portfolio in working with students. In addition to technical training, faculty development in this area will involve active, collaborative exploration of best practices in the use of e-portfolios, principles and guidelines for e-portfolios developed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and an emphasis on the specific purposes of the e-portfolio in the WRITE program.

### **WRITE Mentoring and Student Support**

Supplemental resourcing, mentoring, advising, and tutoring of student writers is one of WRITE's three principal strategies. As recognized consistently in scholarly literature on student writing and in the best university writing programs throughout the country, writing mentors and writing centers provide a level of student support beyond the available time commitments of most faculty members while also, in their creative independence from the instructor-student relationship, serving a different role.

Informed by this understanding, WRITE mentoring and student support builds on existing resources and programs at the University – most notably as a part of the University Writing Center – while also significantly supplementing, expanding, refocusing, and reconceptualizing some of these within the context of its emphasis on academic majors, sophomore and upper-level courses, and the assessment of specific cohorts of students.

Services at the University that WRITE student support will expand and enhance include face-to-face tutoring, online writing advisement (limited by available resources at present to brief email inquiries), and group writing workshops for students.

Although open to all students at the University, these programs currently operate with a limited staff, also utilized periodically as instructors, and serve primarily developmental studies and first-year students. In each of these areas, WRITE will provide tutors,

facilities, and technology appropriate to its focus on sophomore and upper-level courses in an effort to avoid diverting resources from vital existing services.

WRITE's refocusing and reconceptualization of mentoring and student support include:

- the close integration of these services with other WRITE initiatives;
- consistent linking of services to the demonstrable enhancement of student learning in the curriculum and the classroom; and
- a sustained and systematic campus-wide effort to promote a positive image of mentoring and tutoring as resources for accomplished writers seeking to develop their skills creatively and expressively at higher levels.

These commitments, also grounded in the scholarly literature and national best practices, focus supplemental student support thoroughly and consistently on the curriculum, the work of the faculty, and the cumulative learning goals of academic major programs.

Following the flexibility of successful models at other institutions, WRITE, here as elsewhere, focuses on the improvement of learning rather than programmatic enhancements. The "center" of WRITE's mentoring and support component is the student.

WRITE's **student support initiatives** include:

- **Employment and Training of WRITE Associates**

WRITE will significantly expand the number of writing tutors and mentors available to the University's students through a combination of the employment of additional tutoring staff, the support of graduate students (and possibly advanced undergraduate students) as WRITE associates, and the employment of faculty members as tutors (either as volunteers in university service or as a part of a formal instructional assignment).

Where possible, WRITE will reward participating major programs by employing their graduate teaching assistants and supporting stipends proportional to the extent of their WRITE tutoring and mentoring responsibilities.

A principal role of the WRITE Director will consist in the hiring, training, supervision, and coordination of this diverse tutoring staff. Depending on the extent of overlap between the WRITE mentoring program and the University's existing tutoring services, this responsibility and authority may be delegated to the director of the University Writing Center.

- **Course-Embedded Supplemental Writing Support**

Following on the University's successful "embedded librarian" program and other integrated tutoring models, WRITE tutors and mentors – including tutoring staff, graduate teaching assistants, and faculty members – will be

assigned to WRITE courses each semester.

The role of course-embedded tutors will be determined by course instructors within the framework of WRITE guidelines and goals. The tutoring program and resources associated with the course – including tutor office hours, individual appointments, group tutoring sessions, expectations of students, and WRITE learning outcomes – will be described clearly in the course syllabus, and tutors will maintain an active presence in the class.

- **E-portfolio Technology**

Although electronic portfolio technology was a critical component of the QEP from an early stage, its centrality to WRITE's mentoring and student support program is significantly attributable to the model provided by the QEP of Virginia State University (see literature review in Section V), which includes the creation of a "Writing/E-portfolio Studio" that focuses its student support component on a single, central site of visible learning.

Although other computer software, including programs designed to assist with grammar and mechanics, may also prove to be of value to WRITE's goals, the plan's focus on comprehensive writing primarily requires an effective means for tutors to review and critique writing at a more advanced level.

The electronic portfolio provides the flexibility of online communication and, more importantly, allows students to share with tutors their previous work, current writing, and longer-term projects. The portfolio allows a writing tutor or mentor to move beyond isolated questions and assignments to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of a student's writing.

The WRITE electronic portfolio thus serves as a focusing reference point for students and WRITE associates, an efficient means of communication between them, the goal of their collaboration, and the evidence of their achievement.

- **The WRITE Studio**

Through the creation of a genuinely interdisciplinary and interdepartmental WRITE Studio, WRITE follows other successful university writing programs in recognizing the importance of a prominent, accessible, and attractive facility on campus providing a dedicated physical location for WRITE tutoring, workshops, and other activities.

The WRITE Studio will include an office for the WRITE Director, at least 35 individual workstations for students, 35 notebook computers with reliable access to the University's wireless network, and at least 10 stations for face-to-face tutoring. The arrangement of the space should facilitate interpersonal interaction and maximize flexibility for a variety of WRITE activities including workshops.

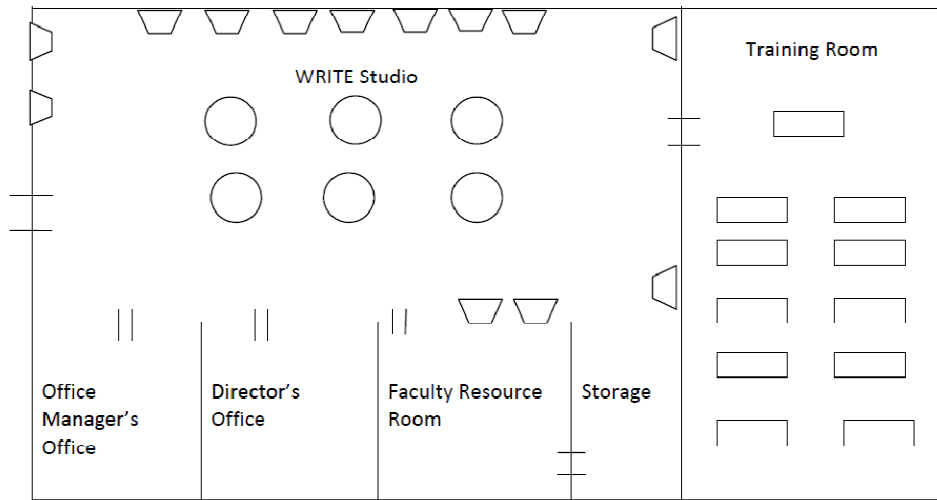
The University will select the location of the WRITE Studio by March 1, 2010, and complete renovation of the space by September 30. The Studio will be



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located in prominent and central area of the campus in order to provide greater visibility and accessibility to students, to clarify the distinctiveness of WRITE as a program focused on sophomore and upper-level course work, and to attest to a campus-commitment to writing as a fundamental part of the life of the University.

The following is an approximate diagram of the design of the Studio, comprising a flexible work area, a technologically equipped classroom for student use and faculty and tutor development (including e-portfolio training), and storage and office space:



In addition to physically locating WRITE's student support component, the concept of the WRITE Studio is intended to reinforce the program's philosophy of writing as a craft and discipline. The appearance and resources of the facility itself as well as its activities should be designed to convey this vision of writing, above all, as the appropriate concern of good students and good writers desiring to achieve excellence.

## VII. Timeline

### Overview

The WRITE timeline is governed by a phased implementation concept in which the program's strategies are applied to first-year students and then extended each year to a higher classification. This provides for gradual and deliberate implementation while also allowing the WRITE assessment plan to follow specific cohorts of students and make comparisons by the fourth year with substantial baseline data gathered during the first three years of the program.

### Pre-Implementation, Spring and Summer 2010

The primary pre-implementation component of WRITE is the selection of participating major programs, which will constitute the principal remaining responsibility of the QEP Development Committee during the spring 2010 semester. The Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, informed by the recommendations of the QEP Development Committee, is responsible for the final identification of participating programs.

Additional pre-implementation activities include the creation of the WRITE Studio, the purchase and preparation of the e-portfolio system, the appointment of a WRITE project director and advisory committee, and preparation of an initial promotional campaign for the beginning of the fall semester. Responsibility for these actions is shared as indicated below.

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Primary Responsibility</b>
February 15	Program application announcement.	QEP Development Committee
March 1	Identification of space for WRITE Studio.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs
March 15	Final selection of e-portfolio system.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs QEP Development Committee
March 31	Submission of preliminary program applications.	Department Heads, Deans, and Directors
April 1-April 15	Review of preliminary applications.	QEP Development Committee
April 1-April 15	Preliminary faculty development for the First-Year Writing Program focusing on the use of the WRITE E-portfolio.	Director of the First-Year Writing Program Faculty Support Center

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April 30	Submission of final program applications.	Department Heads, Deans, and Directors
May 1-May 15	Review of final applications and program selection.	QEP Development Committee  Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs
May 31	Appointment of WRITE Advisory Committee.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs
May 31	Completion of WRITE Director search and appointment.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs  Search Committee
May 31	Completion of WRITE Office Assistant search and appointment.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs  Search Committee
Summer	Renovation and resourcing of WRITE Studio space.	Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs  WRITE Advisory Committee
Summer	Preparation of initial promotional campaign.	WRITE Advisory Committee

**First Year, 2010-2011**

Beginning in August 2010, the WRITE Director, with the support of an office assistant and in consultation with the WRITE Advisory Committee (see Section VIII), will assume primary oversight responsibility for all aspects of the program.

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>
September 30	Completion of renovation and resourcing of WRITE Studio space.
Fall	Initial promotional campaign.
Fall	Continuing faculty development for the First-Year Writing Program focusing on the use of the WRITE E-portfolio.
Fall/Spring	Completion of WRITE website and initial publication of WRITE newsletter.

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Fall/Spring	Recruitment of two additional full-time members of the History faculty to reduce American History Survey class sizes beginning fall 2011.
Fall/Spring	Recruitment of one additional full-time member of the Composition faculty to allow for course-embedded writing support in the American History Survey beginning fall 2011.
Spring	Faculty development for WRITE major programs focusing on developing rubrics which include assessment of the WRITE learning outcomes, outcomes within the discipline, and assignment expectations for the senior capstone course.  Application of rubrics in senior capstone courses of WRITE major programs in order to fine-tune the rubric, achieve appropriate inter-rater reliability, and begin to gather baseline data.
Spring	Initial faculty development for the American History Survey focusing on the WRITE E-Portfolio, development and use of rubrics, use of embedded instructional support, and the WRITE Studio.
Spring	Year-end assessment of program implementation, faculty participation and evaluation, first-year student participation and evaluation, and learning outcomes in the First-Year Writing Program.

**Second Year, 2011-2012**

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>
Fall	Introduction of embedded instructional support for the sophomore American History Survey.
Fall	Continuing faculty development for the sophomore American History Survey including a focus on the transfer of writing skills from the First-Year Writing Program and the use of rubrics for teaching, learning, and assessment.
Fall	Training of graduate teaching assistants and selected undergraduate students (if applicable) to provide mentoring and tutoring for general education WRITE courses.
Fall/Spring	Recruitment of graduate teaching assistants to provide mentoring and tutoring for WRITE major programs beginning in fall 2012.
Fall/Spring	Recruitment of one additional full-time member of the Composition faculty to allow for course-embedded writing support in WRITE upper-level major courses beginning in fall 2012.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing promotional campaign including the WRITE newsletter and website.

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Spring	Continuing faculty development for WRITE major programs including a focus on the transfer of writing skills from general education to the upper level and the use of rubrics for teaching, learning, and assessment.
Spring	Continued application of rubrics in senior capstone courses of WRITE major programs in order to gather baseline data.
Spring	Year-end assessment of program implementation, faculty participation and evaluation, first-year and sophomore student participation and evaluation, and learning outcomes of students in the first and second year of the program.

**Third Year, 2012-2013**

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>
Fall	Expansion of embedded instructional support to WRITE junior-level major courses.
Fall	Continuing faculty development for WRITE major programs including a focus on the transfer of writing skills from general education to the upper level and the use of rubrics for teaching, learning, and assessment.
Fall	Training of graduate teaching assistants and selected undergraduate students (if applicable) to provide mentoring and tutoring for WRITE major programs.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing promotional campaign including the WRITE newsletter and website.
Spring	Continuing faculty development for the American History Survey and WRITE major programs.
Spring	Continued application of rubrics in senior capstone courses of WRITE major programs in order to gather baseline data.
Spring	Year-end assessment of program implementation; faculty participation and evaluation; first-year, sophomore, and junior student participation and evaluation; and learning outcomes of students in the first three years of the program.

**Fourth Year, 2013-2014**

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>
Fall	Expansion of embedded instructional support to WRITE senior-level major courses.
Fall	Continuing faculty development for WRITE major programs including an emphasis on developing and assessing writing in senior capstone courses.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing training of graduate teaching assistants and selected undergraduate students (if applicable) to provide mentoring and tutoring for WRITE major programs.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing promotional campaign including the WRITE newsletter and website.
Fall/Spring	Initial application of rubrics in WRITE senior capstone courses for direct assessment of the program's effectiveness.
Spring	Expansion of WRITE faculty development to other majors. Continuing faculty development for the American History Survey and WRITE major programs.
Spring	Year-end assessment of program implementation, faculty participation and evaluation, student participation and evaluation at all levels, and learning outcomes of students at all stages of the program. Comparison of learning outcomes among WRITE graduates with baseline data gathered during the previous three years.

**Fifth Year, 2014-2015**

<b>Date/Semester</b>	<b>Action</b>
Fall/Spring	Continuation of embedded instructional support in the American History Survey and upper-level courses.
Fall/Spring	Continued expansion of WRITE faculty development to other majors. Continuing faculty development for the American History Survey and WRITE major programs.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing training of graduate teaching assistants and selected undergraduate students (if applicable) to provide mentoring and tutoring for WRITE major programs.
Fall/Spring	Ongoing promotional campaign including the WRITE newsletter and website.

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Fall/Spring	Continued application of rubrics in WRITE senior capstone courses for direct assessment of the program's effectiveness.
Spring	Year-end assessment of program implementation, faculty participation and evaluation, student participation and evaluation at all levels, and learning outcomes of students at all stages of the program. Comparison of learning outcomes among WRITE graduates with baseline data gathered during the previous four years.  Consideration of adaptation and application of WRITE strategies to other general education areas.

## **VIII. Organizational Structure**

### **WRITE Director**

The WRITE Director will be responsible for the direction and oversight of the WRITE program in all of its components, including program administration, faculty development, student support, and assessment.

The Director will be appointed as a tenured or tenure-track member of the University faculty but will be assigned primarily (at least six of fifteen hours of assigned workload per semester) to the administration and implementation of the QEP, in which capacity he or she will report directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

In support of WRITE's broader goal of general education quality and transfer, the WRITE Director's remaining assignment may include leadership in general education curriculum development, teaching, and assessment.

### **WRITE Advisory Committee**

The WRITE Director will be supported in the administration and oversight of the program by an advisory committee including:

- one faculty representative from each of the participating major programs including the Composition and History faculties;
- the Director of the University's Faculty Support Center;
- the Director of the University Writing Center;
- the chair of the University's General Education Committee;
- a computer and information technology advisor primarily responsible for assistance with WRITE's e-portfolio component;
- the Director of the Office of Effectiveness, Quality, and Assessment; and
- the Director of the University Testing Center.



**IX. Resources**

**Funding**

Tennessee State University's Quality Enhancement Plan will be funded through Title III. This federal funding source is earmarked for strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and the QEP is consistent with the provisions and stipulations of the Title III program.

Although appropriations for the upcoming funding cycle have not yet been announced, Tennessee State University has received funding from this source for more than 35 years. Funds for renovating space for the WRITE Studio will be provided from the current years' budget (FFY ending September 30, 2010).

Although the WRITE Director is encouraged to seek additional funding through grants where possible, the program is a primary commitment and securely financed budgetary priority of the University.

Based on the University's particular needs and comparisons with the levels of QEP funding at its peer institutions in recent years, the QEP Development Committee has projected a total QEP budget of approximately \$3,000,000 over the five-year period of its implementation, or an annual budget of approximately \$600,000.

With the exception of the renovation and resourcing of the WRITE Studio, expenses for most of WRITE's components follow its phased implementation and therefore increase each year as an additional cohort of students is added to the program.

**Proposed Budget**

**First Year, 2010-2011**

Salaries and Benefits		
	WRITE Director	\$70,000
	Office Assistant	30,000
	Total	\$100,000
Operational		
	WRITE Studio and Office Renovation, Furnishing, and Equipment	\$700,000
	Faculty Development Program	20,000
	E-portfolio	30,000
	Promotion	5,000
	Total	\$755,000
Annual Total		\$855,000

**Second Year, 2011-2012**

Salaries and Benefits		
	WRITE Director	\$80,000
	Office Assistant	30,000
	Temporary Faculty (2 History Appointments)	180,000
	WRITE Advisors/Associates	50,000
	Total	\$340,000
Operations		
	WRITE Studio and Office Operations	\$50,000
	Faculty Development Program	20,000
	E-portfolio	40,000
	Promotion	5,000
	Total	\$115,000
Annual Total		\$455,000

**Third Year, 2012-2013**

Salaries and Benefits		
	WRITE Director	\$80,000
	Office Assistant	30,000
	Temporary Faculty (2 History; 1 Composition)	240,000
	WRITE Advisors/Associates	100,000
	Total	\$450,000
Operations		
	WRITE Studio and Office Operations	\$50,000
	Faculty Development Program	20,000
	E-portfolio	40,000
	Total	\$110,000
Annual Total		\$560,000

**Fourth Year, 2013-2014**

Salaries and Benefits		
	WRITE Director	\$80,000
	Office Assistant	30,000
	Temporary Faculty (2 History; 1 Composition)	240,000
	WRITE Advisors/Associates	100,000
	Total	\$450,000
Operations		
	WRITE Studio and Office Operations	\$50,000
	Faculty Development Program	20,000
	E-portfolio	50,000
	Total	\$120,000
Annual Total		\$570,000

**Fifth Year, 2014-2015**

Salaries and Benefits		
	WRITE Director	\$80,000
	Office Assistant	30,000
	Faculty	240,000
	WRITE Advisors/Associates	100,000
	Total	\$450,000
Operations		
	WRITE Studio and Office Operations	\$50,000
	Faculty Development Program	20,000
	E-portfolio	60,000
	Total	\$130,000
Annual Total		\$580,000

## X. Assessment

### Overview

As discussed in Section II, the results of over ten years of general education assessment guided WRITE's vision from its earliest stages, and meaningful, outcomes-based assessment is central to its design. The priority of demonstrable improvement of learning over programmatic enhancement informs many of the plan's most important commitments, including the specificity of its learning outcomes, its concentration on specific undergraduate majors, and the use of the WRITE E-portfolio as a focal point connecting its activities.

The WRITE Assessment Plan comprises four interrelated components:

- **summative assessment** of WRITE competencies demonstrated in the senior capstone courses of participating programs;
- **formative assessment** of these competencies in the First-Year Writing Program, the sophomore American History Survey, and upper-division WRITE courses;
- **program quality and effectiveness** documented by implementation of actions outlined in the WRITE timeline (Section VII), results of faculty and student surveys assessing self-efficacy relative to writing instruction and writing skills, and analysis of the use of tutoring and other support resources; and
- **indirect assessment** of WRITE outcomes through the continued review of retention data, results of the testing of graduating seniors, and surveys of employers and alumni.

This combination of assessment approaches is designed to ensure WRITE's transparency and accountability both internally and externally.

### Summative Assessment

Evaluation of WRITE learning outcomes at the end of the senior year represents the program's most direct assessment strategy.

Applying rubrics to senior capstone projects in WRITE major programs, the WRITE Assessment Plan will compare the achievement of learning outcomes by seniors who have completed a WRITE-enhanced curriculum with baseline data from a control group of students at the same level prior to the introduction of WRITE enhancements.

Because graduating seniors will generally not complete a WRITE curriculum until the fourth year of the plan's implementation (see the timeline in Section VII), its first three years will allow the refinement of rubrics and achievement of inter-rater reliability as well as the gathering of baseline data in each participating major for comparison with data from the fourth and fifth years, when the performance of graduates will provide evidence of the extent of WRITE's effectiveness. Data collected in the first two years will be designated as baseline data, and data from the fourth and fifth years will be considered

as evidence of the effectiveness of the WRITE program. Data will also be collected in the third year, but the work submitted at this point in the timeline is likely to be influenced to some degree by the intensive faculty development included in WRITE even though the students in this cohort will not have experienced all four years of participation in WRITE courses.

The rubric currently used in the First-Year Writing Program to evaluate the five WRITE student outcomes specifies three rating levels per outcome. When the five WRITE outcomes are assessed in the sophomore American History Survey course and in the required courses and capstone courses of the WRITE majors, it is expected that the rubrics will specify five rating levels per outcome. With a five point scale for each outcome, ratings of 1 or 2 will reflect a need for continued skill development in the designated element of writing; a rating of 3 will reflect an acceptable level of skill, and ratings of 4 or 5 will indicate the desired levels of performance. A central commitment of WRITE's faculty development plan is achieving consistency in assigning rubric ratings so that reliable measures of students' writing skills can be collected.

For the purpose of summative assessment, the senior projects submitted in the capstone courses will be rated by a minimum of two faculty members and these two or more ratings will be averaged for each student. The skill level of a group of students will be reported as the percentage of students who achieve averaged ratings of 2 or less, the percentage who achieve averaged ratings between 2 and 3.5, and the percentage who achieve averaged ratings of 3.5 to 5.

Strengths of this assessment approach include the comparability of variable and control groups (WRITE and non-WRITE students in the same majors at the same level), its direct reference to WRITE learning outcomes, the simplicity and feasibility of its implementation, and its close integration with other WRITE initiatives. The WRITE E-portfolio and the emphasis on the use of rubrics in its faculty development program specifically support this assessment method, and the plan's budget allows for the compensation of faculty members participating in assessment at this level.

Within this general framework (the comparison of non-WRITE cohorts from years 1-3 with WRITE cohorts from years 4 and 5), the validity and comparability of WRITE's summative assessment data will be further ensured by:

- comparison within – rather than among – participating academic programs for purposes of assessing WRITE's "value added";
- further separation and differentiation of cohorts according to the number of WRITE-enhanced courses completed;
- review of assessments from years 1-3 in years 4 and 5 to ensure inter-rater reliability and consistent evaluation criteria; and
- consideration of program changes and trends external to WRITE that may influence learning outcomes over the five-year review period.

## **Formative Assessment**

While the summative component of the WRITE Assessment Plan is designed for purposes of overall program evaluation and accountability, its formative component is intended primarily to promote and encourage ongoing internal reflection and improvement. Unlike summative assessment data, which will become available only at the end of WRITE's fourth year, formative assessment will begin in the first year of the plan and continually inform the work of the WRITE Director and the WRITE faculty.

Formative assessment of learning outcomes will be based on the application of WRITE rubrics to one designated artifact in each course within the WRITE curriculum – beginning with the First-Year Writing Program in 2010-2011, extending to the sophomore American History Survey in 2011-2012, and including upper-level major courses in 2012-2013 and thereafter. The rubrics will build on assessments already in place in the First-Year Writing Program (see Section VII) as a part of its participation in the General Education Assessment Plan of the Tennessee Board of Regents.

In contrast to summative assessment, which is based on a straightforward comparison between the performance of WRITE and non-WRITE students, formative assessment is designed primarily to measure trends during implementation, to support reflection and improvements at the level of specific courses, and to track the progress of students in the program longitudinally.

Particularly in WRITE's first three years, however, when summative assessment data will not yet be available, comparing the performance of WRITE students in formative assessments with that of prior cohorts may provide important information for the director and the faculty in reflecting and reporting on the early impact of the program. For this purpose, the General Education Assessment Plan already underway can provide useful baseline data for the First-Year Writing Program, and the faculty can make similar pre-implementation assessments for courses at the sophomore, junior, and senior levels.

For example, a vital aspect of faculty development for the American History Survey faculty in the WRITE program will include understanding the rubric rating system and applying the rubric to student work collected in previous semesters. This collection of rated assignments will constitute pre-implementation assessment. Pre-implementation data in the WRITE-major courses will be collected in this way also.

Formative assessment data will be reported for various groups as percentage of students achieving ratings of 2 or less, ratings of 2 to 3.5, and ratings of 3.5 to 5. This group data for each of the five WRITE outcomes for each course will be useful for the course instructor and the faculty member providing embedded writing support as they continue to work in partnership on developing students' writing skills. This formative assessment data for each of the five WRITE outcomes for all of the courses together will be useful for the WRITE Director, faculty who teach in the First-Year Writing Program, tutors and mentors in the WRITE Studio, and faculty who provide course-embedded writing support as they collectively consider ways to strengthen skills in the specific outcomes that prove most challenging for students.

### **Program Quality and Effectiveness Assessment**

As a supplement to its primary emphasis on the direct assessment of student learning, the WRITE Assessment Plan also provides for the careful monitoring of program implementation and the qualitative and quantitative analysis of student and faculty participation. These assessment elements are principally intended to measure and document the WRITE's enhancement of the learning environment at the University and the plan's impact on the dispositions and experiences of the faculty and students.

The implementation of the actions outlined in the WRITE timeline will be documented on an annual basis.

Qualitative assessments will include student surveys regarding the level of preparation and skills students feel they have for addressing the written communication expectations they will encounter in their future careers. These surveys will also ask students to report on their use of WRITE support programs as well as aspects of their course work that did, or did not, contribute to developing their skills as successful writers.

Quantitative indicators of program implementation and impact will include analysis of the use of the WRITE Studio by students and the number of faculty members participating in development opportunities.

All WRITE faculty development activities will include formal evaluation by participants as well as surveys which reflect how knowledgeable and comfortable faculty members feel regarding incorporating written work in the courses they teach.

Additionally, the WRITE Director will review annually evidence of curricular and pedagogical improvements resulting from faculty development, including WRITE course syllabi and other instructional materials. As indicated in Section VI above, participating academic programs are also expected to include the review of this evidence in their annual evaluations of participating faculty members.

### **Indirect Assessment**

While emphasizing direct assessment of a defined set of learning objectives, the WRITE Assessment Plan recognizes the program's larger general educational vision and will continually review data from relevant institutional assessments already in place in evaluating its effectiveness at this level. Toward this end, the WRITE Advisory Committee will include both the Director of the University Testing Center and the Director of the Office of Effectiveness, Quality, and Assessment.

As discussed in Section II above, WRITE developed largely from the results of over ten years of general education assessment – through the testing of both "rising juniors" (now discontinued) and graduating seniors – that demonstrated serious weaknesses in fundamental learning outcomes as measured by multiple-choice tests of general education outcomes. WRITE's priority of assessment through portfolios and rubrics specifically acknowledges the limited usefulness to the faculty of this previous approach to general education assessment, most notably in the separation of this testing from the curriculum and the classroom as the site of learning and in the questionable validity of multiple-choice questions in evaluating authentic student outcomes. Particularly where these tests assess writing, however, the WRITE Assessment Plan will review results as

one measure of the writing abilities of graduating students and the wider impact of WRITE throughout the University.

Tennessee State University is also a participant in the Voluntary System of Accountability and is expected within the next four years to document evidence of student learning in the areas of written expression and critical thinking. There are currently three measures that have been approved for collection of this data. Additionally, Performance Funding, as outlined by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), requires that universities test the general education outcomes of all graduating students as measured by one of several possible tests.

The 2005-2010 Cycle of Performance Funding is concluding, and the guidelines for the next Performance Funding Cycle have not yet been determined. It is highly likely, however, that the next cycle will continue to include a measure of general education outcomes. The University's Assessment Council will determine how the University will document student outcomes for both of these purposes. The WRITE Advisory Committee will insure that the measure selected for these external reports will also be used as an indirect measure of our students' attainment of writing skills. The WRITE Assessment Plan recommends the analysis of this data in terms of WRITE-students and non-WRITE-students and also the number of years in which a student was considered a WRITE-student. The Plan further recommends the establishment of a baseline outcome score for writing on this selected measure during WRITE's first implementation year in 2010-2011. This score will be compared to the outcome score for WRITE-students in the fourth year as a relevant but indirect assessment of the program.

In addition to general education testing, WRITE's indirect assessment component will draw on data from a range of relevant institutional assessments already administered by the Office of Effectiveness, Quality, and Assessment including the analysis of retention patterns (specifically with reference to general education and participating undergraduate programs) and surveys of seniors, alumni, and employers of the University's graduates. These data, although only partially indicative of writing learning outcomes, reflect clearly on WRITE's goals of curriculum integration, reflective learning, and career preparation.

### **Program Review and Reporting**

Based on the assessment strategies detailed above, the WRITE Director, with the support of the WRITE Advisory Committee, will be responsible for reporting at the end of each academic year to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate on the progress and effectiveness of the program, with a complete self-study and external review conducted during the third year. A second complete self-study will follow in the fifth year as a part of the preparation of the QEP Impact Report submitted to the SACS-COC at the conclusion of WRITE's initial implementation in 2015.



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QEP Development Committee  
Tennessee State University

Committee Charge

The QEP Development Committee is charged to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Tennessee State University which develops the topic: Building on a Culture of Achievement: Transfer and Reinforcement of General Education Competencies in Upper Level Coursework. The Committee should use the prospectus by the same title as the beginning point of exploration of the topic but should adequately narrow and focus the topic. The Committee should examine the University's general education competencies (see <http://www.tnstate.edu/interior.asp?mid=1636&ptid=1>) and recommend a focus on a single competency or set of competencies that is manageable, assessable, and significant to student achievement and preparation for the world of work.

The QEP should be developed consistent with the requirements of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). To that end, the Committee should consult the following SACS documents:

- *The Quality Enhancement Plan:*  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/QEP%20Handbook.pdf>
- *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement:*  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf>
- *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation:*  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/handbooks/Exhibit%2027.ReaffirmationOfAccreditation.pdf>
- *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/handbooks/Exhibit%2031.Resource%20Manual.pdf>

The Committee, in consultation with the Accreditation Liaison, Dr. Timothy Quain, should develop a strategy and a calendar for completing the QEP no later than October 1, 2009. The calendar should include periodic review by the Accreditation Liaison and by the campus SACS Leadership Team. It should also provide for significant opportunities for input and review by campus constituents, including students, faculty, alumni, and the larger community.

In consultation with the Accreditation Liaison and the University's Marketing Office, the Committee should identify a theme and logo or slogan that can be used to publicize the QEP and to ensure that campus constituents are aware of the QEP as a major University endeavor for the ensuing five to ten years.

The Committee should recommend an organizational structure for implementation of the QEP and an administrative location for the QEP to ensure successful implementation and continuation of the program represented by the Plan.

## Tennessee State University QEP Development Survey

Tennessee State University's five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for 2010-2015 will focus on writing in sophomore, junior, and senior-level courses as students build on skills developed in freshman composition toward the real-world expectations of their academic majors and careers.

Because of this emphasis on advanced writing in authentic professional contexts, the QEP Development Committee has developed the survey below in an effort to determine the writing goals, challenges, and needs in each of the university's departments and programs.

Please respond at your convenience to the questions below by typing and/or cutting and pasting directly into the spaces provided. Feel free to include any and as much information as you believe could be helpful in focusing the QEP on your program's specific goals and needs.

A detailed presentation of the QEP's development to date and a discussion forum for feedback and input from students, faculty, and other members of the university community is available at the website: [www.tnstate.edu/qep](http://www.tnstate.edu/qep).

Please return the completed survey by **March 31** to:

Joel Dark  
QEP Development Chair  
Email: [jdark@tnstate.edu](mailto:jdark@tnstate.edu)  
Fax: 963-5497

### **Program/Department Name:**

- 1. To what extent is writing ability currently a stated learning goal in your department or program? If you have a published list of program learning outcomes or degree competencies, please include them here. (Feel free to cut and paste as necessary.)**

2. **What courses in your upper-level curriculum most directly develop and assess writing ability? If you were able to obtain QEP support for faculty and students in two or three writing-focused courses at the junior and senior levels, which would you include? Please list.**
  
3. **What types of writing are your students (in their major) and graduates (in their careers) most likely to be involved in? To what extent do the five learning outcomes proposed for the QEP (see website or the list below) apply to this kind of writing? To what extent would they need to be modified or expanded to meet the specific needs of your graduates?**
  
4. **How satisfied are you and other faculty members in your program with the writing quality of your students and graduates? What do you regard as their greatest deficiencies or needs in this area?**
  
5. **Do you currently have any direct or indirect assessments in place that specifically address writing quality? (Direct writing assessments might include data from senior exams, capstone projects, or portfolio assessments. Examples of indirect assessments include surveys of students or employers.)**

- 6. What aspects of the QEP as currently proposed are of greatest (or least) potential benefit to your department or program? What improvements or changes to the plan could help it better serve your needs?**



**QEP Learning Outcomes (for reference in responding to the questions above)**

- I. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.
- II. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.
- III. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition) in response to their specific rhetorical situation.
- IV. Students are able to employ standard diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
- V. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.

### **Tennessee State University Analysis of MAPP Results 2005-2008**

This analysis is based on test results for 2,463 seniors who took the Academic Profile/Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) during the following academic years: 2005-2006 (N=873); 2006-2007 (N=822); and 2007-2008 (N=768) as a Senior Exit Exam. The national normative data cited is from the test publisher, Educational Testing Service, and it is based on test results of seniors from January 2003 through July 2007 at 21 Doctoral/Research Universities I and II.

The **Total Score** on the MAPP ranges from 400 to 500. The national normative data indicates that the mean of the institutional mean Total Scores was 450.83 and the mean for the individual students' Total Score was 449.1. The mean Total Score for TSU 05-06 seniors was 438.55, with a standard deviation of 17.21 For the 06-07 academic year the institutional mean Total Score was 436.09 and for 07-08 it was 434.0. These comparisons suggest that the scores for the graduating seniors at Tennessee State University are significantly below the national average for seniors at Doctoral/Research Universities.

The mean **Skills Subscores** for the TSU seniors are indicated below for each of the three academic years. Skill Subscores range from 100 to 130.

- Critical Thinking—109.10; 109.96; 109.57
- Reading—117.28; 116.25; 115.07
- Writing—113.82; 112.92; 112.43
- Mathematics—111.53; 110.44; 110.15

For each skill there is minimal variation from year to year. Although there is variation between these mean skill scores, this apparent variation does not represent relative skill strengths or weaknesses for TSU students because this same pattern of relatively higher and lower scores was also reflected in the national comparison data. The data for all Doctoral/Research Universities indicate that the mean for Reading was the highest score, 120.10, the mean for Critical Thinking was the lowest score, 112.90, and the mean scores for Writing and Mathematics were in between and statistically comparable with 115.63 for Writing and 115.48 for Mathematics. When the TSU mean Skills Subscores are compared to these national institutional mean scores, the TSU seniors as a group demonstrated skills that are significantly below average. The TSU graduating seniors scored relatively closer to the national means in Writing and Critical Thinking and farthest below the national mean in Reading. It is unlikely that the variation in the mean Skills Subscores represent actual strengths or weaknesses in skill development in the instructional areas of reading, writing, mathematics or critical thinking.

The **Proficiency Classifications** provide additional analysis of students' skills in **Reading, Critical Thinking, Writing, and Mathematics**. For this analysis the comparisons will focus only on the 07-08 seniors because the above data suggests that there is considerable consistency in skill outcomes across 05-06, 06-07, and 07-08. On **Reading** Level I, the 07-08 group of TSU seniors demonstrated that 49% were Proficient, 25% were Marginally Proficient, and 26% were Not Proficient. The Proficiency levels for all Doctoral/Research Universities were 74%, 16%, and 10% respectively. It is clear that some seniors across all Doctoral/Research Universities fail to demonstrate proficiency on Level 1 Reading skills, however, it is also clear that a higher proportion of TSU seniors do not demonstrate these basic Reading skills on the MAPP. This pattern is also seen when the Level 2 Reading skills are compared to the national data. The proportion of TSU seniors who were Proficient on Level 2 Reading was 20%, an additional 18% were Marginally Proficient and 62% were Not Proficient. The national comparison data was distributed as follows: 43% Proficient; 22% Marginally Proficient; and 36% Not Proficient. On the MAPP, the highest level of Reading is designated as Critical Thinking to encompass both the reading and reasoning skills needed to be proficient in this skill dimension. National data indicates that relatively few students, only 7%, are classified as Proficient. For the TSU seniors 3% achieved this classification. Nationally 18% are classified as Marginally Proficient in Critical Thinking and of the TSU seniors 7% were in this category. Nationally 75% of seniors at Doctoral/Research Universities were Not Proficient while this was true of 90% of TSU seniors.

In the skill of **Writing** it is also evident that significant numbers of TSU seniors are able to demonstrate proficiency but fewer students reach this classification than the national data indicates is average for TSU's Carnegie category. For Writing Level 1, 46% of TSU seniors achieved Proficiency, 32% achieved Marginally Proficient, and 23% performed in the Not Proficient range. The national comparison group was distributed as follows: 72% Proficient; 21% Marginally Proficient; and 7% Not Proficient. For Writing Level 2, 12% of TSU students were Proficient, 27% were Marginally Proficient, and 61% were Not Proficient. For the national comparison group, 23% were Proficient, 40% were Marginally Proficient, and 37% were Not Proficient. For the TSU seniors and for the national sample of seniors, fewer students were Proficient for Level 3 Writing, 4% at TSU and 10% nationally. For Level 3 Writing, 17% of TSU seniors were Marginally Proficient and 32% of the national sample were within this skill range. The majority of seniors were classified as Not Proficient in Level 3 Writing Abilities, 57% nationally and 79% at TSU.

Close to half of the 07-08 TSU seniors were able to achieve Proficiency in Level 1 Reading and Level 1 Writing. This was not true however for Level 1 **Mathematics** where 32% of graduating seniors were classified as Proficient. The national comparison data indicates that 61% of seniors achieved Proficiency in this level of math skills. Of the TSU seniors 28% demonstrated Marginally Proficient skills while

fewer students, 24%, were in this category nationally. Of TSU seniors, 40% were Not Proficient and nationally 15% were Not Proficient in Level 1 Mathematics. On Level 2 Mathematics skills, the national comparison group was fairly evenly distributed with 34% Proficient, 28% Marginally Proficient, and 38% Not Proficient. For TSU seniors, the majority was Not Proficient in Level 2 Mathematics with 68% falling into this designation. At this same level of Mathematics, 17% of TSU seniors were Marginally Proficient and 15% were Proficient. For Level 3 Mathematics the majority of seniors at TSU and nationally were classified as Not Proficient, 70% nationally and 89% at TSU. Nationally 20% were Marginally Proficient and at TSU 9% achieved at this level. Nationally only 10% of the graduating seniors were Proficient at Level 3 Mathematics skills and for TSU seniors 2% were Proficient.

The MAPP also generates Context-Based Subscores in **Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences** which range from 100 to 130. For the TSU seniors the mean scores in these areas for the three graduating classes were as follows:

Humanities—113.63; 113.61; 112.72

Social Sciences—112.18; 112.45; 111.76

Natural Sciences—113.28; 113.30; 112.95

When compared to the means and standard deviations for the national sample, TSU students were below average in all three Context-Based Subscores. The mean scores (and standard deviations) for the national comparison group were as follows:

Humanities—116.47 (1.78); Social Sciences—115.00 (1.77); and Natural Sciences—116.31 (1.91).

### **Analysis and Planning**

This analysis of the results of 2,463 seniors on the Senior Exit Exam from the 05-06, 06-07, and 07-08 academic years indicates that considerable efforts need to be made to improve the general education outcome scores for TSU's graduating students. The Academic Profile, and its successor, the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP), are a reasonable match for the general education curriculum as outlined by TSU and TBR. The MAPP tends to weight the Communications general education outcome quite heavily because 50% of the test questions evaluate reading and writing skills and this could be considered disproportionate to the requirement of nine credit hours in the Communication strand of the General Education Core. On the other hand, the History strand of the General Education Core, which requires six credit hours, tends to be under-represented on the MAPP where it is grouped along with economics, political science, psychology, anthropology and sociology under the Social Sciences Context-Based Subscore with approximately 33% of the test questions spread across all of these disciplines.

During the 2005-2006 academic year efforts were made to help the faculty understand this outcome measure and its implications for TSU students and for the institution.

- The General Education Committee reviewed the Academic Profile/MAPP and the results of TSU students.
- The faculty who teach English 1010 and 1020 reviewed the Academic Profile/MAPP and had several meetings to discuss possible actions they could take that might have a positive effect on students' scores on this measure; these discussions are ongoing at this time.
- The Dean and Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences met with key Department Heads to review the results of the Academic Profile/MAPP and other outcome measures and consider ways to increase students' motivation as well as students' skill levels relative to the MAPP and Major Fields Tests.

During the 2006-2007 academic year efforts were made to address student motivation as well as ways faculty could better prepare students for tests that measure academic outcomes.

- The issue of motivating students to give reasonable effort when they take the MAPP was addressed primarily through academic departments. Several departments developed plans to address student motivation when taking this outcome measure and specific test sessions were scheduled during the Fall 2006 semester for their prospective graduates that utilized the online version of MAPP and provided immediate score feedback to students and their departments. Unfortunately, these efforts to increase student motivation when taking the Senior Exit Exam did not result in higher scores.
- A faculty development session on writing context-dependent item sets and other test questions/items that require higher level thinking skills was conducted on campus by staff from the Higher Education Assessment unit of ETS. This training was intended to support faculty members in developing more meaningful course exams.

To expand assessment beyond the single end-of-degree test, the Tennessee Board of Regents has mandated course embedded assessment in general education core areas. The course embedded assessment is being piloted this year in Freshman Composition, ENGL 1020. This assessment can serve to measure student ability to master General Education Competencies and may be more revealing about students' ability to master General Education Learning Outcomes than the standardized test.

Furthermore, the University has selected a Quality Enhancement Plan prospectus that seeks to reinforce General Education skills. This initiative and the course

embedded assessment have the potential to strengthen student ability in the core course competencies, but also could provide a more effective means of assessment.

# **Tennessee State University**

## **College of Arts and Sciences**

### **Department of Languages, Literature and Philosophy**

#### **General Education Writing Assessment Proposal**

##### **ENGL 1020- Freshman English II**

Course Embedded General Education Assessment  
Freshman Composition

**Purpose of Program Assessment**

The Course Embedded General Education Assessment Plan for Freshman Composition (hereafter referred to as the Plan) provides a sound mechanism for reviewing curriculum, instruction, and internal assessment for the purpose of programmatic improvement. The Plan identifies desired student competencies and utilizes both quantitative and qualitative student outcome measures to assess the extent to which students achieve these competencies. The Plan is intended to meet the general education assessment requirements set out by the Tennessee Board of Regents. In addition, it is intended to assist the University in meeting the Institutional Effectiveness Requirement of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

**Components of the Plan**

The Plan utilizes the following documents and protocols

TBR Learning Outcomes for General Education (Composition): These outcomes have been established by a committee appointed by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) central office staff. They are listed in Appendix A.

General Education Curriculum: The curriculum consists of two courses: ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020. The descriptions for these courses appear in the Undergraduate Catalog. They are consistent with the requirements for Freshman Composition established by the Tennessee Board of Regents and are certified by the General Education Committee of Tennessee State University (TSU) as meeting the general education objectives of TSU and TBR.

Freshman Composition Rating Sheet: This instrument is a spreadsheet used by faculty to rate each student's mastery of the general education objectives as reflected in a common assessment administered at the end of ENGL 1020.

College of Arts and Sciences General Education Course Embedded Assessment Reporting Form: This form is used to report aggregate data for each section of ENGL 1020.

Instructor's Report: This narrative report from the instructor briefly explains why the instructor believes the students performed as they did on the assessment and explains what actions the instructor will take to improve student mastery of the objectives in future



sections of the class. The instructor may also provide suggestions about factors outside his/her control which can be changed to improve student mastery.

Minutes of Composition Committee and Departmental Faculty Meetings: The minutes of these meetings provide evidence of the use of assessment results. They reflect the discussions of the two bodies related to assessment results, the recommendations for program improvement made by the Composition Committee based upon the assessment results, and the actions of the faculty following discussion and recommendations.

### **Methodology**

The following methodology utilizes the components described above.

1. By the beginning of each spring semester, the Composition Committee will construct a common writing assignment to be administered in all ENGL 1020 classes at the end of the semester. The assignment must require students to demonstrate mastery of all of the general education objectives for freshman composition as stated in Appendix A.
2. During the scheduled final examination each faculty member teaching ENGL1020 will administer the common writing assessment. It is up to the individual instructor whether or not the results of the assessment will be used in computing the students' course grades.
3. The instructor will complete the Freshman Composition Rating Sheet for each section of ENGL 1020, utilizing the rating criteria provided in Appendix B.
4. Using the results from the Freshman Composition Rating Sheet, the instructor will complete a College of Arts and Sciences General Education Course Embedded Assessment Reporting Form for each section of ENGL 1020.
5. The Instructor will write a narrative report providing his/her reflections on the assessment results for his/her sections of ENGL 1020, as described in Appendix C.
6. The Instructor will submit the Freshman Composition Rating Sheet and College of Arts and Sciences General Education Course Embedded Assessment Reporting Form for each section of ENGL 1020 along with his/her narrative report to the Department Head by the end of the week following commencement.
7. Each fall semester, the Composition Committee will review the assessment forms and reports from the previous spring semester and will formulate recommendations for program improvement based upon its review of the assessment results.

8. The Composition Committee will present its written recommendations, including all documentation and sources and the Committee's rationale for the recommendations, to the Department Head before mid-term break each fall semester.
9. The Department Head will forward the Committee's recommendations to the department faculty no later than the third week following mid-term break.
10. The Department Head will ensure that the Committee's recommendations appear on a department faculty meeting no later than the beginning of the ensuing spring semester.
11. Minutes of the Composition Committee meetings and of the Department Faculty meetings will be maintained electronically in the Department Office.

#### Justification

The Plan calls for each individual instructor to evaluate papers from her/his own 1020 classes. This process is valid because composition faculty members are required to attend regular "grade-ins." These are sessions in which faculty members are provided with 2-4 of the same student papers generated in response to a single assignment. Faculty members grade each paper using the common grading criteria included on the common syllabi for ENGL 1010 and 1020. Faculty members then meet to discuss their responses to these papers and arrive at consensus on grades for the papers. This session allows composition faculty to recalibrate their grading approach so that individual grading remains consistent across ENGL 1010 and 1020 offerings.

#### Implementation

The Plan will be piloted by select faculty members for spring 2008 (see Appendix F for the initial common assignment). This pilot process is necessary because faculty members already have course syllabi and schedules in place including final exams and/or assignments. The data collected from the pilot will be used to fine tune the plan in fall 2008 in preparation for full implementation in all sections of ENGL 1020 for spring 2009.

#### Reporting of Assessment

The General Education Course Embedded Assessment (Appendix E) will be used to report the assessment of the course key competencies. A report for each section, which will include the combined data for all sections of ENGL 1020, will be completed. This data will be evaluated by the English general education committee, with input from the Department Head. From these findings, improvement strategies will be recommended

Appendix A

TBR General Education Learning Outcomes for Freshman Composition

- I. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.
- II. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.
- III. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g. narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition) in response to their specific rhetorical situation.
- IV. Students are able to employ standard diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
- V. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.

Appendix B

Criteria for Rating Student Mastery of General Education Learning Outcomes for  
Freshman Composition

- I. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.
  2. Exceeds minimum mastery: contains a clear thesis statement
  1. Exhibits minimal mastery: contains a thesis statement which is unclear or inadequately focused
  0. Does not exhibit mastery: does not contain a thesis statement
  
- II. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.
  2. Exceeds minimum mastery: clear organization, consistently executed
  1. Exhibits minimal mastery: clear organization, inconsistently executed
  0. Does not exhibit mastery: no clear organization
  
- III. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns in response to their specific rhetorical situation.
  2. Exceeds minimum mastery: evident and appropriate pattern, consistently executed
  1. Exhibits minimal mastery: evident pattern inconsistently executed or shifts patterns throughout the essay
  0. Does not exhibit mastery: no clear pattern exhibited or inappropriate pattern used
  
- IV. Students are able to employ standard diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
  2. Exceeds minimum mastery: few if any errors, none of which detract from the overall quality of the paper
  1. Exhibits minimal mastery: a few errors which detract from the overall quality of the paper
  0. Does not exhibit mastery: a pattern of errors which detract from the overall quality of the paper
  
- V. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources
  2. Exceeds minimum mastery: use of source material clearly supports the thesis, consistently adequate documentation
  1. Exhibits minimal mastery: use of source materials does not consistently support the thesis, inconsistently adequate documentation
  0. Does not exhibit mastery: use of source materials does not support the thesis and/or inadequate documentation

## Appendix C

### The Instructor's Narrative

The Instructor's Narrative is a brief report which provides the instructor's reflections on the results of the assessment. After reviewing the Freshman Composition Rating Sheet and College of Arts and Sciences General Education Course Embedded Assessment Reporting Form for each section of ENGL 1020 which the instructor has taught, the instructor should attempt to answer these questions:

- Why do you think the students in your classes performed as they did?
- Which of these circumstances can I affect? Which require Departmental, College, or University intervention?
- What actions can I take to improve student performance in ENGL 1020?
- What actions need to be taken by the Department, the College, or the University?

Appendix D

The Freshman Composition Rating Sheet and Instructions

STUDENT NAME	I	II	III	IV	V

Each instructor will use this Excel Spreadsheet form into which each class list will be copied. A dropdown menu (0, 1, or 2) will be available for each of the five characteristics the common assignment will be assessed upon for each student. The spreadsheet form will be constructed to average and total each item per class, and then the aggregated data for all ENGL 1020 sections will be evaluated.

Appendix E

The College of Arts and Sciences  
 General Education Course Embedded Assessment Reporting Form and Instructions

Course Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Course # \_\_\_\_\_ Section# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instructor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Enrollment \_\_\_\_\_ Term \_\_\_\_\_

A. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Number and Percentage of Students Exceeding minimum mastery of objective</i>	<i>Number and Percentage of Students minimally mastering objective</i>	<i>Number and Percentage of Students Failing to master objective</i>
1.	num/%	num/%	num/%
2.	num/%	num/%	num/%
3.	num/%	num/%	num/%
4.	num/%	num/%	num/%
5.	num/%	num/%	num/%

- B. STUDENT WORK EXAMINED—List the tasks to measure each objective (e.g. examinations and quizzes, research projects/paper assignments, oral presentations, or other class assignments) and attach a copy of each.
- C. SCORING CRITERIA— Briefly explain the criteria used to evaluate student mastery of each objective (i.e. what constitutes Exceeding Minimum Mastery of Objective, Minimally Mastering Objective, and Failing to Master Objective). Attach a copy of rubric specifications for the assessment of student performance on each objective.
- D. Briefly explain why you think students performed as they did in this course. What actions will you take to improve student performance in the course? What other actions, outside of your control, should be taken to improve student performance in the course?
- E. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT—Briefly explain what might be done to improve the course-embedded assessment process toward the end of improving student performance. What ideas do you have for possible revisions of listed student learning outcomes?

## Appendix F

English 1020 at Tennessee State University

Common Assessment Assignment: "The New Digital Landscape: What Is Its Value?"

**To be completed during the final exam period.**

**Reading Assignment:** Part V of *A Meeting of Minds*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., contains Casebook 5 "Are We Too Plugged In?" which presents several discussions of the impact of digital technology and media on how we live, think, and interact in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century United States. Read the following sections from these texts:

Andrew Freeman's "The Electronic Addiction," paragraphs 5-8 (493-94);

Andrew Sullivan's "Society Is Dead, We Have Retreated into the iWorld," paragraphs 12-16 (501); and

Sherry Turkle's "Virtuality and Its Discontents: Searching for Community in Cyberspace," paragraphs 52-53 (510-11).

**Rhetorical Situation:** All of the excerpted articles listed above have been cited by Luddite University's administration to argue that the devices that deliver these media are disruptive to the education experience and the University community. To that end, the administration has banned all such devices from the classroom. Your assignment is to write a persuasive and analytic academic argument response essay to the University administration. You must include specific reference to and citation of all **three** of the readings assigned. You will need to tailor and focus your argument specifically: What is your response to the University administration's decision? Explain your reasoning. What are the possibilities that you see these technologies presenting for education, community awareness, and social participation?

This well-organized, academic essay should demonstrate your ability to create a specific, focused thesis and speak specifically to your audience. The essay should also exemplify your use of standard English and MLA documentation.

**Process:** After reading the assigned excerpts, begin by spending a few minutes outlining your essay and its argument. Draft your essay (leaving room to revise). Leave time at the end of the period to proofread and edit your paper. You will have the full exam period in which to complete and submit your final essay.