



## **Tennessee State University's Quality Enhancement Plan**

### **What is a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)?**

A QEP is a university's plan to focus on one aspect of student learning in some special way for a period of five to ten years with the intent of enhancing students' educational achievement. It grows out of a university's history of assessment outcomes. The QEP is a relatively new requirement in the process for reaffirmation of institutional accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

### **What is the topic of TSU's QEP?**

Tennessee State University has chosen to focus on the transfer and reinforcement of writing skills from the general education courses throughout the upper level curricula.

### **How and why was this topic chosen?**

The topic was chosen based on extensive faculty input as well as review and input from academic administrators and the University's leadership team. Faculty looked at various assessment outcomes and prioritized potential topics based on the needs of their students.

While there were several worthy topics, faculty overwhelmingly recognized the importance of strong written communication skills to academic and career success.

### **So, what exactly is WRITE?**

WRITE is a program that provides a broad range of support for students, faculty, and programs to enhance and refine writing competency throughout the upper level curriculum.

In the general education core, ENGL 1010 and 1020 will continue to focus on development of writing competence but will also introduce students to an online portfolio.

HIST 2010, 2020, and 2030 will be taken after ENGL 1020 and will be enhanced to continue reinforcing writing skills.

Upper-level programs that choose to participate in the program will continue to reinforce writing competency in specifically sequenced junior and senior level courses, including capstone or senior project courses.

From the first-year writing course to the senior project, students will develop their on-line portfolios of writing projects to trace the development of their writing competency and to demonstrate that competency for prospective employers or potential graduate schools.

### **What is the benefit of WRITE for students?**

Students will develop not just the required, minimum level of competency in writing, but a level of competency in writing specific to their disciplines and vocations. In addition to the emphasis on writing throughout their upper level curricula, students will take advantage of the WRITE Studio, where they can talk about their writing with faculty and trained graduate assistant mentors.

A prospective employer or graduate school usually gains a first look at a graduate from the written word. In the professional and academic worlds, judgments about intelligence, overall competence, astuteness, and analytic capabilities are often made based upon a piece of writing one has generated. TSU students who complete the WRITE program will enter their futures with a strong advantage in terms of significant writing samples and enhanced writing skills.

### **What is the benefit of WRITE for faculty and academic departments?**

Faculty will be given the opportunity to participate in workshops and other activities focusing on how to construct good writing assignments, how to support students' writing initiatives, and how to assess students' writing. In programs with graduate components, they will be given the opportunity to select graduate assistants in their disciplines to participate in the same or similar workshops. These graduate assistants will then be able to assist students with their writing projects and faculty in assessing the writing projects.

### **When does the WRITE program start?**

First-year students entering TSU in fall 2010 will be the pilot WRITE class. The Plan must be approved by SACS before it is fully implemented.

### **How does an academic department become involved?**

Undergraduate degree programs wishing to apply for designation as WRITE programs should 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 to the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs by April 30, 2010

Upper level classes that are a part of the WRITE program will not be implemented until the fall 2010 freshmen become juniors. In the meantime, faculty will receive support to redesign their course assignments and develop rubrics for assessing students' writing within their disciplines.

**What happens after the five-year period of the QEP?**

The QEP will undergo assessment from beginning to end. If the results are as positive as the faculty hope, the project could be expanded to other general education competencies, including oral communication, computation, and competencies in the arts, natural sciences, and social sciences.

**What role can I play even if I am not a part of an academic discipline?**

First, be knowledgeable about WRITE so that you can help to send a positive message to prospective students and employers, to the community and alumni, and to current students and faculty. Then, let everyone know that Tennessee State University provides the WRITE education!

**Where can I get more information?**

The complete QEP is available on the TSU home page. Go to [www.tnstate.edu/qep](http://www.tnstate.edu/qep).