Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at the University of Virginia

Creating a Culture of Writing

Year 1 Report
Academic Year 2017 – 2018
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Dear Faculty, Students, and Staff

The purpose of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to enhance the culture of writing at the University of Virginia, through increased pedagogical support for faculty and students with respect to writing instruction, a wider range of inquiry-based writing opportunities for students, and adequate infrastructure to support writing instruction.

The first year of implementation established the institution-wide foundation for this work. Our main activities focused on collecting baseline data from faculty members and undergraduate students. For the faculty, the focus was on their perceptions of and engagement in the teaching of writing. For students, the focus was on their experiences in writing in their academic activities at the University. This data is critical for understanding the current strengths and challenges we have across the institution and helping us articulate how our efforts will change the culture of writing at the University.

We were also successful in hiring a Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) who will work with me, the QEP Oversight Committee, and others across Grounds in enhancing the culture of writing.

I want to thank John T. Casteen III, University Professor and Professor of English and former University of Virginia president, who served as Interim Director of Writing Across the Curriculum during our first year. John provided concrete leadership and direction on the institution wide undertakings and counsel on these matters to the Provost and myself. He drew on his deep knowledge of the University to build on the work of the QEP Design Committee and to lay a critical foundation for the incoming Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) to accomplish key outcomes and the overall goal consistent with the QEP time frame.

Archie Holmes
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Chair of the QEP Oversight Committee
QEP Oversight Committee
2017-2018 Academic Year

Archie Holmes, Provost’s Office and Chair
Umar Arshad, Student Council
Matt Banfield, Provost’s Office
Sydney Bradley, Student Council
John Casteen, University President Emeritus and the College
Sarah Corse, the College of Arts & Sciences
Sheila Crane, School of Architecture
Ashley Hurst, School of Nursing
Amanda Kibler, Curry School of Education & Human Development
Alison Levine, the College of Arts & Sciences
Steven Levine, School of Continuing and Professional Studies
Christina Morell, Institutional Assessment and Studies
Lois Myers, Institutional Assessment and Studies
Kathryn Neeley, School of Engineering and Applied Science
Rob Patterson, McIntire School of Commerce
Andy Pennock, Frank Batten School of Leadership & Public Policy
Jim Seitz, Academic and Professional Writing Program and the College of Arts & Sciences
Adriana Streifer, Center for Teaching Excellence
Phil Trella, Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
Siva Vaidhyanathan, the College of Arts & Sciences
Summary of the QEP

The University of Virginia’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is designed to advance writing across the undergraduate curriculum. Consistent with the University’s strategic vision for promoting educational experiences that deliver new levels of student engagement and cross-disciplinary work, the QEP will extend the range of writing opportunities for students and enhance pedagogical support for faculty so that students will develop more significantly as writers, and faculty will be better positioned to promote an academic culture that values writing across disciplines. The QEP has been structured so that faculty from diverse disciplines teach writing regularly, hold high standards for written work, and engage in well-informed practices to help students meet those standards. Ultimately, these efforts should culminate in an institution that demonstrably values and celebrates writing as being fundamental to its mission.

Selected in consultation with faculty and administrators from the eight schools serving undergraduates, Creating a Culture of Writing responds to campus-wide assessments of writing in 2009 and 2015, which revealed that students were largely competent but that only a small percentage displayed the advanced aptitude desired from graduating students. For example, the 2015 assessment found that 99 percent of fourth-year students were competent writers but that only 27 percent were highly proficient. The QEP also responds to widespread recognition that students have not been required to write enough in the current curriculum: one third of first-year students in the College of Arts and Sciences (the College) test out of the First Writing Requirement and many of the Second Writing Requirement courses in the College do not provide sufficient writing instruction. Furthermore, the QEP leverages recent efforts to enhance faculty development in writing instruction and the benefits of engaging faculty from different disciplines in this objective. Building on a new universal first-year writing requirement that will begin in the College in fall 2017, the QEP consists of three major interrelated endeavors: faculty preparation, curriculum, and infrastructure support.

The QEP assessment plan, which focuses on faculty and student learning outcomes and on program implementation outcomes, provides direction to guide the ongoing implementation of the multiple initiatives and to document progress and achievements throughout the five years. Descriptive, indirect, direct, and qualitative assessments will be completed during the course of the QEP. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will manage implementation, supported by the QEP Oversight Committee, and in partnership with the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies (IAS), the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and the deans’ offices of the undergraduate schools.
Major Activities and Achievements

The major QEP activities and achievements of the past year (AY 17-18) are divided into three major categories: faculty and student pedagogical support, student learning outcomes, and organization of the QEP.

Faculty and Student Pedagogical Support

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum: All initiatives of the QEP address the tenets of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)—that students’ writing ability is continually developed, that writing promotes learning, and that, as each discipline has its own unique language conventions, students in those disciplines can best learn to write by practicing those discipline-specific writing conventions. The initiatives are also informed by best practice research that provides insight into how to advance Writing Across the Curriculum to promote a culture of writing, including both student and faculty interventions.

A central role in this endeavor is a Director to develop Writing across the Curriculum at UVA. The Director will engage with academic program faculty across Grounds to generate models of writing instruction and course curricula tailored to disciplinary conventions. The Director will work closely with other faculty in the Academic and Professional Writing Program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Director of Writing Across the Curriculum job was posted on November 10, 2017 (see Appendix A for job posting). In early 2018, a search committee began reviewing applications and selected ten candidates to participate in virtual interviews. Following the virtual interview round, the search committee selected four candidates to move to an in-person interview round. During late February 2018, the four finalist candidates were invited to Grounds to give job talks, meet with members of the UVA community, and discuss the QEP with members of the Committee.

During the spring of 2018, an offer for the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum position was extended to T. Kenny Fountain, who accepted the offer and began at UVA over the summer of 2018. Fountain has joined the University as Associate Professor in the Department of English and as Director of Writing Across the Curriculum. A scholar of rhetoric and scientific communication, Fountain is the author of *Rhetoric in the Flesh: Trained Vision, Technical Expertise, and the Gross Anatomy Lab* (Routledge, 2014). He has previously served as the Director of the Writing Program at Case Western Reserve University and held other writing program administration positions at Yeshiva College and Bilkent University.
Faculty Seminar in the Teaching of Writing: The Academic and Professional Writing Program oversees an annual, week-long seminar in May for up to 20 faculty, from any school or department, who wish to improve their writing instruction, writing assignments, and response to their students’ written work. The seminar addresses the following topics:

- Writing as critical inquiry
- Evaluating and responding to student writing
- Designing a writing-intensive course in one’s discipline
- Scaffolding assignments
- Alternatives to conventional writing assignments
- Managing the paper load
- Writing Center tutorials and how to make use of them
- Issues of grammar and style
- In-class writing activities
- How to use peer review

On the final day of the seminar, each faculty member gives a presentation on his or her pedagogical project, be it writing-intensive course design, writing assignments, responding to student writing, or other forms of writing instruction. In this way, the seminar pursues a learner-centered model of pedagogical education.

Sixteen faculty members enrolled in the May 2018 Faculty Seminar in the Teaching of Writing. The seminar is a four-day seminar offered the week after graduation each May to faculty members from across schools and disciplines that teach undergraduates at UVA. Up to twenty participants are chosen each year to attend the seminar, which is designed to assist faculty in developing effective writing instruction in any subject. Faculty members selected for the seminar each receive a $2,000 research and course development fund with an additional $1,000 available to those who share the new course materials and participate in a collaborative presentation on writing pedagogy (in one’s department or at an event like the yearly Innovations in Pedagogy Summit) during the following academic year. The 2018 seminar participants were invited to complete a self-assessment of their confidence in teaching writing both before and after the seminar. During a pre-seminar assessment, for only five items did half or more respondents report being confident or very confident. Following the seminar, for 16 of the 20 items, 80-100 percent of respondents reported that they were confident or very confident in their ability. All 20 items showed an increase in the percent of respondents reporting that they were confident or very confident. The full assessment report from the 2018 seminar can be found in Appendix A of this QEP report.

1 The seminar had 20 participants in 2016 and 18 participant sin 2017.
**Student Learning Outcomes**

*University-wide Writing Requirement (UWR):* A major component of the QEP will be implementation of a university-wide writing requirement. Currently, the most robust definition of this exists within the College of Arts and Sciences. The criteria for writing requirement courses as posed in the QEP design, and labeled a Second Writing Requirement, included student/faculty ratios of no more than 30:1 and the assignment of at least two writing assignments in English totaling 4,000 words (20 pages) or more independent of quizzes and final examinations.

At present, more than 250 courses – spanning the disciplines – are designated as SWR courses.

During the first year of QEP implementation, a new set of criteria was proposed to better align writing courses with best practices in writing instruction. These criteria included:

- inclusion of in-class writing instruction;
- peer review;
- aligning student assessment with writing expectations;
- multiple occasions to write; and
- the opportunity to revise at least one paper.

During the first year of the QEP, a different structure was proposed by John Casteen, the interim Director of Writing Across the Curriculum: establishing criteria that could be a university-wide requirement for all undergraduate students. After some initial discussion within the QEP Oversight Committee, the representatives discussed this opportunity within their respective schools. While there was general agreement that this could be possible, some concerns were raised, including:

- Ensuring that there would not be too much curricular burden on programs that have very prescriptive courses of student (i.e.: nursing);
- Ensuring that there would be enough flexibility in the criteria to adapt the requirement to programs that may not traditionally engage in heavy writing instruction; and
- Ensuring that SWR courses would not be taught towards an assessment (better to have a curriculum certification).

In parallel to soliciting feedback from the schools, Archie Holmes and John Casteen met with Provost Katsouleas to discuss this idea. He was supportive of an effort that defined university-level criteria for meeting this requirement, but leaving it up to each individual school to determine how to best satisfy the requirement. In addition, the provost felt it was important that there be a university-wide committee that provided continual oversight to ensure that the schools’ implementation plans were aligned with the criteria.
Organization of the QEP Oversight Committee

**Goal Setting:** The Committee began year-one with goal setting. The broad categories of established year-one goals include gathering baseline data; faculty and student pedagogical support; student learning outcomes; technology infrastructure support; and building awareness. In order to progress towards these prescribed goals in an efficient and effective manner, the Committee adopted a once a month meeting schedule with work conducted via email in the interim.

**Scope and Organization:** The Executive Vice President and Provost is accountable for implementation of the QEP. The Provost has charged the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs with the plan’s direct implementation and management. To ensure broad-based communication, understanding, and cooperation, the Provost appointed a QEP Oversight Committee, chaired by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Comprised of faculty from each of the undergraduate schools and staff from departments that will assume a role in the implementation and assessment of the planned strategies, the committee will monitor implementation progress, address opportunities and challenges that surface, and recommend adjustments as needed (Figure 6.1). Representatives from the Student Council Academic Affairs Committee also serve as members. The Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will provide staff support to the committee. As needed, the Provost will appoint new Committee members during the course of the QEP.

Subcommittees have been created in order to better guide the implementation process. The existing subcommittees include: Baseline Data Gathering; Focus Group Development; Building Awareness; and Graduate Students as Scholars and Instructors. The Baseline Data Gathering: Focus Group Development subcommittee has been charged with: identifying baseline data that should be collected as part of the QEP process and make recommendations for additional data collection opportunities as the QEP is implemented; aiding in collecting data and information when possible; creating focus groups, where appropriate, to further evaluate the status of writing at the University of Virginia; and assisting in the interpretation of collected data and information and making recommendations to the QEP Oversight Committee based off of such findings. The Building Awareness subcommittee has been charged with: identifying the ways by which the value of writing is currently conveyed to undergraduate students, including prospective students, at the University; and preparing a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to recommend to the QEP Oversight Committee that seeks to build awareness of a culture of writing at the University. Finally, the Graduate Students as Scholars and Instructors subcommittee has been charged with examining the role of graduate students at the University, both as scholars and as instructors, and making recommendations to the QEP Oversight Committee on how to both support and utilize graduate students in the context of the QEP. A full description of the subcommittee can be found in Appendix D of this QEP report.
Technology Infrastructure: The primary infrastructure support required to achieve the QEP’s goals is the creation of online learning platforms to facilitate advance student writing and enable peer review. In addition, and consistent with Writing Across the Curriculum pedagogy, robust on-line resources will be made available to faculty to provide guidance on ways to improve undergraduate student writing, with emphasis on writing unique to disciplines. The Director of WAC will collaborate with academic departments to provide easily accessible tools and information via the web designed to support faculty writing instruction.

The Committee has spent considerable time discussing priorities for technology infrastructure to support the QEP. During a Committee meeting in fall 2017, a presentation was given on E-portfolios; following this presentation, a group of Committee members attended the Association for Authentic, Experiential, and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) Conference in Charlottesville on November 6 & 7, 2017, during which presenters shared best practices for the use of E-portfolios in higher education.

The Committee has identified the following list of priorities for technology infrastructure to support the QEP:

- A built-in text editor function that allows for peer evaluation, in a style similar to Google Docs, and would allow for peer review to be anonymous or attributed, and allow for instructors to divide the class into smaller groups on the platform so there could be small peer-review groups within the course;
- Options for public and private facing platforms, the former essentially serving as a “portfolio;”
- The ability for the system to follow a student, not follow the course;
- Having all tools available in one platform;
- Integration with Collab or UVA Box.; and
- Compatibility with existing print infrastructure on Grounds.

The Committee is currently exploring whether the University’s implementation of Office 365 will provided sufficient technology infrastructure for the QEP. This will be further discussed at a later Committee meeting, at which Dana German, Deputy CIO, will provide a presentation on the functionality of Office 365 and its compatibility with existing learning technology infrastructure.

A digital portfolio tool (Digication) is under consideration for use by undergraduate students and their instructors to facilitate student writing, reflection, and assessment. The tool has been initiated in the College of Arts and Sciences (the College), which began piloting a digital portfolio with faculty and students in foreign language programs in 2014-15. The objective was to learn how to employ digital portfolios for student learning and for assessment of learning and to evaluate the power and feasibility of the tool. Since its first year, the pilot has expanded to include approximately nine foreign language departments as well as more customized pilots in courses representing English (Writing), Chemistry, Art History, and others. The Committee is awaiting a full evaluation from the College before determining whether this tool would meet the needs of the QEP.
Assessment

Baseline Data Gathering: Three surveys were administered during the first year of QEP implementation to collect baseline data that will help guide QEP implementation. IAS plans to re-administer all surveys in two years in order to measure progress. In 2017-2018, the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies (IAS) administered three surveys to support assessment:

1. **Survey to assess faculty members’ perception of a writing culture at UVA:**
   
   Survey solicited faculty perspectives on perception of themselves as writers and instructors of writing, barriers to teaching writing, and knowledge of pedagogical and instructional resources. The survey was administered in Feb 2018; 30% of those invited responded. Results were shared with the QEP Oversight Committee in April 2018.

2. **SERU survey.** UVA added questions to the “Wild Card” module of the survey focused on students’ perceptions of a writing culture and of themselves as writers. This was in addition to current questions regarding writing instruction. The survey was administered in February 2018 with field period open through May.

3. **Pre-post survey of faculty participants** in the May 2018 Seminar in the Teaching of Writing. The survey asked faculty to rate their level of confidence in 20 aspects of teaching writing. Three-quarters (12 of 16) of seminar participants responded to the survey.

Also recorded: enrollment in

1. ENPG 3800 (tutoring peers course)
2. ENWR courses in 2017-2018

**Institutional Goal: Assessment—Writing Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Culture Outcomes:</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign to highlight the value of writing</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Overall, of students responding to the questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will be more likely to report that:</td>
<td></td>
<td>1) 43% reported that they were somewhat or very often offered useful writing instruction; 21% reported rarely or never. 1st year students were most likely to report writing instruction often (51%), 2nd years the least (36%).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) they were offered useful writing instruction,</td>
<td>SERU 2018</td>
<td>2) 51% reported that writing helped them think critically somewhat or very often; 16% reported rarely or never; 1st year students were most likely to report that writing helped often (55%), 2nd years the least (45%).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) writing helped them think critically,</td>
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<td>3) 49% reported that faculty provided prompt and useful feedback often or</td>
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<td>3) faculty provided prompt and useful feedback,</td>
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<td>4) they saw an increased amount of writing assigned this term vs. last term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Culture Outcomes:</td>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>very often; 4.6% reported rarely or never; while 51-53% of 1st, 3rd and 4th years reported feedback often or very often, only 41% of 2nd years did so.</td>
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<td>4) 57% agreed or strongly agreed that “I understand the criteria my instructors use to grade my writing”; 14% somewhat to strongly disagreed. While 57-59% of 1st, 3rd and 4th years agreed or strongly agree, 54% of 2nd years did so.</td>
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<td>Undergraduate students will be more likely to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) characterize themselves as proficient/strong writers;</td>
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<td>2) characterize their attitude toward writing as positive;</td>
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<td>3) view writing as highly important to their expected career</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) view writing as highly important to their personal/public life after graduation</td>
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<td>Overall, of students responding to the questions:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) 58% of students self-assessed as very good or excellent writers, 10% as very poor to fair.</td>
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<td>2) 81% agreed or strongly agreed that “being able to write well is important to me”; 5% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 84-85% of 3rd and 4th years agreed or strongly agreed, only 77% of 2nd years did so.</td>
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<td>3) 46% agreed or strongly agreed that “I enjoy writing”; 31% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 51% of 4th year students agreed or strongly agreed; only 42% of 2nd year did so.</td>
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<td>4) 68% agreed or strongly agreed that “I am confident in my ability to write well”; 11% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 69-70% of 3rd and 4th years agreed or strongly agreed compared to 65% of 2nd years.</td>
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<td>5) 74% agreed or strongly agreed that “I know how to use drafting, revising, and editing to improve my writing”; 6% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 77-79% of 1st year and 4th year students agreed or strongly agreed compared to 67% of 2nd years. (Interesting that between 1st and 2nd year, have a 10%-point drop)</td>
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<td>Undergraduate students will report greater agreement with statements re: UVA valuing writing, existence of writing culture</td>
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<td>Overall, of students responding to the questions:</td>
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| 1) 78% agreed or strongly agreed that “The University of Virginia values writing”; 6% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 82% of 1st year students agreed or strongly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Culture Outcomes:</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<td>agreed; the percentage drops to 74-78% among 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and 4\textsuperscript{th} years.</td>
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<td>2) 70% agreed or strongly agreed that “Teaching students to write is an important goal of the University”; 9% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 75% of 1\textsuperscript{st} years agreed or strongly agreed, which dropped to 67% among 2\textsuperscript{nd} years.</td>
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<td>3) 69% agreed or strongly agreed that “My instructors care about how well I write”; 10% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 75% of 1\textsuperscript{st} years agreed or strongly agreed, which dropped to 63% among 2\textsuperscript{nd} years, then rebounded to 69% among 4\textsuperscript{th} years.</td>
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<td>4) 60% agreed or strongly agreed that “The Writing Center provides a useful service for students who need extra help”; 13% somewhat to strongly disagreed. 70% of 1\textsuperscript{st} years agreed or strongly agreed although the percentage drops to 56-57% among 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty will report greater agreement re: UVA valuing writing, existence of writing culture</td>
<td>Faculty survey 2018</td>
<td>• 59% at least somewhat agree that “there is a high level of commitment at UVA to teaching students to write well.” (29% disagree; 13% N/A or DK)</td>
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<td>• 56% at least somewhat agree that “there is a high level of commitment in my department to teaching students to write well.” (33% disagree; 11% N/A or DK)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Only 30% at least somewhat agree that “My work instructing students to write is valued by the University.” (42% disagree; 28% N/A or DK)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional Objective: Assessment—Writing Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Instruction Outcomes:</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty will:</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Methods</strong>: In February 2018, an email invitation to take an online survey on student writing was sent to 1724 instructors who had taught or were teaching one or more undergraduate courses in Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017, and/or Spring 2018. Recipients were assured of confidentiality. Those who did not respond to the invitation were</td>
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</table>
sent reminders. 510 instructors completed the survey for a response rate of 30%.

- Characterize their attitude toward teaching writing as positive
  - 86% agree that Teaching students to write is an important goal of mine: mean=5.3 (scale 1-6)

- Characterize themselves as strong teachers of writing
  - I know how to help students improve as writers Mean=4.7 (scale 1-6); 20% are not confident in their ability to help students improve as writers; 77% are

- View writing as highly important to their professional work
  - Faculty survey 2018
  - Mean=5.8 (scale 1-6) Being able to write well is important to my professional work

- View writing as highly important to their personal/public (non-career) life
  - Not on survey

**Faculty survey report findings** (source: QEP Faculty Survey on Writing, presented to QEP Oversight Committee, April 27, 2018)

**#1 Respondents value writing and writing instruction**
Respondents across all schools strongly agree that:
- *Learning to write well should be an integral part of undergraduate students’ educational experience.*
- *An important goal of the University is to teach students to write well.*
- *Being able to write well is important to my professional work.*
- *I am confident in my own ability to write well.*

**#2 However, respondents are less likely to perceive a “Writing Culture” at UVA, that is, an institutional commitment to teaching writing...although it varies by school.**
- 59% at least somewhat agree that “there is a high level of commitment at UVA to teaching students to write well.” (29% at least disagree; 13% N/A or DK)
- 56% at least somewhat agree that “there is a high level of commitment in my department to teaching students to write well.” (33% at least disagree; 11% N/A or DK)
- Only 30% at least somewhat agree that “My work instructing students to write is valued by the University.” (42% at least disagree; 28% N/A or DK)

**#3 Respondents believe that teaching writing is important, and they are assigning significant writing in their undergraduate courses.**
- For 86% of respondents “teaching students to write is an important goal of mine.”
- 85% of respondents typically include assignments having significant writing components in their courses.
- 68% of respondents give students the opportunity to revise their writing.
Although teaching writing is important to 86% of respondents, challenges abound.

- 67% find it difficult to balance teaching content and writing; 27% do not.
- 57% feel that they devote more time to teaching students to write than they should have to; 38% do not.
- 25% do not enjoy teaching writing; 70% do.
- 20% are not confident in their ability to help students improve as writers; 77% are.
- 18% don’t agree that in their experience students want to learn to write well; 77% do agree.
- The wide variability in students’ writing and in students’ writing deficits magnifies the challenge of teaching writing (cited in response to final open-ended question).
- The time commitment required to teach writing and coach students needing help is not sustainable or supported by the department (cited in response to final open-ended question).

Respondents appear to be unaware of available pedagogical and learning support.

- Respondents appear to be somewhat unaware of resources available to support teaching of writing. This varies by school.
- Although overall, 54% of respondents agree that I know where to go for help in teaching students to write, 20% do not. Responses to three statements that refer to availability of pedagogical support for instructors or learning support for students suggest that the respondents probably rely on a local resource (e.g., colleagues in their school). Among the 21 statements, these three elicited the largest percentages of respondents selecting the “N/A or Don’t Know” option:
  - UVA provides pedagogical support for faculty to teach writing
  - The Writing Center provides a useful service for my students who need extra help
  - UVA provides pedagogical support for graduate students to teach writing

Faculty vs. Student Perceptions of a Writing Culture at UVA in 2018
Results from Faculty Survey on Writing and SERU survey

Summary: students are more positive than faculty about writing—UVA’s commitment to writing, the importance students place on their writing, students’ own writing ability, and resources for help. Students and faculty do agree about two aspects of writing at UVA: that instructors care about students’ ability to write, and that the Writing Center provides a useful service. Throughout, 2nd year students tend to be less positive than their fellow students.

1. Faculty are much less likely than students to perceive a strong institutional commitment to writing and teaching writing. Among the students, first-years are most likely to agree that UVA is committed to teaching students to write. Students’ perceptions decline by the second year and recover partially in the third and fourth years.

Faculty respondents registered their agreement or disagreement (or N/A, DK) with three statements:

- There is a high level of commitment at UVA to teaching students to write well. 59% at least somewhat agreed; 29% at least somewhat disagree; 13% N/A or DK
- There is a high level of commitment in my department to teaching students to write well. 56% at least somewhat agreed; 33% at least somewhat disagreed; 11% N/A or DK.
• **My work instructing students to write is valued by the University.** One quarter of faculty reported N/A or Don’t Know. Of those who did note their agreement or disagreement, 57% at least somewhat disagreed. Only 43% at least somewhat agreed that their work instructing students to write is valued.

Students were asked to respond to two statements:

• **The University of Virginia values writing.** Overall, 94% at least somewhat agreed; 6% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
  ○ Focusing only on students who agreed or strongly agreed, of 1st year students, 82% agreed or strongly agreed; the percentage dropped to 74-78% among 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years.

• **Teaching students to write is an important goal of the University.** 91% of students at least somewhat agreed; 9% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
  ○ Focusing only on students who agreed or strongly agreed, 75% of 1st years agreed or strongly agreed, which dropped to 67% among 2nd years, recovering to 77-78% among 3rd and 4th years.

2. **Faculty believe that teaching writing is important, and students perceive that their instructors care about their writing.**

• **Learning to write well should be an integral part of undergraduate students’ educational experience.** 99% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agreed; 76% strongly agreed; no respondents reported N/A or DK.

• 86% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agreed that “teaching students to write is an important goal of mine.” Fully 53% strongly agreed; only 8% at least somewhat disagreed; no respondents reported N/A or DK.

• Among students, 90% at least somewhat agreed that “my instructors care about how well I write”; 10% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
  ○ 75% of 1st years agreed or strongly agreed, which dropped to 63% among 2nd years, then rebounded somewhat to 69% among 4th years.

3. **However, while faculty respondents assert that they include assignments and opportunities for revision, students may not often perceive follow-through on instruction. (Caution: responses to these survey items differ by scale and topic and so are not directly comparable.)**

• 85% of instructors at least somewhat agreed that they *typically included assignments having significant writing components* (13% disagree)

• 75% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agreed that they *give students the opportunity to revise their writing in their courses.* (23% disagree)

• Only 43% of students reported that they were somewhat or very often *offered useful writing instruction;* 21% reported rarely or never.
  ○ 1st year students were most likely to report writing instruction somewhat or very often (51%; 14% rarely or never), 2nd years the least (36%; 25% rarely or never).

• Only 51% reported that *writing helped them think critically* somewhat or very often; 16% reported rarely or never.
1. 1st year students were most likely to report that writing helped often (55%; 14% rarely or never), 2nd years the least (45%; 18% rarely or never).

2. Only 49% reported that faculty provided prompt and useful feedback often or very often; 5% reported rarely or never.
   o While 51-53% of 1st, 3rd and 4th years reported feedback often or very often, only 41% of 2nd years did so.
   o NOTE: this question was NOT directed specifically at writing instruction: responses were from all disciplines regardless of course or focus.

4. Although students assert that writing well is important to them, faculty don’t necessarily perceive that students want to write well.
   - 95% of student respondents at least somewhat agreed that “being able to write well is important to me”; 47% strongly agreed; 5% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
     o 84-85% of 3rd and 4th years agreed or strongly agreed, only 77% of 2nd years did so.
   - 72% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agreed that in their experience “students WANT to write well”; only 14% strongly agree; 18% didn’t agree (10% N/A or don’t know).

5. Assessing students’ ability to write well all depends on how you define “well.” If it’s “very good to excellent”, then faculty and students are in agreement. If it’s “good to excellent”, then students’ confidence exceeds faculty opinion and students’ own self-assessment.
   - In my experience, UVA undergraduate student students write well: 69% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agreed; 28% didn’t agree.
     o Similarly, for graduate students, 71% of faculty respondents who did not report N/A or DK at least somewhat agreed that “UVA graduate students write well”; 29% didn’t agree.
   - I am confident in my ability to write well: Among undergraduate students, 89% at least somewhat agreed; 26% strongly agreed; and 11% at least somewhat disagreed.
     o Interestingly, the percentage who at least somewhat agreed hardly changes over the four years, dipping only to 87% among 2nd years.
     o The percentage who strongly agreed, however, rises from 22% for 1st years to 31% among 4th years.
   - 90% of student respondents overall self-assessed their “ability to be clear and effective when writing” as good to excellent. Across the years, the percentage ranged from a low of 85% among 2nd years to 90-93% among 1st, 3rd, and 4th years.
   - Applying a higher standard (very good to excellent), 58% of student respondents assessed their ability as very good to excellent, closer to the faculty’s perception. 65% of 4th years self-assessed as very good or excellent, an 11 percentage point increase from 1st years’ self-assessment of 54%.

6. While some faculty respondents appear to be aware of resources available to support teaching of writing and students’ own writing, students are well aware of where to go for help with their writing, especially the Writing Center.
   - I know where to go for help in teaching students to write: among faculty respondents who did not report N/A or DK, 64% at least somewhat agreed and 36% did not.
• **UVA provides pedagogical support for faculty to teach writing:** 30% of faculty respondents reported N/A or DK. Of those who did not, 51% at least somewhat agreed while 49% at least somewhat disagreed.

• **I know where to go for help with my writing:** 75% of student respondents at least somewhat agreed while 6% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
  
  - 78% of 1st and 4th years agreed or strongly agreed that they know where to go for help, somewhat more than the 72-74% among 2nd and 3rd years.

With regard to the Writing Center in particular:

• **The Writing Center provides a useful service for my students who need extra help:** fully 38% of faculty respondents reported N/A or don’t know. Among those who did not note N/A or DK, 81% at least somewhat agreed; 18% at least somewhat disagreed.

• **The Writing Center provides a useful service for students who need extra help:** Among students, 87% at least somewhat agreed; 13% somewhat to strongly disagreed.
  
  - 70% of 1st years agreed or strongly agreed although the percentage drops to 56-57% among 2nd, 3rd and 4th years.

7. **Enjoyable? For most, but not universally.**

• **I enjoy teaching students to write:** 76% of faculty respondents at least somewhat agree; 23% at least somewhat disagree. 50% agree or strongly agree.

• **I enjoy writing:** 69% of student respondents at least somewhat agree; 31% at least somewhat disagree. 46% agree or strongly agree.
  
  - The percentage who at least somewhat agree rises from 65% among 1st years to 75% among 4th years; likewise the percent who at least disagree declines from 35% in the 1st year to 26% in the 4th year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number and disciplinary diversity of Writing Center tutors will increase</th>
<th>Descriptive, counts</th>
<th>Collect spring 2018 results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**Institutional Objective:** **FORMATIVE Assessment—Writing Instruction (Faculty Seminar in Teaching of Writing)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Instruction Outcomes:</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># participants in Faculty Seminar in Teaching of Writing</td>
<td>May 2018: 16 participants Curry-1; Law-1; SON-3; EnvSci-1; History-1; Media-1; Politics-1; English-3; Foreign Lang-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar participants will learn some useful pedagogical strategies that they can incorporate into their teaching</td>
<td>Pre/post survey</td>
<td>Of the 16 faculty members participating in the May 2018 seminar, 12 completed the survey. They were asked to rate their confidence on a scale from 1=“not at all confident” to 5=“very confident” for 20 aspects of teaching. All 20 items showed an increase in the percent of respondents reporting that they were confident or very confident. The largest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
percentage point increases occurred for four items: How confident are you than you can:
- motivate the less motivated writers
- effectively balance teaching of content with teaching of writing
- stimulate students’ interest in writing
- provide useful feedback to students on their progress in writing
Smallest growth was for:
- organize in-class peer review and feedback
- clearly communicate criteria for assessment
- assess students fairly
- incorporate writing activities in the classroom setting
- provide students with opportunities for revision
For these, \( \frac{2}{3} \) of participants reported already being confident of their ability prior to the seminar

Source: Fac Seminar in Teaching Writing May 2018_Fac pre-post confidence report
O:\SACS\2017\QEP\Surveys\Confidence survey

Institutional Objective: Assessment—Writing Instruction

Enrollment: ENPG 3800 Tutoring Peer Writers

Prepares undergraduates to tutor peer writers by introducing them to theories of writing and practices of peer tutoring. Students will read in the field of writing instruction, research primary materials (such as assignments and syllabi), observe tutors, and practice tutoring peer writers under supervised and supportive circumstances. (Meets second writing requirement.)

Assessment: monitor enrollment (spring term course)

Spring 2018: 16 students:
- 2 men/14 women;
- 1-1\textsuperscript{st} yr, 5-2\textsuperscript{nd} yrs, 4-3\textsuperscript{rd} yrs, 6-4\textsuperscript{th} yrs
- 2 from Curry; 14 from A&S (4 undeclared; 6 English; 1 each from French, Biology, Drama, Global Studies)

Enrollment: FWR in 2017-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1505</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1506</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1507</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1508</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1510</td>
<td>1180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 1559</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Institutional Objective: Assessment—Student Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Students will be more likely to self-assess their current writing ability at higher levels than did students pre-QEP | SERU 2016, 2018 | 2016: 4th years: 24% excellent, 43% very good, 26% good, 6% fair, 1% poor  
2018: 4th years: 19% excellent, 45% very good, 27% good, 8% fair, 1% poor |
| Students will be more likely to:  
1) characterize themselves as proficient or strong writers  
2) characterize their attitude toward writing as positive  
3) view writing as highly important to their expected career after graduation  
4) view writing as highly important to their personal/public life after graduation  
5) characterize their ability to employ multiple strategies to complete a writing task | SERU 2018 | 1) Overall, 57.8% of students self-assess as very good or excellent writers (1st yrs-53.6%; 2nd yrs-51.5%; 3rd yrs- 60.1%; 4th yrs-64.6%).  
2) Overall, 81% agree or strongly agree that “being able to write well is important to me” (1st yrs-78.7%; 2nd yrs-77.4%; 3rd yrs-83.5%; 4th yrs-84.7%).  
3) Overall, 45.6% agree or strongly agree that “I enjoy writing” (1st yrs-43.3%; 2nd yrs-41.6%; 3rd yrs-46.4%; 4th yrs-50.7%).  
4) Overall, 67.6% agree or strongly agree that “I am confident in my ability to write well” (1st yrs-66.8%; 2nd yrs-64.6%; 3rd yrs-68.8%; 4th yrs-69.7%).  
5) Overall, 74.3% agree or strongly agree that “I know how to use drafting, revising, and editing to improve my writing” (1st yrs-78.7%; 2nd yrs-66.6%; 3rd yrs-74.7%; 4th yrs-77.3%). |
| Students will be more likely to report that writing helps them think critically than students did pre-QEP | SERU 2016, 2018 | 2016: 4th years: 20% very often, 38% somewhat often, 29% occasionally, 12% rarely, 3% never  
2018: 4th years: 17% very often, 35% somewhat often, 34% occasionally, 11% rarely, 3% never |
Looking Ahead

With the first year of QEP implementation at its close, we have made significant progress with establishing a baseline of needs and expectations regarding writing at the University that will guide the Committee’s work for the next four years. Looking ahead to year two of QEP implementation, we expect to identify the specific ways by which the University can support the teaching and learning of writing, and to begin implementation of such efforts.

Our year two priorities will include re-defining writing course requirements and working with the faculty and schools in implementing these changes into the curriculum of the schools, identifying a technology infrastructure that is well suited to support the QEP, and better understanding the professional development needs of faculty and graduate students who provide writing instruction. As we undertake these efforts at the University, we will also focus on demonstrating to our students that writing is a valued and integral part of their University of Virginia education, and building stakeholder buy-in for the new university-wide writing requirement.
The Office of the Provost at the University of Virginia invites applicants for a tenure-track Assistant/Associate Professor position to serve as Director of Writing across the Curriculum. The appointment begins with the fall term of 2018, with an anticipated start date of July 25, 2018. In addition to developing external funding to support research endeavors, candidates will be expected to teach at the graduate and undergraduate levels and provide service to the University, Department and professional organizations.

The Director of Writing across the Curriculum will teach one course per semester and work with individual schools, departments, and programs across the University to incorporate improved writing instruction into courses across disciplines. The Director will also contribute to a newly launched five-year Quality Enhancement Program focused on student writing by assisting faculty with syllabi, writing assignments, peer review, and evaluation. In rotation with other Writing Program faculty, the Director will offer workshops, create website resources, and co-teach an already established Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing. The Director will also take a prominent role in University-wide assessment of student writing.

Applicants must provide evidence of a strong research profile in the area of writing across the curriculum and have a Ph.D. by the time of appointment in July 2018. While a degree in Composition and Rhetoric may be advantageous, we are open to degrees in other fields that contribute to an understanding of writing and literacy. We are especially interested in candidates who have experience in university-wide program development.

Review of applications will begin December 10, 2017. The position will remain open until filled. We will notify by the end of December those candidates we have selected for Skype interviews in January.

To apply candidates must submit a Candidate Profile through Jobs@UVa (https://jobs.virginia.edu), search on posting number 0622124 and electronically attach the following: a cover letter describing research agenda and teaching/administrative experience, a curriculum vitae with contact information for three references, a writing sample, and teaching materials from two courses (upload to Statement of Teaching Philosophy).

The University of Virginia is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women, minorities, veterans and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.
APPENDIX B

FACULTY SEMINAR IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING ASSESSMENT REPORT

The 16 faculty members who enrolled in the May 2018 Faculty Seminar in the Teaching of Writing were invited to complete a self-assessment of their confidence in teaching writing both before and after the seminar. The assessment asked them to rate their confidence on a scale from 1=“not at all confident” to 5=“very confident” for 20 aspects of teaching, presented as survey items. They also had the option of reporting “N/A or don’t know” to any of the items and were invited to provide comments overall. The assessment was conducted via online survey format (Qualtrics).

Of the 16 faculty members participating in the seminar, eleven were from Arts & Sciences (including foreign languages, media studies, environmental sciences, politics, English, and history), one from Law, one from Curry, and three from Nursing. Participants included two Lecturers, 12 Assistant Professors, and one full Professor, and one academic staff member. Among the 12 respondents who completed the survey, eight provided text comments (copied below): seven offered positive reviews, and two offered suggestions.

Survey results were aggregated across respondents pre- and post-seminar and analyzed for each item. NOTE: as the number of respondents is small, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Pre-seminar: for only 5 items did half or more respondents report being confident or very confident.

Post-seminar: for 16 of the 20 items, 80-100 percent of respondents reported that they were confident or very confident in their ability. The remaining four items ranged from 67-75% of respondents confident or very confident.

All 20 items showed an increase in the percent of respondents reporting that they were confident or very confident. The largest percentage point increases occurred for four items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How confident are you that you can:</th>
<th>Reporting Confident or Very Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 motivate the less motivated writers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11 effectively balance teaching of content with teaching of writing</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 stimulate students’ interest in writing</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 provide useful feedback to students on their progress in writing</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The smallest percentage point increases occurred for five items. For these items, about half to two-thirds of participants reported already being confident of their ability prior to the seminar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How confident are you that you can:</th>
<th>Reporting Confident or Very Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 14. organize in-class peer review and feedback opportunities | Pre-seminar: 55%  
Post-seminar: 83%  
%-point difference: 28% |
| 4. clearly communicate criteria for assessment and grading | Pre-seminar: 55%  
Post-seminar: 83%  
%-point difference: 28% |
| 6. assess students fairly | Pre-seminar: 55%  
Post-seminar: 83%  
%-point difference: 28% |
| 13. incorporate writing activities in the classroom setting | Pre-seminar: 66%  
Post-seminar: 92%  
%-point difference: 25% |
| 16. provide students with opportunities for revision | Pre-seminar: 66%  
Post-seminar: 92%  
%-point difference: 25% |
Is there anything else you would like to share regarding this seminar, your writing instruction, or your writing courses?

1. I loved the seminar, but I would have liked a more in-depth survey of peer editing activities and options.

2. This is by far the most effective seminar on the teaching of writing (on pedagogy in general) that I have had the opportunity of taking. The instructors provided a goldmine of useful guidelines and exercises, which they asked us to apply early and often to our own syllabi-in-process. I feel materially better prepared to teach the course I am creating for the fall, and--this was a bit more surprising--I find I am also better prepared to tackle my own writing projects and upcoming conference presentations. (I suppose it is the nature of good teaching that it never stops being relevant...) Please keep this course on offer for UVa's faculty! Better writing means better teaching across the board--indeed, it was amazing to see how other faculty, even in non-writing-based disciplines like science and nursing, were able to evolve their curricula by incorporating more language and narrative into their various assignments.

3. This seminar has motivated me to be more creative with writing assignments for students as well as providing them with more support during the process. The seminar, as well as the readings from the text and input from other professors have given me different ideas to make writing more interesting and exciting in my course. I plan to try some short exploratory writing in the classroom and build in peer review for students' writing projects.

4. I feel like I got so much out of this seminar for two reasons. 1) It was great to be reminded of the importance of some practices (generous reading for example). With my background in composition pedagogy, I'd of course heard it before, but it's good to be reminded why it's important and to hear people articulate what they feel it can do for them. 2) Getting to hear how faculty from other departments approach writing instruction or plan to approach it was hugely beneficial both for my own practice and to gain an understanding what types of writing contexts my students will enter once they leave my classes. My colleagues had such insightful responses to questions of writing pedagogy. It was great to see.

5. One note about the seminar: I've developed a pretty intentional practice of not checking work email on the weekend (especially during the summer). That meant I missed a few assignments/assessments that were to be completed before the first day. I really appreciated the organization and pacing of this seminar, so I hate that I missed some of the early preparation. In the future, would you please consider sending emails with specific Day 1 tasks during the week prior? I was able to complete at least one of the tasks because the email that mentioned it was sent out last Friday. Thank you!

6. This seminar was outstanding! The faculty facilitators, Jim Seitz and Steph Ceraso, put together a seminar that was perfect for the task of supporting faculty development to enhance student writing capacity. The structure, content, modeling and group interaction of faculty from across Grounds contributed immensely to exploration and application of new concepts including
writing to learn", sequenced writing assignments, sharing work with peers, reading generously and providing positive authentic feedback. The work we did together in class did develop empathy for how frightening and difficult the task of writing is, but also how exciting and energizing it can be. I plan to communicate both to my students. The book, Engaging Ideas by John C. Bean, will be a reference I will use frequently as I redesign my course. The many resources generously shared by Jim and Steph and faculty participants added even further value to this seminar. The potential for cross Grounds collaborations are already being explored. This is the Academical Village at its best. THANK YOU.

7 I would like to thank both Jim and Steph for conducting a wonderful seminar and for providing insightful comments on our work. I really enjoyed how we were steered towards evaluating our students more compassionately. Well done.

8 Excellent instruction by Jim and Steph! I thought this was a well-paced, engaging, and highly substantive seminar. I also enjoyed interacting with the other participants--almost all of whom were generous and interesting--and learning from their pedagogical practices. Occasional comments made by a few tenured faculty members did give me pause, as they reflected a slightly demeaning attitude toward the work of their non-tenure track colleagues. I'm not sure that there's any solution for this. Perhaps it would be helpful to make more explicit connections between acquiring competence in first-year writing courses and performing well in more traditional forms of academic writing.
APPENDIX C

QEP OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE CHARGES

Subcommittee One: Baseline Data Gathering: Focus Group Development

Responsibilities

- Identify baseline data that should be collected as part of the QEP process and make recommendations for additional data collection opportunities as the QEP is implemented;
- Aid in collecting data and information when possible;
- Create focus groups, where appropriate, to further evaluate the status of writing at the University of Virginia;
- Assist in the interpretation of collected data and information and make recommendations to the QEP Oversight Committee based off of such findings; and
- Elect a subcommittee chair and administer all subcommittee meetings and activities.

Composition
Ideally 3-4 members. Current membership includes: Amanda Kibler (Curry), Sarah Course (College), and Sydney Bradley (Student Council).

Term, Meeting Frequency and Estimated Time Commitment
This subcommittee is expected to meet approximately every 6-8 weeks over the course of a 12-18 month period. Outside of committee meetings, subcommittee members should expect a small amount of work (2-3 hours a month) to be handled via email.

Subcommittee Two: Building Awareness

Responsibilities

- Identify the ways by which the value of writing is currently conveyed to undergraduate students, including prospective students, at the University;
- Prepare a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to recommend to the QEP Oversight Committee that seeks to build awareness of a culture of writing at the University; and
- Elect a subcommittee chair and administer all subcommittee meetings and activities.

Composition
Ideally 5-6 members. Current membership includes: Siva Vaidhyanathan, Chair (College), Sydney Bradley (Student Council), Ashley Hurst (SON), Sheila Crane (Arch.), Rob Patterson (McIntire).

Term, Meeting Frequency and Estimated Time Commitment
This subcommittee is expected to meet approximately every 8 weeks over the course of the QEP implementation process. Outside of committee meetings, subcommittee members should expect a small amount of work (2-3 hours a month) to be handled via email.
Subcommittee Three: Graduate Students as Scholars and Instructors

Responsibilities

- Examine the role of graduate students at the University, both as scholars and as instructors, and make recommendations to the QEP Oversight Committee on how to both support and utilize graduate students in the context of the QEP.

Composition

Ideally 3-4 members. Current membership includes: Phil Trella (OGPA), Adriana Streifer (CTE), and Andy Pennock (Batten).

Term, Meeting Frequency and Estimated Time Commitment

This subcommittee is expected to meet approximately every 8 weeks over the course of a 24 month period. Outside of committee meetings, subcommittee members should expect a small amount of work (2 hours a month) to be handled via email.