

2015-2020 QEP CONCEPT PAPER SUBMISSION FORM

Address all issues as specifically as possible. While the white paper is not intended to constitute a fully-developed proposal, a high degree of clarity and specificity will better enable the SACS Leadership Team to evaluate the potential of the proposal to meaningfully impact and document student learning at WKU.

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Proposed Title. Provide a working title of 15 words or less that captures the focused intent of the proposal. For reference, a list of other institutions' QEPs is available at: http://sacscoc.org/inst_forms_and_info1.asp

Constructing Meaningful Discourse Locally and Globally: Producing Global Citizens to Meet 21st Century Challenges

Problem Statement. Briefly describe the aspect of student learning this proposal is designed to enhance. What makes this dimension of learning particularly pertinent to WKU and its students?

To prepare students for entry into a global community, WKU needs a systematic, integrated, cross-disciplinary program and infrastructure for deliberate curricular and co-curricular instruction in 21st century global communication and media development. English 100 and 300 prepare students to write expository academic essays; Communication 145 and 161 introduce students to effective means of planning, developing, and delivering public speech; part of the University Experience course helps to develop students' information literacy skills; and writing, oral communication, and design and delivery of scholarly and creative presentations surface in the curriculum and co-curriculum regularly but not consistently (for example, in writing-enriched capstone courses—primarily in Potter College—and through WKU's annual Undergraduate Research conference). Such activities, however, are not subject to regular assessment.

The pages that follow present a rationale, timetable, and preliminary statement of resource needs for initiating and sustaining a deliberate, integrated, and assessable program in Writing, Communication, and Digital Literacy at WKU.

Writing, Communication, and Career-Readiness

According to the AAC&U-funded report "Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn," 89% of employers surveyed identified "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing" as a learning outcome that is not sufficiently addressed by America's colleges and universities. Moreover, 81% of those employers reported that "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" need to be emphasized more than they are today; 75% expressed dissatisfaction with graduates' ability to "analyze and solve complex problems"; 71% reported colleges need to place more emphasis on teamwork and collaboration; and 68% expressed a desire to hire graduates with better preparation in "locat[ing], organiz[ing], and evaluat[ing] information from multiple sources" (Hart, 2010, p. 9). Universities such as WKU are sending graduates into increasingly demanding work environments in which their employers expect them to know how to think, how to solve problems, often through research, how to work successfully and creatively in teams, and how to communicate clearly when they have solved those problems. In response to such demands, WKU must rethink the current curricular requirements that prepare students in these areas and develop an integrated, cross-disciplinary program to address these needs.

Producing and Critiquing Arguments—The 2009-2010 CLA Results

WKU students should graduate with an ability to think critically about the myriad opportunities for communicating—producing texts of all sorts, as well as finding themselves the recipients/audiences of texts of all sorts—in a 21st century global community. Such a community requires of its citizens, as producers of texts, an ability to adapt language and other communicative media (images, video/audio, multimedia) for a variety of audiences across disciplines, professions, and cultures. Such a community also presents opportunities for its citizens to engage with others as recipients or audiences of texts, and a critical approach to those texts helps to produce an informed global citizenry that communicates more clearly, meaningfully, and effectively.

The results of the 2009-2010 CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment), administered to 39 graduating WKU seniors, suggest that WKU could stand to revisit those areas of the curriculum and co-curriculum that help students develop their communication skills. According to the WKU's SACS 5th Year Interim Report, "Results of the CLA were mixed, as anticipated. WKU seniors scored in the 51st percentile of participating institutions on the Performance Task dimension of the CLA instrument, while those assigned the Analytic Writing Task scored at the 16th percentile. However, the sample size of this pilot assessment was small (n = 39) . . . While few firm conclusions can be drawn from the results of this assessment, the 2009-10 CLA results provided important baseline data for future assessments of General Education."

Initiatives such as those outlined below will go far in helping our graduates leave WKU with a skill set necessary to engage in meaningful discourse with others in our global community and to think critically and analytically about the problems and challenges they will face in their lives after WKU.

Alignment. How does the proposal align with existing institutional and/or statewide priorities, as articulated in the emerging WKU 2012-2017 Strategic Plan and *Stronger by Degrees: A Strategic Agenda for Kentucky Postsecondary and Adult Education 2011-2015*. These documents are available for review at: <http://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/strategicplanningupdates.php>

Goal 1.1 Sustain a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built upon a liberal arts and sciences foundation. **The production and critical "reading" of texts of all sorts are foundational to the 21st century liberal arts and sciences educational experience.**

Goal 1.2 Attract and support excellent faculty, staff, and students. **Many recently-graduated PhDs are adept at new communicative technologies such as those that should ground this program. Applicants for faculty positions will likely find appealing the teaching opportunities that draw on the technological resources made available through the proposed program.**

Strategy 1f: Expand professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. **Faculty who teach in the initiatives and programs described below will be provided numerous opportunities for professional development (see next item).**

2.j Strengthen student support centers and programs. **Funding for the development of a Writing and Communication Center will provide professional development for faculty and graduate teaching assistants (distinct from FACeT) to support WID and all the elements of the QEP.**

Initiatives. What specific initiatives or programs are proposed to address the identified QEP theme? What would be the targeted student demographic and number of students to be impacted? How would the proposed activities be integrated into the existing curricular/co-curricular framework? What individuals or units would be responsible for ensuring that the activities were appropriately implemented and assessed? Map out a rough implementation timeline, beginning in Fall 2015.

All undergraduates seeking to earn BA or BS degrees will be affected.

Initiatives include:

1. A significantly revised writing and communication experience in the first year. Currently, Eng 100 introduces students to general expository writing in various genres, and Comm 145 provides instruction in planning, developing, and delivering extemporaneous speeches. A more robust freshman writing and communication experience, with an introduction to writing and communication across disciplines, genres, technologies and cultures will provide students with a foundation that aligns vertically with the junior/senior Writing, Communication, and Digital Literacy Enriched Curriculum described below. Specifically, this revised first-year writing and communication experience would include the following:

- Revise English 100 as Writing and Rhetoric, modeled after a "writing studies"¹ approach to first-year composition with units of instruction on writing in the various disciplines and writing for and across various media platforms.
- Develop supplemental one-credit writing workshops attached to large-lecture disciplinary courses for non-majors. Students would enroll in the one-credit writing workshop in addition to the first-year writing course, and the workshops would be offered only in conjunction with large lecture courses for non-majors, such as Bio 113, Geog 100, Hist 101/102,

¹ Reference: Downs, Doug, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to English Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007): 552-84. Print.

Psy 100, and so on.

- Revise Comm 145/161 to include emphasis on communicating and presenting ideas both in person and through digital means.

2. A comprehensive Writing, Communication, and Digital Literacy Enriched Curriculum at the upper level (referred henceforth as the “WCEC”) aligned vertically with COMM 145/161, ENG 100, UC 175 and first-year writing workshops and integrated into the disciplinary major. This WCEC would include the following revisions or additions to the existing junior writing requirement (currently English 300):

- Revise English 300 curriculum to include a combination of mixed-majors sections of English 300 (currently, the university offers ONLY mixed majors sections of English 300) and, for selected departments/colleges, sections of English 300 (taught by English faculty) for single majors or disciplinary emphases (like “English 300 for the Humanities”).
- Develop (selectively) sections of English 300 that are linked with specific majors courses.
- Develop discipline-specific writing courses taught by faculty within the disciplines; courses will meet the same learning outcomes as English 300 (like “Writing for Biology” or “Writing for History”).
- Encourage and support (not mandatory) Writing-Intensive and Writing-Enriched courses in the majors; develop certification process for WI and WE courses through the WCEC office.

Student Learning Goals and Outcomes. What is the overarching student learning goal; that is, what is the primary academic purpose in implementing the proposed initiatives? What are 2-3 measurable student learning outcomes that will be targeted? Student learning outcomes describe the specific component of knowledge, skills, or perspective that students will be expected to gain as a result of participating in the proposed initiatives.

Student Learning Goal: Students will become critical producers and consumers of 21st century texts.

Student Learning Outcomes. After completing the curricular requirements of this program and participating in co-curricular activities, students will be able to:

1. Produce clear and effective texts in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, genre, media/technology, and culture.
2. Analyze and evaluate texts in a variety of forms representing diverse points of view, recognize relationships among those texts, and construct logically valid, informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
3. Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas in texts of various forms.
4. Utilize 21st century technologies critically, ethically, and appropriately to produce texts for a variety of purposes and audience.

(Adapted from *WKU Colonnade Plan*, p. 7).

Assessment. How might student learning outcomes be assessed? What metrics could be used to document enhanced student learning? What means of assessment (process, rubric) could be employed to track progress on these metrics? What would be appropriate criteria for success and institutional attainment targets? Where would the primary point of accountability lie for documenting enhanced student learning (individual academic departments, coordinating unit, Institutional Research, etc.)?

Various programs would need to incorporate assessment mechanisms into their existing assessment tools. Departments would work collaboratively with the WCEC office and the Writing and Communication Center (WCC) to develop appropriate rubrics for various assessment tools. Individual academic departments would be accountable for assessing other QEP efforts.

- Existing General Education Assessment of first-year writing and communication experience and upper-level writing in the disciplines courses.
- E-portfolios that include evidence of student mastery in writing, communication, and digital literacy (departments with existing portfolio requirements will not be required to submit additional materials for assessment).
- Assessment of student writing/oral/digital presentations at departmental and university research/creative activity conferences.
- CLA results: Compare 2009-2010 baseline results to future administrations of the CLA examination, with future administrations of the exam yielding a representative sample of 200 graduating seniors.