

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF WRITING
TO
ENHANCE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
AND
PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Virginia State University

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Executive Summary

In keeping with Core Requirement 2.12 of the Principles of Accreditation, Virginia State University has selected as its Quality Enhancement Plan the topic: “Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students’ Academic and Professional Success.” In order to create a culture of writing to enhance students’ academic and professional success, the QEP has established four major goals:

1. Providing all freshman students a strong and effective first-year writing program that emphasizes academic writing and includes, among others, the essential literacies of critical thinking, reflective practice, and technology. (As stated above, critical thinking and reflective practice more generally are included in the 2-credit Freshman Studies course.)
2. Creating opportunities for students throughout their general education program to practice writing and critical thinking in a variety of contexts both informally and formally as a way to continue to strengthen the writing and thinking skills developed in the first-year writing program.
3. Providing opportunities for students to continue to develop their writing competencies and critical thinking skills through discipline-specific and genre-specific informal and formal writing activities in their major courses (designated writing Intensive courses) taught by expert writers well versed in specific areas.
4. Developing a Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) to provide writing assistance and e-portfolio support to students, faculty, and staff in meeting the writing demands of the Quality Enhancement Plan and helping to develop a culture of writing throughout the university.

In satisfying these goals, the proposed plan will emphasize three areas: academic writing; writing across the disciplines; and in the junior/senior years, an emphasis on writing

intensive/capstone courses in the major. Critical thinking as a critical literacy in writing will be also infused throughout the plan. All of this will be supported by a University-wide Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) that will be designed to support the culture of writing that will insure students' writing competencies from the first year through graduation and beyond. The culture would be developed by both informal writing practices and by formal writing assignments. The goal would be to get every student and faculty member in all disciplines to see writing (and critical thinking) as a means of learning throughout college and to view the first-year writing practices (and courses) as foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.

The first step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on academic writing and the idea of transfer as intellectual practice as the foundation of a student's academic career: the ability of students to take what is learned—about composing processes, about texts and ways to create them, about rhetorical situations in framing—and use it to good effect in other writing situations—in other classes, in other programs, in other institutions, in the workplace, and in other parts of life itself.

The second step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on writing to learn in the general education courses and in the disciplines and the development of critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Faculty throughout the university will be trained to use informal writing practices in their courses to help students improve their writing, thinking, and learning. Focusing on writing practices and critical thinking skills throughout the university, not just in required English/composition courses, faculty and students will see writing and thinking as (1) a means of learning and (2) as a means of preparing students for professional writing practices in the upper level courses in their major.

The third step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on writing intensive courses in the major. Departments will identify courses within each major that will be designated as writing intensive courses based on specific criteria and the amount of writing required by students enrolled in the course. University-wide guidelines will be established for writing intensive courses that all

departments will meet; however, the specific requirements and guidelines will be established by the faculty within the department or major offering the course.

To develop the culture of writing and meet the writing requirement of the university, every student would be required to enroll in five writing intensive courses. These courses would include the two first-year writing courses (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II), a sophomore level introduction to literature course (ENGL 201: Introduction to Literature or ENGL 202: Introduction to African American Literature), and two writing intensive courses in the major (e.g., a capstone course, a senior seminar, an undergraduate thesis course, a designated writing intensive course), one of which may be a culminating course. Each department will be required to designate at least two courses which all majors would be required to take during their undergraduate experience. Departments which have already developed writing intensive courses such as senior seminars and capstone courses will not be required to develop new courses; however, all courses designated as “writing intensive” must meet the minimum criteria established for a writing intensive course at Virginia State University.

An important component of the Quality Enhancement Plan is the development of critical thinking. One of the objectives of developing a culture of writing is to enhance the ability of students to think critically as a way of improving teaching and learning in the general education program, across the curriculum, and in their major disciplines.

The overarching goal of the Virginia State University Quality Enhancement Plan is to develop a culture of writing to enhance students’ academic and professional success. The culture would be developed by both informal and formal writing practices. We want to get every student and faculty member in all disciplines to see writing as a means of learning throughout college.

A critical component of the plan will be the use of e-portfolios for instruction and for assessment. The literature on e-portfolios in general review provides much support for the use of electronic portfolios to foster and assess students’ writing and thinking competencies from the first-

year writing courses to the point of graduation. Such portfolios at VSU, containing a collection of students' writing from their first year composition courses through their major courses, will serve a number of important functions.

First, they will serve as a means of assessment by the university, a way of demonstrating to faculty, parents, future employers, and students that a proficient level of critical thinking and writing skills has been achieved. In addition, students will have a collection of work that can be used to support employment or graduate school applications. Most importantly, these portfolios will also include a final essay that provides students an opportunity for reflection as a means towards a higher and more permanent level of learning.

Virginia State University: A Brief Institutional Profile

Virginia State University, founded on March 6, 1882, is America's first fully state supported four-year institution of higher learning for Blacks. It is a comprehensive university and one of two land-grant institutions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The University is situated in Chesterfield County at Ettrick, on a bluff across the Appomattox River from the city of Petersburg. It is accessible via Interstate Highways 95 and 85, which meet in Petersburg. The University is approximately two and a half hours from Washington, D.C. to the north, the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area to the southwest, and Charlottesville to the northwest.

The mission of the University is to promote and sustain academic programs that integrate instruction, research, and extension/public service in a design most responsive to the needs and endeavors of individuals and groups within its scope of influence. Ultimately, the University is dedicated to the promotion of knowledgeable, perceptive, and humane citizens who are secure in their self-awareness, equipped for personal fulfillment, sensitive to the needs and aspirations of others, and committed to assuming productive roles in a challenging and ever-changing global society.

The University operates on the following seven principles:

- ◆ Regardful of its heritage and its tradition of eminent concern for the education, welfare, and progress of all peoples, the University welcomes and extends its resources to all who strive for academic excellence, whatever their nationality, race, ethnicity or religious affiliation.
- ◆ The University seeks to fulfill its mission by enrolling students with a diverse range of talents and abilities, including: (a) students whose pre-college records reveal high academic achievement and talent, (b) students who through a combination of factors have demonstrated the potential to be successful in college, and (c) students whose secondary school records reveal potential but who need special academic enhancement.

- ◆ The University, using available resources, offers programs which are of interest to the students, meet current and changing needs of society, and fall within the scope of its mission.
- ◆ The living/learning community of the University seeks to cultivate a sense of pride and dignity within each individual and promote an enduring search for knowledge among all students, staff, and faculty.
- ◆ Those who matriculate are required to demonstrate a broad understanding of and competency in the arts and sciences and a commitment to intellectual development and scholarship in their fields of study.
- ◆ Graduates of Virginia State University are prepared to enter the work force of the twenty-first century, pursue advanced study, assume leadership roles, and compete in a global society.
- ◆ The University assures its constituencies of collegial participation in decision- making.

The University has five academic schools: School of Agriculture; School of Business, School of Engineering, Science, and Technology; School of Liberal Arts and Education; and the School of Graduate Studies, Research, and Outreach. The University offers 34 undergraduate degree programs, 17 graduate degree programs, 1 doctoral degree program, and 2 certificate programs. The University admits an average of 1,000 to 1,100 students per year (based on first-time freshman headcount from 2001 to 2006), and it graduates approximately 700 - 800 students during its two yearly, December and May, graduation exercises. The retention rate over a six year period is approximately 41%. Virginia State University is listed among the twelve colleges and universities cited by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities as having achieved unusual success in retaining and graduating students. (“Student Success in State Colleges and Universities” 6)

Virginia State University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges and Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Teacher Education Program is accredited by the

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Virginia State Board of Education; the Music Program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music; the Visual Art and Design Program is accredited by the National Association of School of Art and Design; the Dietetic Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education of the American Dietetic Association; and the Engineering Technology Programs are accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (TAC and ABET). Degree programs in the School of Business are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). (For additional information, see the 2006 - 2008 Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog.)

Process Used to Develop the Quality Enhancement Plan

Since the fall of 2004, Virginia State University has been engaged in reviewing its former strategic plans, planning and implementing its new 20/20 Vision Plan (a long-range planning document), and gathering and examining information regarding student learning, especially in terms of its mission, its principles, its goals, and the learning outcomes of first-year students. The two committees that have been responsible for most of the work are the University Planning Council and the General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate that has broad faculty representation from throughout the University. The work of the University Planning Council has resulted in the initiation of several degree programs, innovations in technology, upgrades in campus facilities, and enhanced academic quality of programs, including special accreditations. The work of the General Education Committee has led to a restructured General Education Program and the implementation of a required Freshman Studies Seminar for all first-year students, including transfer students with fewer than twenty-four academic credit hours. The research and deliberations of the committee also led to a list of possible topics and themes for consideration by the larger VSU community and the VSU Quality Enhancement Planning Team in selecting a QEP topic. In November 2004, the QEP Team became the third component in this process.

The University Planning Council

The University Planning Council (UPC) is a broad-based university-wide group consisting of key administrative personnel (e.g., vice presidents, deans) and the leadership of each of the campus constituent groups (e.g., Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Government Association). The UPC, under the direction of the Board of Visitors and the President, developed the 20/20 Vision Plan, a long-range plan for Virginia State University that is intended to guide the course of the University through the year 2020. The plan contains nine areas: academics, student affairs, research, technology, financial affairs, facilities, development, the President's Office and Athletics, and community outreach. These nine areas represent either significant components of the University or entities with campus-wide impact. These areas collectively represent all of the areas critical to the future of Virginia State University (VSU 20/20 Vision Plan 1).

The University has identified in its 20/20 Vision Plan, the University's strategic academic plan, three long-range planning goals:

- ◆ To become a SACS Level 6 institution
- ◆ To become a Carnegie Doctoral/Research Intensive University
- ◆ To move to the upper echelon of Tier 2 in the U.S. News & World Report rankings.

As the University grows to its potential, it recognizes that certain core values—highly valued and integral to the identity of the University—must be protected and retained; therefore, Virginia State University will maintain its heritage as an HBCU with a land-grant mission, give personalized attention to students in the delivery of instruction, offer a holistic approach to student development, provide a nurturing environment that supports the needs of students, and continue the goal of pursuing academic excellence (VSU 20/20 Vision Plan 2).

The Academic Excellence Committee of the University Planning Council, in determining action items for the enhancing of undergraduate programs at VSU, reviewed several data sets: students' performance on Praxis I and Praxis II; students' grades in general education courses,

especially in first-year basic mathematics courses and in first-year writing courses; summary reports of data submitted to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) on competencies in writing, mathematics, critical thinking, oral communication, and technology (see <http://research.schev.edu/corecompetencies/default.asp>). In addition, the committee members reviewed anecdotal information (collected somewhat randomly during a succession of meetings focused on the development of the 20/20 Vision Plan) from faculty regarding the strengths and weaknesses of students enrolled in their courses. The findings showed that our students were not performing at the desired levels in writing, mathematics, and critical thinking. More specifically, faculty across campus perceived that while students could write at a satisfactory level, they were not able to perform as novice writers in a discipline. Using the results of these data, the committee recommended the following action items: assess the general education program using a nationally standardized instrument; reform and update the general education program based on assessment results; require minimum proficiency levels for student performance in English composition, mathematics, and technology, and provide academic support services in these areas; develop and implement a freshman seminar course that includes critical thinking and oral communication; and use the reform and enhancement of general education as a basis for selecting the topic for the Quality Enhancement Plan during the next reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 2008.

The General Education Committee

In August of 2004, the General Education Committee, a subcommittee of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the Virginia State University Faculty Senate, was formed and given the charge to do a comprehensive evaluation of the existing General Education Program and to propose changes, if required, based on the results of the evaluation. The work was to be completed over a two-year period. The General Education Committee is broad-based and consists of faculty

representation from all areas of the university (e.g., English, social sciences, natural sciences, arts and humanities) that provide general education courses and support services.

The first year of the committee's work was spent assessing first-year students and rising juniors; gathering information on innovative general education program models, on teaching and assessment strategies, and on best practices in first-year experiences; and reviewing general education curricula at peer institutions and other institutions with similar student populations. During the second year, the committee utilized the comprehensive information gathered the previous year to revise the Virginia State University General Education Program to meet the needs of current VSU students.

Specifically, the General Education Committee reviewed the grade distributions of students enrolled in first-year English (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II) and first-year mathematics courses (GEMA 112: Basic Mathematics and GEMA 113: Basic Mathematics), scores of freshmen and juniors on College Base (College Basic Academic Subjects Examination), VSU Core Competencies Reports in quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and written communication submitted to State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV), and observations and anecdotal information of faculty experiences of student performance in their courses during the general education review period.

The distribution of grades in first-year writing courses showed a passing rate of 68% and a failure rate of 32%. Grades in all composition classes are based in part on a final culminating portfolio of works created by students. A review of these portfolios showed that seventy-seven percent of the students demonstrated an excellent to fair range of writing proficiency; however, 23% of the students' portfolios failed to demonstrate an acceptable level of writing competency at the end of the first-year writing courses. Only 17% of the students demonstrated very good to excellent writing competency.

VSU's students' competency in quantitative reasoning, that is the ability to perform mathematical operations and apply the logic of mathematics to the functions of daily life and work,

was assessed using a locally developed college algebra and calculus assessment test. A summary of student performance on the test showed that 17% of the students scored at the high to satisfactory levels in algebra, and 44% scored at the high to satisfactory levels in calculus. Approximately 83% scored at an unacceptable level in algebra, and 56% scored at an unacceptable level in calculus.

In the fall of 2004, Virginia State University administered College Base to the in-coming freshman class. The most recent information provided by the Assessment Resource Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia makes the following statement about College Base:

College Base, a criterion-referenced academic achievement examination, evaluates knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, science, and social studies, usually after a student completes a college-level core curriculum. Developed to provide colleges with an accurate assessment of academic progress, College Base emphasizes concepts derived from course materials. As a broad achievement test, College Base assesses basic and enduring knowledge in each of the four subject areas and provides performance rankings in higher order thinking skills (College Base: Academic Subjects Examination Brochure 1).

The Institutional Summary Reports for the College Base show that students at Virginia State University performed lower than expected in each of the four subject areas included in the test: English, mathematics, science and social studies. The Composite Score for each of the three yearly reports for freshmen ranged from 203 to 214, an average of 87 points below the test average Composite Score of 300. The Composite Scores for juniors over two administrations were 203 and 208, an average of 95 points below the test average Composite Score of 300. The average English scores were 212, 210, and 217; the average mathematics scores were 234, 225, and 242; and the average science scores were 194, 180, and 192. The average English scores for juniors were 212 and 198; the average scores in mathematics were 228 and 224; and the average scores in science

were 189 and 181. Students did not demonstrate a relative strength in any of the subject areas in that they did not score 17 points above the average Composite Score of 300. The Skill Score in writing as a process indicated that 61% of the students scored low, and 55% scored low in conventions of written English. The Skill Score in critical reading indicated that 73% of the students scored low, and 57% scored low in reading analytically. The Competency scores are equally as revealing. In interpretive reasoning, 40% of the students received low ratings; in strategic reasoning, 83% received low ratings; and in adaptive reasoning, 94% of the students received a low rating. The scores reported for juniors did not show any significant gains.

The results of the data sources examined (e.g., the VSU Core Competencies, scores from the College Base, anecdotal information from faculty who teach general education courses) show that many VSU students lack the core competencies needed to succeed in their general education courses and meet the demands of their upper-level course work. Specifically, the findings show that our students are significantly weak in the sciences; in writing, especially in writing as process and in conventions of written English; in reading critically and reading analytically; and in interpretive, strategic, and adaptive reasoning. In all these areas of reading, the College Base scores were stronger than the scores of first time freshmen. Still, while the performance of first-time freshmen was reasonably consistent with expectations, the performance of juniors was not. For example, fifty percent of juniors scored in the medium and high categories of College Base in interpretive reasoning, but only 19 percent and six percent scored in the medium and high category in strategic and adaptive reasoning, respectively.

As a result of the findings by the General Education Committee, the first-year writing program housed in the Department of Languages and Literature was revised to be more reflective of current pedagogical thinking. The new program was implemented in the fall of 2006. Reflective practice and critical thinking also became major components of the new, required 2-credit hour Freshman Studies course. This course, implemented in the fall of 2006, is required of all freshman

students and transfer students with fewer than 24 hours. However, it was universally acknowledged that the teaching of communication skills could not be relegated solely to the province of the Languages and Literature Department, that the teaching of critical thinking could not rest exclusively with the Philosophy program, and that the new Freshman Studies course could not by itself shore up these important and pervasive deficiencies so prevalent in college freshmen everywhere. The General Education Committee further recommended that the university as a whole consider writing and critical thinking as possible topics/themes for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

The Quality Enhancement Planning Team

In November 2006, the QEP Director officially began his work. He selected a Quality Enhancement Planning Team in late November 2006 that was approved by the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs in December 2006. The QEP team began its work in January 2007. The team consists of representation from the Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs; the Office of the Vice President of Finance and Administration; the School of Liberal Arts and Education; the School of Agriculture; the School of Engineering, Science, and Technology; and the School of Graduate Studies, Research, and Outreach; and representatives from Student Government, Alumni Affairs, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate. (See complete membership of the Quality Enhancement Planning Team in Appendix D, page 86.)

In announcing the work of the Quality Enhancement Planning Team, the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs sent a letter to the entire Virginia State University community announcing the launching of the team's work and inviting and encouraging faculty, students, staff, and alumni to participate in the reaffirmation of the accreditation process but especially encouraging them to become involved in selecting a QEP topic that upon implementation would significantly enhance student learning at Virginia State University. The Provost's letter also announced the series of Open Forums that were to take place during January and February of 2007. (See the complete text of the Provost's letter to the VSU community in Appendix C, page 79). Large

banners announcing the Open Forums were placed at strategic locations throughout the campus to remind faculty, students, staff, and alumni of the on-going activities. An e-mail QEP Survey Form was sent to all constituencies soliciting suggestions for the QEP. (See Appendix B, page 78.)

The first major action of the Quality Enhancement Planning Team was to conduct a series of Open Forums (town house meetings) to discuss the plan for selecting a QEP topic/theme. During each of the five Open Forums, The QEP Director, with the aid of a power point presentation and several related handouts, discussed the two key documents required in the reaffirmation of the accreditation process: the Compliance Certification and the Quality Enhancement Plan. The QEP Director explained the nature and purpose of the QEP to members of the University community, how it relates to other accreditation requirements, and what impact it can have on the future of Virginia State University and its students. The key elements of the Quality Enhancement Plan were outlined as well as the six components of a well-structured plan. A process for developing the QEP was outlined, including the focusing of the topic, establishing the learning outcomes goals, developing the assessment plan, developing a resources plan, and developing a management plan. The QEP Director stressed the importance of broad based involvement in the development of the plan by all members of the Virginia State University community.

A planning document outlining the steps in the planning process was given to all forum participants. The most important aspect of the Open Forums was faculty engagement in offering ideas and themes for selecting a QEP topic. Faculty shared their experiences in teaching VSU students in general education courses and courses in their majors. They provided anecdotal information and testimonies about students' strengths and weaknesses. After the discussion, participants were asked to complete a QEP Survey Form if they had not responded to the e-mail survey.

The final Open Forum took place at a university-wide Faculty Senate luncheon gathering that involved over sixty percent of the faculty, members of the administration, and broad

representation from the staff. A brief discussion of the development of the QEP was given and ideas and suggestions for QEP topics were solicited. Participants were also given an opportunity to complete the QEP Survey Form. A copy of the QEP Survey Form is located in Appendix A, page 75.

After examining key documents (e.g., VSU 20/20 Vision Plan, results of the College Base Academic Subjects Examination, grade distribution reports), conducting a series of Open Forums involving the entire VSU community, analyzing the results of a QEP Survey that was completed by a large number of VSU constituencies, participating in a VSU Faculty Senate sponsored university-wide gathering of faculty that included a discussion and solicitation of topics for the QEP, and engaging in a discussion of the QEP Surveys' results with faculty and students and members of the QEP Planning Team, a consensus emerged from the VSU community that the QEP topic would focus on the enhancement of student writing and thinking beginning in the freshman year and continuing to the point of graduation. The specific topic for the QEP is "Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success." In April 2007, the topic was presented to the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Students Affairs who then approved it.

To continue the process of QEP development, faculty development workshops were offered during the 2007 Fall Faculty Opening Conference and again during the Winter Faculty Opening Conference in January 2008. During the workshops, faculty, staff, students, and alumni were given an opportunity to discuss the on-going development of the QEP, examine QEP documents, suggest changes and modifications to the developing plan, and ask questions about their roles in developing the culture of writing at Virginia State University.

In January 2008, a special focus group of alumni and employers were invited to campus to participate in a discussion regarding their experiences with graduates of Virginia State University and their preparedness for successful employment. Members of the focus groups were asked to critique the proposed QEP and offer suggestions for its improvement. Also, in January 2008, a

special focus group of students convened to discuss the final draft of the QEP and its role in helping to develop the culture of writing critical to the success of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

The Quality Enhancement Planning Team has provided support to the QEP Director in all phases of the QEP development. The five subcommittees have played major roles in key aspects of the plan, especially in the areas of financial resources, facilities, faculty development, technology, and informational resources. The final draft of the Quality Enhancement Plan represents a collaborative effort involving all constituent groups that make up the Virginia State University community.

Identification of the Quality Enhancement Topic

In keeping with Core Requirement 2.12 of the Principles of Accreditation, Virginia State University has selected as its Quality Enhancement Plan the topic: “Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students’ Academic and Professional Success.” In order to create a culture of writing to enhance students’ academic and professional success, the QEP has established four major steps:

1. Providing all freshman students a strong and effective first-year writing program that emphasizes academic writing and includes, among others, the critical literacies of critical thinking, reflective practice, and technology. (As stated above, critical thinking and reflective practice more generally are included in the 2-credit Freshman Studies course.)
2. Creating opportunities for students throughout their general education program to practice writing and critical thinking in a variety of contexts both informally and formally as a way to continue to strengthen the writing and thinking skills developed in the first-year writing program.
3. Providing opportunities for students to continue to develop their writing competencies and critical thinking skills through discipline-specific and genre-specific informal and

formal writing activities in their major courses (designated writing Intensive courses) taught by expert writers well versed in specific areas.

4. Developing a Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) to provide writing assistance and e-portfolio support to students, faculty, and staff in meeting the writing demands of the Quality Enhancement Plan and helping to develop a culture of writing throughout the university.

In satisfying these steps, the proposed plan will emphasize three areas: academic writing; writing across the disciplines; and in the junior/senior years, an emphasis on writing intensive/capstone courses in the major. Critical thinking as a critical literacy in writing will be also infused throughout the plan. All of this will be supported by a University-wide Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) that will be designed to support the culture of writing that will insure students' writing competencies from the first year through graduation and beyond. The culture would be developed by both informal writing practices and by formal writing assignments. The goal would be to get every student and faculty member in all disciplines to see writing (and critical thinking) as a means of learning throughout college and to view the first-year writing practices (and courses) as foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.

The first step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on academic writing and the idea of transfer as intellectual practice as the foundation of a student's academic career: the ability of students to take what is learned—about composing processes, about texts and ways to create them, about rhetorical situations in framing—and use it to good effect in other writing situations—in other classes, in other programs, in other institutions, in the workplace, and in other parts of life itself (Yancey). Using the most recent composition research on transfer and first-year academic writing practices, the revised WPA Writing Outcomes, and VSU's outcomes, faculty in Languages and Literature will revise the first-year program (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II) to promote transfer. In addition to the two first-year writing courses in which students must earn a

grade of “C” or better, all students must also complete with a “C” or better an introductory literature course: ENGL 201: Introduction to Literature or ENGL 202: Introduction to African American Literature. Each course includes some selections of African American literature and this plays an important intellectual role at VSU as at other HBCU’s as discussed by Teresa Redd in “Keepin’ It Real: Delivering College Composition at an HBCU.” In addition, as is discussed later, earlier findings from two e-portfolio programs show that linking academic work to students’ culture contributes to increased retention and completion rates. (Eynon “Making Connections: The LaGuardia ePortfolio”) The introductory literature courses are also writing intensive and are designed to extend the students’ knowledge and practice of writing and provide appropriate “transfer” to professional writing practices.

The learning outcomes of these courses are to:

- (1) develop a writing process that is adaptable across occasion, purpose, audience, and time;
- (2) access, consume, interpret, and evaluate information, both in print and online;
- (3) think critically;
- (4) self-assess and reflect on their own performance;
- (5) create new texts and, ideally, new knowledge; and
- (6) create both print and electronic texts. (Yancey 13)

The second step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on writing to learn in the general education courses and in the disciplines and the development of critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Faculty throughout the university will be trained to use informal writing practices in their courses to help students improve their writing, thinking, and learning (See Emig). Focusing on writing practices and critical thinking skills throughout the university, not just in required English/composition courses, faculty and students will see writing and thinking as (1) a means of

learning and (2) as a means of preparing students for professional writing practices in the upper level courses in their major.

The third step of the Quality Enhancement Plan will focus on writing intensive courses in the major. Departments will identify courses within each major that will be designated as writing intensive courses based on specific criteria and the amount of writing required by students enrolled in the course. University-wide guidelines will be established for writing intensive courses that all departments will meet; however, the specific requirements and guidelines will be established by the faculty within the department or major offering the course.

To develop the culture of writing and meet the writing requirement of the university, every student would be required to enroll in five writing intensive courses. These courses would include the two first-year writing courses (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II), a sophomore level introduction to literature course (ENGL 201: Introduction to Literature or ENGL 202: Introduction to African American Literature), and two writing intensive courses in the major (e.g., a capstone course, a senior seminar, an undergraduate thesis course, a designated writing intensive course), one of which may be a culminating course. Each department would be required to designate at least two courses which all majors would be required to take during their undergraduate experience. Departments which have already developed writing intensive courses such as senior seminars and capstone courses would not be required to develop new courses; however, all courses designated as “writing intensive” must meet the minimum criteria established for a writing intensive course at Virginia State University. (See Appendix G: Hallmarks of Writing Intensive Courses, page 88.)

An important component of the Quality Enhancement Plan is the development of critical thinking. One of the objectives of developing a culture of writing is to enhance the ability of students to think critically as a way of improving teaching and learning in the general education program, across the curriculum, and in their major disciplines. Richard Paul, a major leader in the international

critical thinking movement; and Linda Elder, an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college/university level, make the following statement about critical thinking in The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking:

Everyone thinks; it is our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce, make, or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Excellence in thought must be systematically cultivated. (4)

In many of the discussions of faculty during meetings of the General Education Committee, the topic of critical thinking was a major concern of faculty based on their own observations in their courses and the results of the College Base Academic Subjects Examination. Specifically, we want students to improve their ability to use essential, crucial, and exacting standards to examine and evaluate statements and claims of others as well as their own. We want our students to practice metacognition and to employ the tools of metalanguage.

To achieve this goal, the QEP adopts the “Guide to Rating Integrative and Critical Thinking” used in the Critical Thinking Project at Washington State University. The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, in collaboration with the General Education Program and the Writing Program, developed this seven-dimension critical thinking rubric to provide a process for improving and a means for measuring higher order thinking skills of their students during their college careers. The “Guide to Rating Integrative and Critical Thinking” has seven criteria:

- (1) Identifies, summarizes (and appropriately reformulates) the problem, question, or issue;
- (2) Identifies and considers the influence of context and assumptions;
- (3) Develops, presents, and communicates one’s own perspective, hypothesis or position;
- (4) Presents, assesses, and analyzes appropriate supporting data/evidence; (5) Integrates issues using other (disciplinary) perspectives and positions;

- (6) Identifies and assesses conclusions, implications, and consequences; and
- (7) Communicates effectively.

Each criterion is rated as emerging, developing, or mastering. Most recently, Washington State University received a three-year grant from the Department of Education FIPSE Comprehensive Program to integrate higher order thinking in its four-year General Education Program. The QEP will train faculty in the use of this critical thinking rubric and solicit faculty to participate in a pilot program to use the rubric in writing courses, other general education courses, and selected courses throughout the curriculum. The purpose for using the model is three-fold: (1) to promote the shared development of critical thinking skills and provide assessment of effective teaching and learning related to those skills, (2) to provide faculty a means for assessing students' learning outcomes, and (3) to provide faculty with a self-assessment of their teaching effectiveness based on their students' progress in reaching learning goals.

Critical to the success of the QEP is the establishment of a strong Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS). In order to develop a culture of writing to enhance student academic and professional success, the institution must develop a major support mechanism to offer assistance to students, faculty, and staff in meeting the immediate and long term goals and objectives of the writing/thinking initiative. The university proposes to develop a Writing /E-Portfolio studio: a teaching, tutorial, and on-line facility that offers writing and e-portfolio assistance for students, faculty, and staff. The studio will be staffed by a director, three professional writing tutors, 10 - 15 trained peer tutors, and technical support personnel.

Desired Student Learning Outcomes

The overarching goal of the Virginia State University Quality Enhancement Plan is to develop a culture of writing to enhance students' academic and professional success. The culture would be developed by both informal and formal writing practices. We want to get every student and faculty member in all disciplines to see writing as a means of learning throughout college. To

accomplish this goal, we proceed in two stages. The first, as represented in Appendix __, is the scoring guide (WPA Outcomes Statement) currently used in first-year composition courses. Once revised to emphasize more strongly academic writing, these courses will provide the first-year writing foundation. With the new cross disciplinary efforts in place, students will meet a new set of learning outcomes:

1. After experiencing writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the discipline (WID), junior and senior should demonstrated increased levels of competency in rhetorical knowledge, including the following:

- ◆ The main features of writing in their fields
- ◆ The main uses of writing in their fields
- ◆ The expectations of readers in their fields

2. After experiencing writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the major (WID), junior and senior students should demonstrate increased levels of competency in critical thinking, reading, and writing and gain knowledge of the following:

- ◆ The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- ◆ The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- ◆ The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields

3. After experiencing writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the major (WID), junior and senior students should demonstrate increased levels of competency in the processes of writing and demonstrate that they can do the following:

- ◆ Build final results in stages
- ◆ Review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
- ◆ Save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
- ◆ Apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

4. After experiencing writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the major (WID), junior and senior students should demonstrate increased levels of competency in the conventions of writing and give evidence that they can do the following:

- ◆ Employ the conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
- ◆ Apply strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved.

5. Students should demonstrate technology literacy:

- ◆ Use available electronic environments for drafting, revising, reviewing, editing, and submitting texts
- ◆ Locate, evaluate, organize, and use in research electronic sources, including web databases and informal networks, and intranet sources
- ◆ Understand and exploit the different rhetorical strategies available in print and electronic texts
- ◆ Understand how research and composing processes and texts in their fields are influenced by digital technologies
- ◆ Understand how research and application in their fields are communicated by means of digital technologies.

Literature Review and Best Practices

There is a large body of research, both locally and nationally, that supports Virginia State University's decision to focus its Quality Enhancement Plan on developing writing competencies and critical thinking skills throughout the university in order to enhance our students' academic success while matriculating in the academy and to prepare them for professional success after graduation.

Since the decade of the seventies with the publishing of the article "Why Johnny Can't Write" in Newsweek (1975) to the most recent Report of The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (2006), there has been a growing interest nation-wide in

the teaching of writing. This interest stems, in part, from educators' and politicians' concerns with the inability of high school and college students to write well. Ernest Boyer's, A Nation at Risk, John Goodlad's A Place Called School, and Mortimer J. Adler's Paideia Proposal, all education reform reports, assess the quality of American public schools and suggest an erosion of academic skills among high school graduates and their lack of preparation to do college-level work. Among the deficiencies most often cited are students' lack of college-level writing competencies and critical thinking skills required by higher education institutions. In addition, reports and studies such as those by the College Entrance Examination Board and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) have identified the lack of writing ability among American college students as a problem of national magnitude that must be attacked on every level of the educational process if we expect our schools and colleges to graduate literate students. Graduates should be able to think critically and solve problems. Writing is the key process in developing that skill. Because of the attention that has been generated regarding students' inability to master the most elementary writing skills, many new approaches have been experimented with and modest improvement in students' writing has been observed. However, according to several recent reports, the problem continues to persist. As these reports suggest, far too many students are enrolling in the nation's colleges and universities, including the most prestigious ones, unprepared to do the writing and thinking required in general education courses and in their academic majors, and many graduate four to six years later without having acquired the level of competency in writing and thinking skills their future employers demand.

The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges concluded in its report on school reform that "a great deal of good work is taking place in classrooms across the nation in the teaching of writing; however, the consensus was clear: writing skills need to improve if students are to succeed in school, college, and life" (National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges 3).

In “The Neglected ‘R’: The Need for a Writing Revolution,” the report declares that “writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for many” (3). The report states that “American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom” (3).

Among the suggestions the commission offers for creating a writing revolution are the following:

- ◆ Higher Education should address the special role it has to play in improving writing. All prospective teachers, no matter their discipline, should be provided with courses on how to teach writing.
- ◆ Writing instruction in colleges and universities should be improved for all students.
- ◆ The amount of time students spend writing should be at least doubled.
- ◆ Writing should be assigned across the curriculum.
- ◆ States and the federal government should provide the financial resources necessary ... to make writing a center piece of the curriculum.
- ◆ Best practices in assessment should be more widely replicated. Authentic assessment of writing depends on requiring students to produce a piece of prose that someone reads and evaluates.
- ◆ Writing is everybody’s business and teachers in all disciplines must provide writing instruction. (4)

The report points out that writing is an essential skill and stresses the importance of writing to academic and professional success. Writing allows students to “connect the dots in their knowledge and is central to self-expression and civic participation” (“The Neglected ‘R’” 3). The commission points out that “students must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, they must write” (“The Neglected ‘R’” 9).

In September 2004, the National Commission on Writing surveyed business leaders and

reported its findings in “Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out.” The findings of this report mirror the findings of other national reports and confirm the need for schools, colleges, and universities to do a better job of improving the writing skills of their students for academic success and workplace success.

The survey involved 120 major American corporations that employ eight million people.

Among the survey’s findings are five key ideas:

- ◆ Writing is a “threshold skill” for both employment and promotion, particularly for salaried employees.
- ◆ People who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion.
- ◆ Two-thirds of salaried employers in large American companies have some writing responsibility.
- ◆ Eighty percent or more of the companies in the service and finance, insurance, and real estate sectors, the corporations with the greatest employment growth potential, assess writing during hiring.
- ◆ More than 40 percent of responding firms offer or require training for salaried employees with writing deficiencies that cost American firms as much as \$3.1 billion dollars annually (“ Writing: A Ticket to Work” 3-4).

The findings of this report and many other national reports on the state of writing are very clear: “American public and economic life depends on clear oral and written communication (skills)...and that writing is a basic building block for life, leisure, and employment” (5). In the words of Bob Kerry, chairman of the National Writing Commission, “Individual opportunity in the United States depends critically on the ability to present one’s thoughts coherently, cogently, and persuasively on paper” (“Writing: A Ticket to Work” 5).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ 2002 report entitled “Greater

Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College” calls for a “dramatic reorganization of undergraduate education to ensure that all college aspirants receive not just access to college, but an education of lasting value.” The report stresses the vital role that writing and critical thinking must play in the “New Academy” (Executive Summary 2). Jonathan Monroe, writing in 2003 Fall issue of Peer Review, states that “rather than a remedial or ancillary concern, writing is integral to the learning students will engage and pursue from the first semester of their first year through their senior years and beyond” (1). “Effective writing is central to the work of higher education and it follows then that the responsibility should be vested in the disciplines where this work takes place and in the faculty who are the ultimate arbiters and authorities over what counts as effective and disciplinarity at all levels of the curriculum” (“Writing in the Disciplines” 1).

Briefly, the problem is that entering freshmen no longer demonstrate the proficiency in writing skills which their predecessors exhibited three decades ago. Concomitant with this decline has been a similar decline in writing proficiency of freshmen to meet the writing tasks on first-year composition courses. As at most colleges and universities, the teaching of writing continues to be the primary responsibility of the English faculty. The responsibility for ensuring literacy is not shared by the entire faculty.

This responsibility became increasingly difficult when Virginia State University ended its remedial courses in the fall of 1996 (as many other state institutions were doing). Students entering the university were all placed in college level English courses, and they were expected to successfully meet the course requirements for college level writing. As expected, many students met the challenge; however, far too many students (approximately 40%) experienced failure which resulted in their having to repeat the course. Since 1996, the first-year writing program has experienced many changes and revisions in the pedagogical methods used; and the level of student performance in the courses has improved significantly from a passing rate of approximately 60% to a passing rate of approximately 68%. The first-year writing program has moved from the traditional

approaches to teaching basic writing to the use of print portfolios and since 2006 the use of e-portfolios.

Although the university has made modest progress in improving the writing skills of our students, the writing problem still exists. The problem seems to be two-fold: first, many of the students enrolling in the university are unprepared to meet the writing requirements demanded in college level writing courses; and second, often students seem not to be able to transfer what they learn in first-year composition to other courses in the curriculum. Three assessment measures (the VSU Core Competencies, the pass/fail rate in first-year writing courses, scores on College Base) clearly show that Virginia State University students have significant weaknesses in writing competency and critical thinking and reasoning skills. The passing rate for students enrolled in first-year writing courses is 68%, and the failure rate is approximately 32%. The results of the College Base show that the Skill Score in writing as a process indicated that 61% of the students scored low, and 55% scored low in conventions of written English. Forty percent of the students scored a low on the writing exercise part of test. Student performance on these measures and the anecdotal information provided by faculty throughout the university clearly demonstrate that writing is a major weakness of our students and needs to be enhanced in order for our students to be successful academically and professionally. In other words, VSU's students writing problems mirror those of the nation: entering freshmen do not have the writing skills needed to meet the writing demands of college.

The existence of a writing problem among students is as obvious at Virginia State University as it is nationally. In part, this may be due to the small amount of writing required of students at the University. The research cited below clearly shows that it takes practice to sustain writing skills. On one level, VSU and students simply do not get enough practice; and on another level, because there are so few writing intensive courses, they do not have sufficient opportunities for transferring competencies developed in the first-year writing experience into another writing situation. The result

is the students' writing proficiency has declined at the point of exit. To prevent atrophy and insure writing competencies at graduation and beyond, students must practice, practice, and practice, and those practicing opportunities must be distributed vertically across the curriculum. Too, when writing is only emphasized in English courses, students fail to understand the relationship of writing to the other parts of the curriculum. The Quality Enhancement Plan, "Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success," addresses both academic writing at the first-year level and continues the focus on writing and thinking at the sophomore/junior/senior levels by emphasizing writing and thinking across the curriculum (WAC) and in writing intensive courses in the disciplines (WID).

The literature review supports the WAC and WID components of the VSU Quality Enhancement Plan. More than two decades ago, Edward P. J. Corbett, Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Ohio State University, speaking at a faculty development workshop at Norfolk State University, made the following statement:

The development (in rhetoric and composition) that has most excited me since I became a part of academia has been the writing across the curriculum movement. One reason the WAC movement became so exciting to me is that I recognize it as being the kind of liberal arts venture that people like Isocrates and Cicero tried to make of the rhetoric course in the ancient schools. Everyone in the academy becomes, in a very real sense, a teacher of writing, and those who are specially trained to be teachers of writing have to widen their purview and be willing to exercise students in the kinds of writing demanded in a variety of disciplines. ("A Retrospective and Prospective Look at Rhetoric and Composition" n.p.)

Since Corbett's utterance of the foregoing words, writing across the curriculum programs have multiplied at colleges and universities throughout this country. It is safe to say that a large number of post-secondary institutions now have WAC programs. Although some of the earlier

programs have foundered, many programs are firmly entrenched and very successful (e.g., Howard University, George Mason University, University of Missouri, University of Hawaii, Georgia State University, Miami University of Ohio).

In the Introduction to Writing Across the Curriculum, Susan H. McLeod points out that there are two approaches to WAC, and that the two approaches are defined by the kinds of writing they value. According to McLeod:

The first approach, sometimes referred to as cognitive, involves using writing to learn. This approach assumes that writing is not only a way of showing what one has learned but is itself a mode of learning—that writing can be used as a tool for, as well as a test of learning. The work of James Britton and of Janet Emig undergird this approach, which is based on constructivist theories of education. Knowledge is not passively received, the theory goes, but it is actively constructed by each individual learner; these constructions change as our knowledge changes and grows. One of the most powerful ways of helping students build and change their knowledge structures is to have them write for themselves as audience—to explain things to themselves before they have to explain them to someone else. In the curriculum, this approach advocates write-to-learn assignments such as journals and other ungraded writing assignments aimed at helping students think on paper. The second approach to WAC, sometimes termed rhetorical, involves learning to write in particular disciplines, or in what researchers have begun to think of as discourse communities It emphasizes more formal assignments, teaching writing as a form of social behavior in the academic community. The work of theorists on the social construction of knowledge, summarized by Kenneth Brufee, underlies this approach. Knowledge in the disciplines is seen not as discovered, but as agreed upon—as socially justified belief, created through ongoing ‘conversation’ (written as well as

oral) of those in the field. (3)

Writing across the curriculum promotes the philosophical notion that writing instruction should be included in courses throughout the curriculum and throughout a student's undergraduate academic program. A writing across the curriculum program values writing as a way of learning as Janet Emig (as well as others) values it: "Writing represents a unique mode of learning—not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique. Writing serves learning uniquely because writing as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies" (122).

"Writing across the curriculum," says Julia Romberger of Purdue University's OWL, "acknowledges the differences in writing conventions across the disciplines and believes that students can best learn to write in their majors by practicing those discipline-specific writing conventions" (Purdue University Owl Website). Writing across the curriculum (WAC) values writing as a way of learning, whereas writing in the disciplines (WID) recognizes that each discipline (e.g., biology, engineering, chemistry, psychology, history, English) has its own unique language conventions, genres, and structures.

In "The Promise of Writing to Learn," John M. Ackerman writes:

A casual review of composition journals reveals little debate over the uniqueness of writing as an intellectual process or its role in content-area learning. Instead, 'writing as a means for discovery and learning' naturally surfaces as one of the shared conclusions and principles from the English Coalition Conference (Lloyd-Jones and Lunsford, 1989) as a repeated and uncontroversial claim in recent publications and presentations on writing across the curriculum (WAC) (McLeod, 1988; WAC Video Conference 1992). Although many schools are still grappling with the politics and economics of across-curricular writing instruction, writing to learn appears to be secure within the ideology of modern literary instruction and research. (334-335)

Ackerman, in challenging the strong relationship between writing and learning, asserts that “the field of composition and rhetoric is poised to advance a different model of writing and learning: more social than developmental, more situated than conceptual, more tied to activity than knowledge” (362). Michael Carter, in “Writing to Learn by Learning to Write in the Disciplines,” reports on data from interviews with students who wrote lab reports in a biology course at North Carolina State University. According to Carter, the data from interviews with students who wrote lab reports in a biology lab suggest five ways in which writing promotes learning: learning by writing, learning by writing about genre, learning by enhancing learning behaviors, learning by using reports for future reference and learning in other contexts (286).

Finally, Carter reports on several studies that support writing to learn (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID):

In Hilgers et al.’s (1995) study, students described how writing helped them to understand and retain course content and to improve problem solving. In Hawthorn’s (1998) study, students said that writing helped them to be more involved in a course, to reflect on course content, and to organize and synthesize course material. And in Hilgers et al.’s (1999) followup, students reported that writing encouraged them to engage multiple sources of knowledge, synthesize information, and find connections among apparently disparate things, clarify ideas, organize thoughts, and so on. Hilgers et al (1999) holds the greatest promise for illuminating the relationship between writing and learning in the disciplines. Students reported that writing in their majors is more engaging than writing in nonmajor courses, that writing encourages learning about the body of knowledge that constitutes their disciplines, and that the research assignments helped them learn about the methods used by their disciplines. (282)

Virginia State University's Quality Enhancement Plan provides for both writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID). Both of these emphases will help to develop the culture of writing Virginia State University seeks.

The Role of Thinking in a Culture of Writing

As discussed earlier in this plan, an important component of the Quality Enhancement Plan is the development of critical thinking. One of the objectives of developing a culture of writing is to enhance the ability of students to think critically as a way of improving teaching and learning in the general education program, across the curriculum, and in their major disciplines. Teachers will be introduced to the theories and practices as they prepare for the teaching and infusing of critical thinking skills in faculty development workshops as one of the goals of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

Historically, Thomas Jefferson, in speaking of general education for the society of his day, is often quoted as having said that the purpose of education is "to enable every man to know what will secure or endanger his freedom." This statement embodies the essence of higher education today—the ability to think, to reason, and to make informed decisions regarding one's existence and future. Perhaps, without knowing it, Jefferson comments connect critical thinking to education then, and today it continues to be a desirable objective in education, especially in higher education.

Educators, including teachers of writing, generally agree that one of the goals of education is to help students develop higher order thinking skills so that they can think critically and clearly about a wide range of subjects that they encounter in academic settings (e.g., history, philosophy, biology, business, psychology, literature, writing) as well as those they experience in every day life (e.g., media, data analysis, synthesis). Most educators agree that we need to encourage, teach, and promote effective thinking skills in our students; yet, there are many colleges and universities that do not provide courses or other opportunities for their students to develop critical thinking skills, skills that are seriously lacking in many college students because the skills were not developed in high

school.

The findings from College Base show that students enrolled at Virginia State University lack the desired level of competency in critical thinking. The Competency scores based on a range of high, middle, and low show that in interpretive reasoning, 40% of the students received low ratings; in strategic reasoning, 83% received low ratings; and in adaptive reasoning, 94% of the students received low ratings. Although the scores are based on baseline data from entering freshmen and first semester juniors, the overall performance of our students is of critical and immediate concern.

The urgency to address critical thinking in higher education is evidenced by the attention Dr. Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, gives to the subject in his book entitled Our Underachieving Colleges, published in 2006. Bok notes that teaching students to think critically was cited by a majority of university professors who were surveyed regarding their feelings on the principal objective of an undergraduate education. A summary of his comments is that it is not enough simply to provide facts, dates, lectures, and tests to students. Such experience only encourages students to quickly recall sufficient details needed to convince the professor that the student has retained enough facts and information to receive a passing grade. According to Bok, concepts and theories have little value unless they can be applied to new circumstances long after formal classroom instruction has ended. In addition, Bok makes the following observation: "The ability to think critically, to ask pertinent questions, recognize and define problems, identify arguments on all sides of the issue, to search and use relevant data, and arrive in the end at carefully reason judgment is the indispensable means of making effective use of information" (109).

In citing research by other investigators on critical thinking, Bok makes three observations regarding the teaching of critical thinking:

1. Critical thinking and learning in general can be enhanced by giving students problems and having them teach each other by working together in groups.
2. Teachers who focus attention on the process of problem-solving can also help their

students. Researchers find that teaching students different strategies for solving problems can improve thinking. Encouraging students to reflect on their methods of reasoning and to try different approaches when initial efforts fail can significantly enhance performance.

3. In addition to adjusting their teaching to promote active learning, instructors need to give students frequent opportunities to test their cognitive skills and receive prompt feedback on the results. (118)

In a research article entitled “Teaching Thinking Skills,” Kathleen Cotton reviews a large body of research on thinking skills, including over fifty-six documents that range from research studies to reviews to descriptive and theoretical guidelines reflecting effectiveness of programs and practices in teaching thinking skills. Among the findings reported by Cotton are the following:

- ◆ Instruction in thinking skills is important; they are necessary for people to have in other rapidly changing, technologically oriented world; students, in general, do not have well-developed thinking skills; although people once believed that we are born either with or without creative and critical thinking abilities, research has shown that these skills are teachable and learnable.
- ◆ Instruction in thinking skills promotes intellectual growth and fosters academic achievement gains.
- ◆ Teachers who are trained to teach thinking skills are associated with student achievement gains.
- ◆ Infused thinking skills or a separate course lead to improved student performance, and elements of both are often used together, with beneficial results.
- ◆ Student performance has been shown to improve as a result of both direct teaching and inferential learning of thinking skills.
- ◆ Research supports providing instruction in a variety of specific creative and critical

thinking skills, study techniques, and metacognitive skills

- ◆ Instructional approaches found to promote thinking skill development include redirection, probing, and reinforcement; and asking higher-order questions during classroom discussions. (Cotton 10 -11)

Finally, in defining and teaching critical thinking, Lisa L Hill, in Key Words in Composition Studies, quotes viewpoints of several leading compositionists:

Critical thinking is the ability to formulate generalizations, entertain new possibilities, and suspend judgement” (Meyers, qtd. in Capossela 3). Critical thinking and its “synonym ‘reflective thinking,’ “presuppose “a speculative or questioning stance towards knowledge and experiences” (Petrosky, qtd. in Capossela 3-4). Critical thinking is seen as interdisciplinary, an approach reinforced in writing across the curriculum programs that have made critical thinking a practice and program goal (Berthoff 113-116; Fulwiler 3) For others, critical thinking occurs through acts of revision (Murray 145) leading to “the making of meaning” (Berthoff 115). To that end, Peter Elbow would teach students “two kinds of thinking”: “first order” “intuitive” thinking and “second order thinking” that strives for logic and control.” For Elbow, student-driven “[s]econd order thinking” is critical thinking” (Elbow 37). In Berthoff’s usage, however, critical thinking begins through teacher-directed activity: teachers model “critical thinking” which “is the capacity to see relationships methodically.” (114)

Currently, attention is given to critical thinking in three ways: in the recently instituted Freshman Studies Seminar, a new course in the revamped General Education Program; (2) a limited number of sections of critical thinking as a formal course is offered by the Department of History and Philosophy; and (3) in the First-Year Writing Program where critical thinking is included in the list of student outcomes for writing. Still, given the College Base data, there is only limited evidence to

indicate that the teaching of critical thinking skills is being infused in courses through the curriculum and in all majors. In developing a culture of writing at Virginia State University, an intentional goal will be to teach critical thinking through infusion in first-year writing courses, in general education courses through writing across the curriculum (WAC), and in intensive writing courses required in all disciplines (WID). Instead of relying on special courses in critical thinking, our expectation is that every teacher will create an environment in which “students are motivated and encouraged to read deeply, question assumptions, engage in divergent thinking, look for relationships among ideas, and grapple with real life situations” (Carr 73). There is evidence that this approach works based on the research done in the critical thinking initiative at Washington State University. WSU developed a “Guide to Rating Critical and Integrative Thinking” and asked faculty in a variety of disciplines to integrate the rubric after they have adopted it in their teaching and evaluation of student essays in their classes. Initially, in the four courses in which the rubric was used variously for instruction and evaluation, the student papers received significantly higher ratings than in the four courses in which the rubric was not used. Over several semesters, the papers continued to receive statistically higher scores than the papers emerging from courses where no such rubric was included. According to a report from the Critical Thinking Project at Washington State University:

Faculty who used the rubric were surveyed on their experiences. Unanimously, all the surveyed participants felt that the rubric helped clarify their expectations of students, and that by using the rubric in their instructional and evaluative methods, their students’ critical thinking abilities improved. Sixty percent also believed that their teaching abilities improved using the rubric, and eighty-eight percent will use the rubric again. Ninety percent of the faculty members who were surveyed said that their students met their expectations for critical thinking. (See <http://wsuctproject.wsu.edu/ph.htm>.)

Virginia State University plans to adopt the WSU Guide to Rating Critical and Integrative

Thinking in our effort to enhance the critical thinking skills of our students throughout the university. Faculty will be trained in faculty development workshops to adapt the rubric for use in their courses and how to assign and evaluate student writing using the critical thinking rubric.

E-Portfolios and the Culture of Writing

A critical component of the plan will be the use of e-portfolios for instruction and for assessment. The literature on e-portfolios in general review provides much support for the use of electronic portfolios to foster and assess students' writing and thinking competencies from the first-year writing courses to the point of graduation. Such portfolios at VSU, containing a collection of students' writing from their first year composition courses through their major courses, will serve a number of important functions.

First, they will serve as a means of assessment by the university, a way of demonstrating to faculty, parents, future employers, and students that a proficient level of critical thinking and writing skills has been achieved. In addition, students will have a collection of work that can be used to support employment or graduate school applications. Most importantly, these portfolios will also include a final essay that provides students an opportunity for reflection as a means towards a higher and more permanent level of learning.

At their best, portfolios require students to be thoughtful and reflective learners. An education that relies on lectures and exams as a means of assessment, a method that Paulo Freire refers to as the "banking concept of education" (53), leads only to short-term learning and students who are not reflective learners, but as stated by Bok, regurgitators. As Freire explains, in "the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry" (53). Portfolios can work against this type of repressive pedagogy, requiring students to actively engage in the collection and selection of that by which they will be assessed.

Furthermore, they require the students to reflect upon their learning. A senior portfolio as designed for VSU of writing requires the student to consider the progress that has been made, the bumps along the way, the triumphs, and the road ahead. Constructing a senior portfolio is only possible, of course, when the student's education has consisted of multiple opportunities for writing and reflection at each stage of education. Reflection, as we saw earlier, especially creates more knowledge and a deeper level of critical thinking.

In 1986, Pat Belanoff's and Peter Elbow's program at SUNY-Stony Brook began to gain national attention. As part of an emphasis on the processes of writing (such as drafting and revision), the portfolio system for assessing student writing was developed (Reynolds 4). This system has three components, all of which are student-driven: collection, selection, and reflection. The student collects the papers, journals, exercises, etc. that have been created throughout the semester, selects those elements that best represent his/her progress, and writes a reflective essay that articulates both the selection process and the progress that the student can see in his/her writing. According to Belanoff, because the student is so involved in the process, "portfolios promote a richer and more sophisticated understanding of writing and knowledge" (14). In addition, the portfolio approach "recognizes that learning occurs over time" (Belanoff 16). The student who may be writing "F" and "D" papers at the beginning of the semester often finds his/her way by midterm and is writing papers that are more in the "C" range by the end of the term.

Portfolios present a portrait of the student-writer as he/she is at the end of instruction. The alternative method of grading each paper as submitted throughout the semester reveals only an average of the progress made, and the student who is a competent writer at the end of the term may nevertheless fail the class as a result of the grades he/she received on earlier papers (a result that could have an impact on retention). This is not to say that portfolios artificially inflate grades. In fact, the portfolio approach can promote higher standards. Since the students have had the opportunity to revise their works more than once, they can be held to a higher standard by their instructors

(Belanoff 16). For all of these reasons, portfolios have become the accepted approach to the teaching of composition.

The Department of Languages and Literature at Virginia State University has been using portfolios since 1995. The impetus for this change was the mandate by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) that colleges and universities no longer offer remedial courses paid for by state funds. As part of the redesign of the first-year composition courses, portfolios were introduced. Coincidentally, 1995 was also the year that the Conference on College Composition and Communication, a division of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), recommended portfolio assessment for both teaching and evaluation. For the last twelve years, students in first-year writing classes have been writing four to five essays per semester (in addition to other forms of writing such as journals and in-class essays), choosing their best three, and revising them with assistance from instructors and peers. Most importantly, they write a reflective essay in which they discuss their reasons for including those particular papers in the portfolio and the progress that they have seen themselves make in the class.

How well our students retain what they have learned in first-year writing and apply that knowledge to their other courses is still unclear, although anecdotal evidence suggests a mixed result. That, of course, is what the QEP plan is designed to address. Recognizing that competence in academic writing takes place throughout the students' four years of college (as demonstrated, for example, in Lee Ann Carroll's recent study of student-writers at Pepperdine University), Virginia State University proposes the utilization of a senior portfolio that will contain essays and other written materials from the students' entire college career, including material collected from their major course work. The final reflective essay will require the student to make explicit the changes and adaptations necessary to writing for different audiences in different genres. The reflective essay will be the most important part of the senior portfolio (as it is in the classroom portfolio), since it is the reflection about the pieces collected that leads to deeper and continued levels of thinking and

learning (Cambridge 2).

This senior portfolio will be composed electronically. The electronic portfolio (or “e-portfolio”) is more than just a fancy new technological innovation that replicates the print portfolio. Rather, it presents a number of advantages, from its ability to be shared with multiple audiences (including future employers or graduate schools), to its ease of storage and portability, to the way it allows for a clearer articulation of the process behind the finished product. While our technologically-savvy students will have little problems with the technology, some faculty may need a little coaxing. Perhaps it will help to remember that even the humble pencil was once cutting-edge technology. This simple writing tool involves “advanced design techniques, the preparation and purification of graphite, the mixing of graphite with various clays, the baking and curing of the lead mixture, its extrusion into leads, and the preparation and finishing of the wood casings” (Baron 73). And Pencil 1.0 didn’t even come with an eraser!

Despite the challenges, the introduction of the senior e-portfolio will, in the end, provide a number of important benefits to our students. Kathleen Yancey proposes that “what we ask students to do is what we ask them to be” (738). In this case, we are asking them to be deeply reflective writers who can articulate their own writing process and do so using the kinds of technology that they will encounter in the business world. The kind of student that is represented in the print portfolio is not the same student that is represented in the e-portfolio (Yancey 742).

Electronic portfolios can follow one of three basic arrangements. The most simple replicates many of the features of the print portfolio and is simply a collection of the student’s work in a digital format, such as a CD-ROM or a web-based template (Yancey 744). The second version does not differ significantly from the first, but it makes use of hyperlinks (perhaps included in the reflective essay) that help the student to articulate for his/her readers the connections between the various pieces (Yancey 745). It, too, may be presented on a CD-ROM or web-based template. This is the format that has been used most by the Department of Languages and Literature at VSU. As

students and faculty become more comfortable with technology, and as newer technologies become available to students and faculty, a third type of e-portfolio is possible. This is what Yancey calls the “web-sensible” type. Here, the portfolio “through text boxes, hyperlinking, visuals, audio texts, and design elements not only inhabits the digital space and is distributed electronically but also exploits the medium” (Yancey 745-46). With the recent availability of the portfolio function within BlackBoard, instructors and students in the Department of Languages and Literature are just beginning to move towards a form of e-portfolio that combines the templates of a commercial product (albeit, very general templates) with the possibilities of visuals, audio, etc.

This last type of e-portfolio offers an arrangement that can highlight the student’s critical thinking skills by allowing for multiple levels of thought. Yancey suggests the analogy of a gallery. A print portfolio resembles a rail car. The reader enters at the front and “walks” through each component until arriving at the caboose (often represented by the reflective essay). The story that is told is a linear one of progress and achievement, again a useful arrangement skill. However, the e-portfolio offers the reader a different experience. As a gallery, the e-portfolio allows the reader to wander from room to room, branching off here and there before returning to the center to follow a different path. “Like a gallery,” this type of portfolio “makes multiple contexts a part of the display, which in the case of portfolios means linking internally to the student’s own work, linking externally to multiple worlds outside the student’s own purview to show multiple and complex relationships. . . . Often, there is an implied linear path, but that may be interrupted by peripheral links that themselves take one to the nooks and crannies of the [electronic] portfolio gallery” (Yancey 750). This arrangement allows the student to demonstrate a higher level of critical thinking and gives the reader a more complete picture of the process that went into the creation, collection, and selection of the pieces within the portfolio.

Of course, in implementing a senior e-portfolio, we can take advantage of the experiences of those who have come before us. One of the leaders in electronic portfolios is LaGuardia Community

College, part of the City University of New York. Their work with e-portfolios has garnered recognition from the Association of American Colleges and Universities as well as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (“ePortfolio at LaGuardia Community College” np). In 2001, faculty at LaGuardia began considering the implementation of an e-portfolio system. Following a year-long planning stage, the college moved on to testing a pilot program during the 2002-2003 academic year. Just over 800 students participated in the pilot program. While initial plans called for implementation college-wide in 2003, delays in the development of the program put the date off until Spring 2004. Training of faculty continued and a “Studio Hour” was added to the curriculum to provide training and support to students. Work continued in 2004-2005, with a total of 2,000 LaGuardia students completing e-portfolios. During 2005-2006, the project doubled with more than 5,000 students at LaGuardia Community College completing e-portfolios (“ePortfolio at LaGuardia Community College” np).

As LaGuardia’s experience demonstrates, the implementation of a senior e-portfolio requirement is not a quick process. It takes careful thought and implementation, as well as patience with set-backs and delays. The benefits, however, are tangible. According to LaGuardia, the e-portfolio system has given their students a place to collect and save their course work in a format that allows them to demonstrate their achievements to a wide range of readers, including faculty, other students, family, and friends (“ePortfolio at LaGuardia Community College” np). Students have used their portfolios to showcase “essays, poetry, original paintings, drawings, oral interviews, family photographs, annotated resumes, and a range of projects that represent who they are as students and emerging scholars” (“ePortfolio at LaGuardia Community College” np). Some students have used their portfolios for very practical purposes, such as supplementing their admission applications to 4-year colleges (“ePortfolio at LaGuardia Community College” np).

Another institution that has garnered attention for the success of its program is Valley City State University in North Dakota. A small university of around 1000 students, VCSU implemented

an e-portfolio program as a means for students to demonstrate competency in the eight abilities the University has deemed necessary for a successful VCSU graduate (Corwin 4). From its inception in 1995, the project has been a university-wide endeavor (Corwin 4). Portfolios are introduced to students in their freshman year when they learn basic technology skills as part of a required General Education course. As they progress through their major programs, students work with advisors within their majors to prepare senior e-portfolios that have been tailored by each department to suit its individual needs (Corwin 7). In addition, various handouts and support documents are on the university's website to assist the student (Corwin 8).

The introduction of e-portfolios at VCSU has already had a number of positive results. From a pedagogical point of view, VCSU has found that "students are becoming self-directed, self-assessing learners" (Corwin 11). In the process, students are leaving the university better prepared for the business world. In surveys conducted by the university, employers of new graduates have shown a steady increase in the level of their satisfaction with their new employees since the inception of the e-portfolio requirement. (Corwin 12)

E-portfolios have also found a home at HBCUs, where the technology has been adapted by the students to suit their particular needs. For example, Spelman College uses end-of-the-semester Web-based portfolios in their first-year writing courses. While there has been much written about the ways in which electronic publishing can erase the body and allow the writer (especially a female writer) to "re-imagine themselves different from their material and socially situated selves," Stephen Knadler has discovered that his students seek instead to "make their racial identity visible to a networked diasporic community" (236). His Spelman students have used their portfolios as sites of what he calls "resistant memory where they might be seen, heard, and—most importantly—"felt" (236). Many of them are the product of middle-class homes and, thus, feel pressured "to code switch, to police themselves against acting 'Black, Black' and to express only one part of their carefully negotiated hybrid identities" (237). In their portfolios, they refuse the silencing of

themselves as women as well as the masking of themselves as not “Black/ Black.” Instead, they celebrate their voices as they talk to each other within these portfolios.

Many other colleges and universities, including Elon College (one of VSU’s peer institutions), have also begun using e-portfolios. As an assessment tool, senior e-portfolios can provide an extraordinarily detailed and robust picture of the growth and competencies of the student as he/she nears graduation. As outlined above, there are a number of benefits: more reflective learning by the student, a tool to enhance employment and graduate school applications, and increased use of technology by both faculty and students. Evidence from Portland State University also suggests that e-portfolios, as used in the general education program, can have an impact on retention rates. At Portland State, e-portfolios have been credited in part with the fact that retention rates from first year to second year have more than doubled (Yancey 755). As retention has recently become an issue for Virginia State University, this is a benefit to consider as well.

E-portfolios are becoming a widely accepted tool for demonstrating the knowledge and abilities of soon-to-be college graduates. Our own students, in their first-year composition courses, have demonstrated both the ability and the preference to compose e-portfolios. In addition, their scores on these portfolios have shown an increase, suggesting the possibility that this technology (if used more consistently) can contribute to enhanced writing and critical thinking. Evidence from other colleges and universities also suggests that VSU will, in addition, see an increase in the amount of technology used by faculty in their courses and an increase in the retention rate of students.

Virginia State University can move to the forefront by implementing a senior e-portfolio that begins in the first year. Students can begin collecting material during their freshman year and learn the basic technology skills in their first-year composition classes. Students in Art and Education are already completing portfolios, and students in many other majors from Mass Communications to Business could also find the production of a senior e-portfolio a useful tool for applying for

internships and employment, in addition to graduate school. In sum, a culture of readiness for e-portfolios exists, and our QEP is a “natural” growth of that culture.

To develop the writing culture we envision and to successfully complete the e-portfolio, students will need academic support services in writing and in technology. The Writing/E-Portfolio studio we plan will be staffed with human resources in the form of a director, professional tutors, and peer tutors, as well as being equipped with informational resources and technological support to provide student, faculty, and staff with the assistance they need to enhance their writing for academic and professional success.

Since the early 1970s, the growth rate of writing centers (sometimes called writing studios) on college and university campuses has been remarkable (Hobson 165). By as early as 1991, Wallace and Simpson report that “nearly 90% of the institutions of higher education in the United States have developed writing centers or learning centers where writing is taught” (as qtd. by Hobson 165). Writing centers can be found at even the nation’s leading universities such as Duke University, Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, and many others. According to Hobson:

This pervasiveness of writing centers underscores the important role that writing centers (and writing studios) play in instructing and supporting writing across the educational spectrum. The opportunity for continued instruction that one-on-one and small group tutorials offer writers at all skill levels are important to students’ educational and rhetorical development. Writing centers, like the writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) programs with which they frequently collaborate, offer writers an environment and activity that can differ significantly from that found in many writing classes. (Hobson 165)

This difference centers upon the unique working environment of a writing center. A writing center is a “non-hierarchical structure” that facilitates a different kind of pedagogy from the teacher-driven classroom (Murphy 241). In writing centers or studios, “the pedagogical tool is talk” (Harris

np). The tutor is not there to correct or edit the student's paper. Rather, the paper is revised through conversation. As Harris notes, "the student is encouraged to do most of the talking, sometimes responding to questions the tutor asks, sometimes explaining what the tutor doesn't understand, or sometimes working through something the tutor suggests" (np). The tutor is a "facilitator, a counselor, a coach, a listener" (Harris np). For students who do not speak English as a first language, a writing center tutor can also be a kind of cultural informant (Harris np). Peer tutors can be especially effective as writers feel more comfortable with other students, and the tutors can sometimes better explain an idea or approach using examples that are relevant and understandable to the writer. Although recent technological advances have made it possible to locate much tutoring in an electronic format (such as the very successful on-line writing laboratory at Purdue University), the value of face-to-face tutoring can not be underestimated.

It should be emphasized that writing centers benefit the campus as a whole, not just writing courses. Some schools even develop satellite centers located specifically in certain schools, such as health sciences or business, in order to specifically address the challenges specific to writing in different disciplines (Blumner np). Some schools have also set up centers within the graduate school (Hobson 174). Tutors are trained to assist students in all kinds of writing, from an essay for a first-year composition course to a biology lab report to a Master's thesis in Education. Some centers, such as the one at Purdue University, "do community outreach that varies from providing a 'grammar hotline' to collaborating with public school and outside agencies on projects ranging from high school writing centers to corporate consulting" (Blumner np). While we don't propose such activities immediately, such community outreach—with, for example, the Petersburg schools—would increase the university's involvement in the community while, at the same time, pave the way for better prepared applicants to the university.

In addition to providing instruction and support of writing, the Writing Studio at Virginia State University will also be the place students can turn to for technological assistance with their e-

portfolios. Personnel specially trained in the technology will be available to work with students on the technical aspects of their writing. Ideally, in addition to assisting students with setting up and maintaining their portfolios, they will provide assistance to science, engineering, and business students in setting up graphs, charts, Excel spreadsheets, etc.

A typical Writing Center/Studio is a warm and inviting space that allows students a comfortable, non-confrontational space to work on their writing. It is a place for collaboration and dialogue, experimentation and risk-taking, in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. It can be both a contemplative and an incredibly lively environment. Muriel Harris describes a typical scene as follows:

If there were a magic device to freeze frame a moment during one of the busier times of the day, we would see the following. Near the entrance are several students leaning over the sign-in table, filling out record forms in preparation to see a tutor. At the reception desk is a small knot of people: one asking for a handout, another wondering if she could see a tutor soon, another, another [wanting] to use one of the computers, and yet another student who is twenty minutes late for his appointment and wonders if his tutor is waiting for him In addition, two ESL students, each waiting for a different tutor, are sitting on another sofa, talking quietly in their native language. An education major, about to make another attempt at passing the writing proficiency exam in the office next door, is tapping her pencil angrily on a history text she reads while waiting for her tutor At one of the tutoring tables, an older student sits with a tutor, sheaves of paper spread around the table At another table is a student in freshman composition, explaining his assignment to the tutor so they can begin some planning. (qtd. in Hobson 167)

The Writing Studio will be, by far, the most expensive component of the Quality Enhancement Plan, but it is also one of the most essential. A quality Writing/E-Portfolio Studio has

the potential to not only influence the quality of writing that our own graduates produce, but, if we engage in community outreach, it will have a positive impact on the community as well. Faculty, staff, and students must have appropriate support if the goals of the QEP are to be met.

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Actions to be Implemented in the Quality Enhancement Plan

Several key activities will be undertaken during the summer of 2008 to prepare for the implementation of the Virginia State University Quality Enhancement Plan: "Developing a Culture of Writing to Enhance Students' Academic and Professional Success." Perhaps, the most important of these activities will be to hire or appoint a Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan who will have the major responsibility for implementing the various components of the program over the next five years and for conducting the formative and summative assessment strategies that will be used to evaluate the program's success. The university's chief academic officer will be responsible for the search or for recommending an in-house candidate for the position.

The first major responsibility of the QEP Director, in consultation with the Chairman of the Department of Languages and Literature, will be to appoint a departmental Ad Hoc Committee on the First-Year Writing Program. The committee will revise the First-Year writing courses, ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II to meet the new first-year writing initiatives which includes aligning the courses with the WPA (Writing Program Administrators) first-year writing outcomes. The committee will develop common course syllabi for ENGL110 and ENGL111, including instructional objectives and guidelines, student learning outcomes, course resources, and rubrics for assessing learning. In addition, the Ad Hoc committee will design assessment rubrics for scoring and evaluating e-portfolios for first-year writing courses. The Program Director and the Ad Hoc committee will develop and conduct a two-day workshop on the implementation of the revised first-year writing courses. The writing faculty will be responsible for delivering the workshop. Consultants will be invited to serve as facilitators.

The final task for the QEP Director during the summer prior to the 2008 - 2009 academic year will be to identify a site for the Writing Studio/E-Portfolio Support Center. The QEP Director will

develop a proposal for rehabilitating the facility and making it operational by the 2009 - 2010 academic year.

The major activity for academic year 2008 - 2009, the first year of the program, will be the implementation of the revised first-year writing courses: ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II. Approximately 1,000 to 1,200 students are expected to enroll in the first course, ENGL 110, including new freshmen, returning students who must retake course, and transfer students who have not met the general education requirement in basic writing with a grade of "C" or better. Approximately 300 students are expected to enroll in the second course, ENGL 111, either for the first time or as repeaters who must earn a grade of "C" to satisfy the general education requirement. In the 2009 Spring Semester, approximately 800 - 900 students will enroll in the second course, and approximately 300 students, or 25% will repeat ENGL 110 because they failed to earn a "C" or better during the fall semester.

During the fall of 2008, the QEP Director will develop workshop design and instructional resources for WAC faculty development workshops. These workshops will be held during the summer of 2009. The purpose of the workshops will be to prepare faculty for their roles in developing the culture of writing through WAC activities throughout the academy. Four one-week workshops involving fifty faculty members each held during June and July of 2009 will train approximately 200 faculty members from a broad range of disciplines-- from the natural sciences to business to the social sciences. The faculty development activities are essential for launching the second phase of the proposed Quality Enhancement Plan. Based on the needs of the faculty, the QEP Director will identify WAC consultants for the summer workshops and for the pilot workshop to be conducted in the 2009 Spring Semester involving a core group of faculty who will serve as key WAC leaders in academic programs across the university. In addition to conducting the pilot WAC faculty development workshop in the 2009 Spring Semester, the QEP Director will pilot an e-portfolio group and develop website for culture of writing, including e-portfolio.

Another major undertaking during the spring of the first year, if not before, will be to hire or identify (in-house) a director of the Writing Studio. Working together, the QEP Director and the Writing Studio Director will develop the writing studio, including e-portfolio for students and faculty. The Writing Studio will be an integral part of the First-Year Writing Program, and it will play a major role in helping to develop the culture of writing at Virginia State University. Plans for staffing the studio and for training peer tutors will be developed. Furniture, equipment, instructional and tutorial resources, and technology support will be procured. The goal is to make the studio operational by July 2009, and open it to students, faculty, and staff by the beginning of academic year 2009 - 2010, the second year of the implementation of the QEP. Finally, the QEP Director, with the assistance of the Office of Technology, will identify a system for e-portfolios (e.g., Blackboard) and implement it.

During the summer of 2009, prior to the second year of implementation, the QEP Director will conduct a series of one-week faculty development WAC and WI workshops. With the assistance of the QEP Director, external consultants, and faculty leaders, faculty across the disciplines will prepare for their roles in developing a culture of writing. One of the goals of the faculty development workshops will be to provide faculty with an opportunity to revise their course syllabi to include more opportunities for students to use writing as a way of learning, to practice writing in disciplinary genres, and to enhance their critical thinking skills. Workshop participants will examine the Rubric for Critical and Integrative Thinking adopted from the Washington State University's critical thinking project. The rubric rates the students' integrative and critical thinking skills across seven dimensions as emerging, developing, or mastering. Dimension One focuses on task or issue identification, including subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of an issue and the relationships integral to effective analysis. Dimension Two focuses on scope and context, and considers audience of the analysis. Context includes recognition of the relative nature of context and assumptions, the reflective challenges in addressing this complexity and bias, including the way ethics are shaped by context and shape assumptions. Dimension Three focuses on ownership of an issue, indicated by

the justification and advancement of an original view or hypothesis, recognition of own bias, and skill at qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations. Dimension Four focuses on evidence of search, selection, and source evaluation skills, including accuracy, relevance and completeness. Dimension Five focuses on the treatment of diverse perspectives, effective interpretation and integration of contrary views and evidence through the reflective and nuanced judgement and justification. Dimension Six focuses on integrating previous dimensions and extending them as they explicitly and implicitly resolve in consequences. Dimension Seven focuses on the presentation. If written, it is organized effectively, cited correctly; the language used is clear and effective, errors are minimal, and the style and format are appropriate for the audience. During the faculty development workshops, faculty will work with critical thinking experts to understand the rubric, how to integrate the rubric into their courses, and how to use the rubric to assess the dimensions of critical thinking in their courses. All faculty participating in the faculty development workshops, but especially those who teach general education and/or writing intensive courses will be asked (and strongly encouraged) to adapt the critical thinking rubric for use in one or more of their courses. Faculty will be expected to utilize the ideas gleaned in the workshops to improve teaching and learning and to assist students in developing a culture of writing throughout the university for academic and professional success.

In the fall of 2009, the Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) will open to the Virginia State University community. The development of the Writing Studio will be ongoing with the goal of providing online tutorial services to the VSU community. In addition to opening the Writing Studio, another major activity for year two will be the assessment of first-year eportfolios developed in the first-year writing courses. The assessment will be undertaken to determine what is working and what needs work. The assessment will focus on the students who fail the first-year writing courses, the students who get D's, and the students who earn grades of "C" or better. The QEP Director will pilot an e-portfolio group and begin a graduated e-portfolio implementation by utilizing the work of the

first-year writing courses. After two semesters, fall of 2009 and spring of 2010, the QEP Director will conduct an assessment of students' critical and integrative thinking skills in general education courses and in other selected courses using the Integrative and Critical Thinking Rubric that assesses skills level as emerging, developing, and mastering.

During the summer prior to academic year 2010 - 2011, the QEP Director will conduct a second series of faculty development workshops for new WAC and WI faculty and for faculty who did not participate in the first round of workshops. In addition to focusing on implementation of WAC and WI instruction, participants will have an opportunity to review first-year writing eportfolios. The Director and supporting staff of the VSU Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) will continue to develop the studio.

Early in the 2010 Fall Semester, the QEP Director, in collaboration with the Writing Studio Director and staff will develop four showcase events. Two of the events will focus on faculty and include hosting a Veterans' Day activity and workshops that will give faculty an opportunity to share their experiences (especially their successes, strategies) in developing a culture of writing at VSU. Two activities will focus on student workshops that allow students to showcase their work in achieving the learning outcomes required in the VSU Quality Enhancement Plan, including their experiences with e-portfolios in first-year writing and in the e-portfolio pilot program.

The QEP Director will conduct an assessment of first-year writing portfolios for students enrolled in the First-Year Writing courses during academic year 2009 -2010. The purpose of the assessment will be to determine what is working and what needs work. Special attention will be on students who fail, students who get D's, and students who successfully pass the courses (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II) with a grade of "C" or better. In addition to assessing the extent to which students are meeting the writing outcomes of the first-year courses, the program will again conduct an assessment to determine the extent to which students are

meeting the dimensions of the Integrative and Critical Thinking Rubric used in general education and other selected courses throughout the curriculum.

In year 2011-2012, the fourth year of the QEP, the VSU Writing/E-Portfolio Studio will be completely developed and fully staff to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff. The on-line component and the e-portfolio support will be completely developed to deliver the writing instruction and support services needed for a 5,000 student campus and even larger community service area. During this year, the QEP Director will collect information on WAC activities and review Writing Intensive courses and students' success. The Writing/E-Portfolio Studio will again host showcase events for faculty and students that clearly show how the culture of writing is developing throughout the Virginia State University campus. The Director will pilot senior e-portfolio assessment and use the results to institute mid-course correction as required. As in year three, the QEP Director will conduct an assessment of students' integrative and critical thinking skills in selected courses utilizing the Integrative and Critical Thinking Rubric adapted for use in general education courses and other selected courses throughout the curriculum.

Year five, 2012-2013, is the critical year of the QEP. Having revised the First-Year Writing Program and implemented the two revised courses in the 2008 Fall Semester; having trained faculty to use writing across the curriculum pedagogy and practices in their courses; having integrated critical thinking instruction in general education courses and other courses throughout the curriculum; having designed and implemented writing intensive courses in the major and introduced students to the writing requirements for graduation; and having prepared students for the e-portfolio as a requirement for demonstrating their writing proficiency at the point of graduation, year five will be devoted to a five-year evaluation of the success of the Quality Enhancement Plan. During year five, the QEP Director will conduct assessment of first-year eportfolios to determine what's working and what needs work. The assessment will focus on the students who fail, the students who make D's, and the students who succeed. Information regarding WAC and WI activities will be collected

and reviewed. An assessment of students integrative and critical thinking skills will be conducted. An evaluation of the Writing/E-Portfolio Studio will be conducted to determine to what extent the goals and objectives of the studio are being achieved. Finally, a comprehensive review of the VSU's Quality Enhancement Plan will be undertaken to determine how the plan is working, what should be changed or modified, to what extent students are meeting the learning outcomes, and to provide evidence that a culture of writing is developing at VSU. The findings ascertained from the review will be used to write a five-year impact report to be submitted to SACS in June 2013.

QEP TIMETABLE AND ASSESSMENT PLAN

The assessment plan for the VSU Quality Enhancement Plan outlines (1) methods by which implementation of the QEP will be monitored (process checks), (2) the objectives of the QEP, (3) the proposed assessment method for each objective, and (4) the criteria by which the University will view the objectives as being met. The QEP objectives reflect the deliberate infusion of critical thinking into the University's writing initiative. In addition, a template for the development of the senior e-portfolio is presented.

Implementation Goal	As demonstrated by ...	Responsible Party	
<u>Summer 2008</u>			
Revise First-Year Writing courses (ENGL 110: Composition I and ENGL 111: Composition II)	Revised syllabi, e-portfolio scoring Rubric, and related course materials	QEP Director, Ad Hoc Committee on First-Year Writing Program	QEP Team and Languages and evaluate the rev
Complete faculty development workshop for writing faculty in the Department of Languages and Literature on the implementation of revised first-year writing courses	Faculty registration for and participation in two-day faculty Development workshop	Workshop facilitators, writing faculty in the Department of Languages and Literature, QEP Director	QEP Team and languages and L
<u>Fall 2008</u>			
Implement Revised ENGL 110	2008 fall and 2009 spring course schedules will reflect that multiple sections of revised first-year writing courses are offered.	Dean, School of Liberal Arts and Education and Chair, Department of Languages and Literature	QEP Team and Languages and Fall 2008/Spring
Develop and schedule WAC faculty development workshops	Workshop planning Documents, workshop instructional materials, published invitation to faculty to participate	QEP Director	QEP Team in co department chai president for Aca workshop materi workshop
Identify WAC consultants for faculty	Letters of commitment to serve,	QEP Director	QEP Team will r

Implementation Goal	As demonstrated by ...	Responsible Party	
development workshops	and completed travel arrangements		commitment
Advertise and hire Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) Director	Position announcement published by Office of Human Resources and signed contractual agreement	Position Screening Committee, QEP Director, Chair of Languages and Literature	QEP Director and Office will review documentation
Identify faculty members to serve as WAC leaders	Written requests to academic deans and chairs, written commitment forms to serve from faculty	QEP Team, deans, Vice President for Academic Affairs	QEP Director will review commitment forms
<u>Spring 2009</u>			
Pilot WAC/WID faculty development workshop	Registration of participants, record of attendance at workshop sessions	Workshop Facilitators	QEP Director will review workshop activities with Team
Plan pilot e-portfolio group	Written plan for pilot study	QEP Director and first-year writing faculty	QEP Director will review plan for the e-portfolio group
Communicate findings of e-portfolio group	Published report of results	First-Year writing faculty	QEP Team will review group's report of findings
Conduct assessment of all first-year e-portfolio in April of 2009 (to be repeated in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013)	Published report of results	First-year writing faculty	QEP Director, WAC Director, Chair of Languages and Literature
Develop and launch initiative website	Contractual agreement with webmaster to build site Operational website	QEP Director	QEP Director, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Director of Writing/E-Portfolio will review and approve agreement version
Develop writing studio with e-portfolio assistance and make operational by 2009 Fall Semester	Brochure describing services provided in Writing/E-Portfolio Studio and a description of e-portfolio assistance	QEP Director Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director	QEP Director, Chair of Languages and Literature, WAC Director
Summer 2009			
Conduct WAC faculty development Workshops	Faculty registration for and participation in two-day faculty development workshop	QEP Director, WAC and WID Leaders, external facilitators	QEP Director will review faculty attendance
Develop materials to assist faculty in the use of the critical thinking rubric within the context of their classrooms (included in faculty development workshop)	Written resource document describing how the rubric for critical thinking is to be used	Identified faculty members who teach general education courses and courses in the major	QEP Director, WAC Director will review the resource document for release
Implement use of critical thinking rubric	Faculty will use critical thinking rubric in relation to at least one class activity per class per term	VSU Faculty	QEP Director will review implementation
Fall 2009			
Open Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	The Writing/E-Portfolio Studio will provide assistance to first students	QEP Director Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director	QEP Director, WAC Director, Chair of Languages and Literature
Develop plan for assessment of first-year e-portfolios	Written plan for assessing first-year writing portfolios	QEP Director, Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director, and first-year writing faculty	QEP Team will review assessment plan
Begin phase one of e-portfolio implementation	Written plan describing the implementation process	Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director and first-year writing faculty	QEP Team and Chair of Languages and Literature plans
Year Three 2010-2011			

Implementation Goal	As demonstrated by ...	Responsible Party	
Assessment of first-year e-portfolios	Ratings for a sample of 300 fyc e-portfolios	Portfolio raters, including the Writing/E-Portfolio Studio director and first-year writing faculty members	QEP Team will r
Introduce WAC/WID to new faculty through additional faculty development workshops	Brochure announcing faculty development workshops, registration information, attendance sheets, and workshop evaluation forms	WAC and WID leaders, external workshop facilitators	QEP Director, de school deans wi
Develop and present showcase events involving faculty	Schedule of program events and fliers describing the available event opportunities, event registration, and attendance information	QEP Director and Writing/E-Portfolio Director	QEP Director
Develop and present showcase events involving students	Schedule of program events and fliers describing the available event opportunities	QEP Director and Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director	QEP Team will r events
Implement plan to assess critical thinking in general education courses and other courses in the curriculum using WSU critical thinking rubric	Written plan to assessment critical thinking in general education courses and other courses in the curriculum	Faculty in general education	QEP Team will r documentation o assessment and to discuss degre
Conduct summer workshop for WAC/WID faculty	Attendance information	QEP Director and WAC/WID leaders	QEP Director, de school deans wi
Year Four 2011-2012			
Pilot senior e-portfolio assessment	Ratings for a sample of 100– 300 senior e-portfolios	Portfolio raters, including the Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director and first-year writing faculty members	QEP Team will r feedback from ra
Host showcase events	Successful completion of two additional showcase events	QEP Director and Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director	QEP Team will r evaluations from
Compile information on WAC activities	Written plan for collecting information on WAC activities	QEP Director and WAC/WID leaders	QEP Team will r information
Review WID courses to determine whether they meet the hallmarks for writing intensive courses	Written plan for reviewing WID courses	QEP Director, WAC and WID leaders	QEP Team will r information
Review student performance	Written plan for reviewing student performance	QEP Director and Assessment Specialist	QEP Team will r learning outcom assessment repo
Continue use of critical thinking rubric	Faculty will use the critical thinking rubric in relation to at least one class activity per class per term	VSU Faculty	QEP Director, W review complete and meet with fa implementation
Year Five 2012-2013			
Conduct assessment of e-portfolio	Evidence of written assessment plan	QEP Director, trained e-portfolio evaluators with representation from across the curriculum, Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) Director	QEP Director Q President for Ac
Conduct assessment of e-portfolios	Ratings for a sample 100 – 300 e-portfolios	Trained e-portfolio evaluators with representation from across the	QEP Team will r and feedback fro

Implementation Goal	As demonstrated by ...	Responsible Party	
		curriculum, Writing/E-Portfolio Studios (WEPS) Director, Assessment Specialist	
Conduct assessment of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Writing E-Portfolio Studio assessment report	Writing/E-Portfolio Studio Director and Assessment Specialist	QEP Team will r Studio assessme
Review WAC/WID	WAC/WID assessment report	Faculty across the curriculum and Assessment Specialist	QEP Team will r assessment rep
Conduct summative assessment of QEP	Summative QEP assessment report assessment plan	QEP Director, Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (WEPS) Director, Assessment Specialist	QEP Team will assessment rep
Write and submit five-year impact report	Written and electronic copies of completed impact report	QEP Director	QEP Team will r report prior to su

ASSESSMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goal	As demonstrated by ... (Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
Establish a culture of writing	Enhanced student academic and professional success	Following objectives		5-years

Objectives/Learning Outcomes	As demonstrated by ... (Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
Students, in all disciplines will see writing as a means of learning throughout college.	Students reporting that writing is a valuable process through which learning occurs.	Attitudinal Survey	30% of all students 60% of all students 80% of all students	Year one Year three Year five
Faculty, in all disciplines will see writing as a means of learning throughout college.	Faculty members reporting that writing is a valuable process through which learning occurs.	Attitudinal Survey	60% of all faculty 80% of all faculty	Year two Year five
Students, in all disciplines will see creative thinking as a means of learning throughout college.	Students reporting that creative thinking is a valuable process through which learning occurs.	Attitudinal Survey	30% of all students 60% of all students 80% of all students	Year one Year three Year five
Faculty, in all disciplines will see creative thinking as a means of learning throughout college	Faculty members reporting that creative thinking is a valuable process through which learning occurs.	Attitudinal Survey	60% of all faculty 80% of all faculty	Year two Year three
Students, in all disciplines will see the first-year writing practices as foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.	Students reporting that the first-year writing practices are foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.	Attitudinal Survey	60% of all students 80% of all student	Year three Year five
Faculty, in all disciplines will see the first-year writing practices as foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.	Faculty reporting that the first-year writing practices are foundations for professionalized writing practices in the major.	Attitudinal Survey	30% of all students 60% of all students 90% of all students	Year one Year three Year five
Students will develop a writing process that is adaptable, across occasion, purpose, audience, and time.	The production of multiple written works that span multiple occasions, purposes, audiences and times.	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students need to be able to access, consume, interpret and evaluate information, both in print and online	The production of multiple works that appropriately make use of both print and online information	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students will be able to self-assess and reflect on their own performance using metacognition (Writing?)	Using the tools of metalanguage when reflecting on one's own work	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five

Objectives/Learning Outcomes	As demonstrated by ... (Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
Students will be able to create new texts and ideally new knowledge	The production of one of multiple next texts	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students will demonstrate technology literacy	<p>Using available electronic environments for drafting, revising, reviewing, editing, and submitting text</p> <p>Locating, evaluating, organizing, and using research sources includes web databases and informal networks, and intranet sources</p> <p>Understanding and exploiting the different rhetorical strategies available in electronic texts. Juniors and seniors understanding how research and composing processes and texts in their fields are influenced by digital technologies</p> <p>Juniors and seniors understanding how research and application in their fields are communicated by means of digital technologies</p> <p>Juniors and seniors understanding they can apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields.</p>	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students will demonstrate rhetorical knowledge at the successful completion of the first-year writing program	<p>Focusing on purpose</p> <p>Identifying and responding to the needs of differential audiences</p> <p>Responding appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations</p> <p>Using conventions of format, structure, and style appropriate to rhetorical situations</p> <p>Adopting appropriate voice, tone, level of formality</p> <p>Understanding how genres and modes shape reading and the composition process</p>	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five

Objectives/Learning Outcomes	As demonstrated by ...(Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of writing.	<p>Understanding the use of common formats for different kinds of texts.</p> <p>Developing knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics.</p> <p>Practicing appropriate means for documenting their work.</p> <p>Controlling such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors using conventions of usage, specialize vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields</p> <p>Juniors and seniors strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors employing knowledge of the main uses of writing in their fields.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors employing knowledge of the expectations of readers in their fields.</p>	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students will demonstrate competency in reading skills	Using reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five
Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically	<p>Integrating their own ideas with the ideas of others.</p> <p>Understanding the relationships among language, knowledge, and power.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors employing knowledge of the uses of writing as a critical thinking method.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors employing</p>	<p>College Base</p> <p>Guide to Rating Critical and Integrative Thinking</p> <p>Portfolio</p> <p>Portfolio</p>	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five

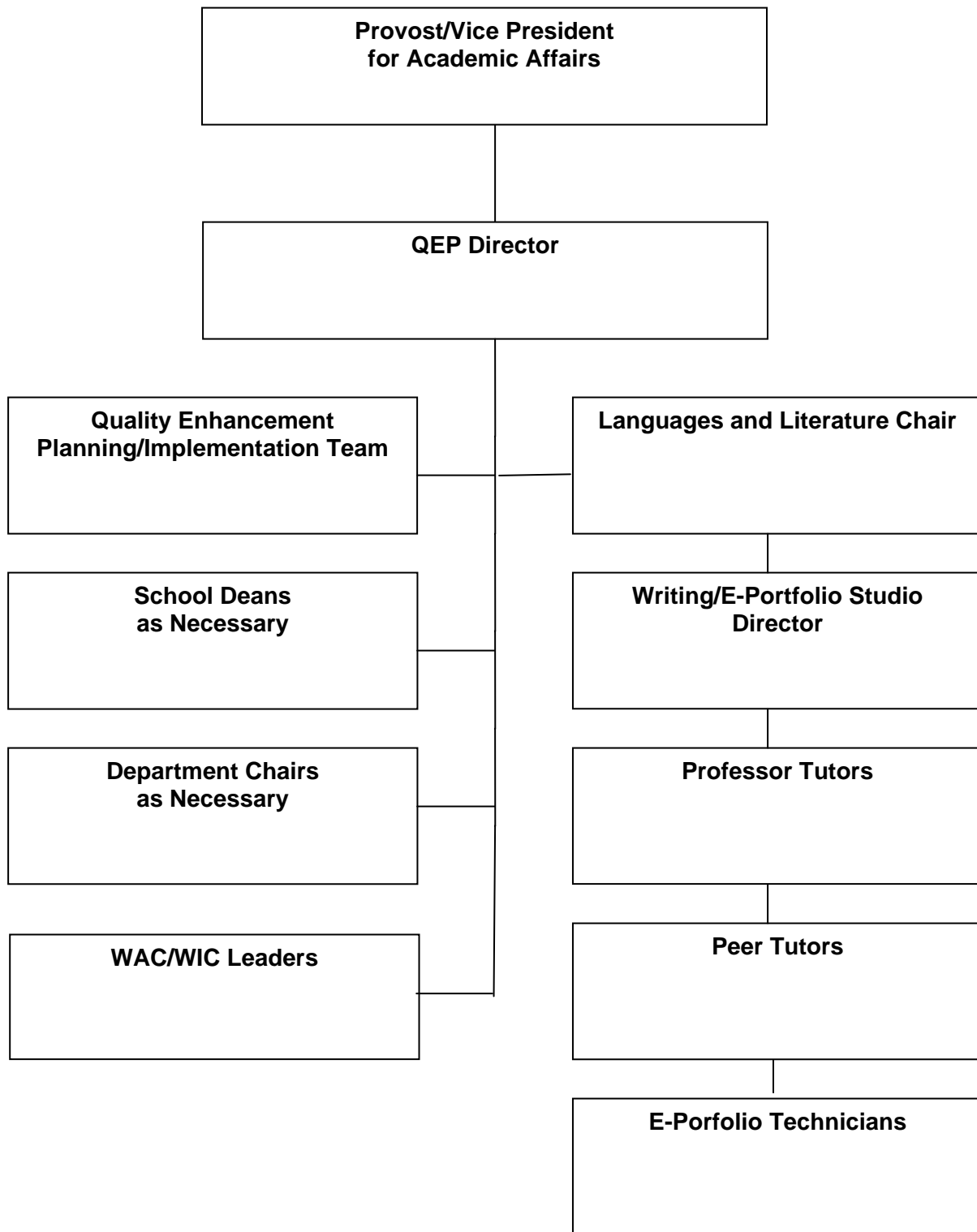
Objectives/Learning Outcomes	As demonstrated by ... (Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
	<p>knowledge of the interaction among critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors employing knowledge of the relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields.</p>	Portfolio		
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the writing process.	<p>Understanding the writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Being aware that is usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text</p> <p>Developing flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading</p> <p>Understanding writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and rethinking to revise their work</p> <p>Understanding the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.</p> <p>Critiquing their own and others work</p> <p>Balancing the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part</p> <p>Using a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences</p> <p>Juniors and seniors reviewing work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors building final results in stages.</p> <p>Juniors and seniors saving extensive</p>	Portfolio	Satisfactory (defined as) 70% 80% 85%	Year One Year Three Year Five

Objectives/Learning Outcomes	As demonstrated by ...(Objectives)	As measured by ...	Criteria for Success	Time period
	editing for later parts of the writing process.			
Faculty will create an environment in which "students are motivated and encouraged to read deeply, question assumptions, engage in divergent thinking, look for relationships among ideas ...	Students reporting that the learning environment motivates students and encourages them to read deeply, question assumptions, engages in divergent thinking, look for relationships among ideas	Classroom evaluation	60% of students will report a conducive learning environment 80% of students will report a conducive learning environment 90% of students will report a conducive learning environment	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5

Portfolio Development

Objective assessed by portfolio	Portfolio element(s)	Grading criteria
Students need to be able to access, consume, interpret and evaluate information, both in print and online		
Students will be able to self-assess and reflect on their own performance using metacognition (Writing?)		
Students will be able to create a new texts and ideally new knowledge		
Students will demonstrate rhetorical knowledge at the successful completion of the first-year writing program		
Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of writing.		
Students will demonstrate competency (?) in reading skills.		
Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically		
Students will demonstrate and understanding of the writing process		

QEP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



VSU will devote resources from four sources to implement the Quality Enhancement Plan:

1. **Infrastructure** - The University's structural facilities budget will be tasked with making structural changes to several office work areas in Colson Hall to house the University's Writing Center.
2. **Infrastructure** -VSU annually receives funding from the Commonwealth's Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF). HEETF funding will be used to equip the writing center.
3. **Operations** - The initial implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan, which consists of hiring professional staff for the Writing Center, training faculty to achieve the QEP's objectives and getting assessment tools in place, will be paid from Title III funds.
4. **Operations** - In the second year of the implementation, operational cost of the QEP will start to be integrated into the University's Educational and General (E&G) budget. Title III funding is only planned for the first three years of implementation. The final two years of implementation and going forward from that point, all costs associated with the QEP and the operation and maintenance of the Writing Center, will be paid from E&G funding.

The total cost to implement the QEP is \$2.2 million. The appendix provides a detailed budget of all operational cost through implementation. The summary below demonstrates the operational cost for the implementation by year and funding source. In the last years of the implementation, the cost to the University's E&G funds will be in excess of \$500,000, annually. The projected growth of the University's student body, plus increases in tuition as needed, will fund the additional cost as VSU integrates the Writing Center into its E&G budget.

Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement - By Funding Source
For Fiscal Years 2009 through 2013

Fiscal Year	Total	E&G	Title III
2009	207,494	82,099	125,395
2010	481,518	178,302	303,216
2011	491,177	307,788	183,389
2012	509,475	509,475	0
2013	533,690	533,690	0
Total	2,223,354	1,611,354	612,000

Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement
For Fiscal Year 2009

Activity	Description	2008-2009		
		Total	E&G	Title III
Hire or appoint QEP Director	75% Released time to implement QEP (8 courses @ \$3,800 per course for fall/spring/summer)	30,400	30,400	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	10,640	10,640	
Hire Director of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	100% of time devoted to Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (based on yearly salary of \$60,000.00 with 5% yearly increase)	60,000		60,000
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	21,000		21,000
Hire three Professional Writing Tutors	Hire three professional Writing Tutors (2 in year 2 and 1 in year 3) (\$45,000 per year, ten month basis with 5% yearly increase)	0		0
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	0		0
Hire technician to provide e-portfolio assistance in WEPS	Identify senior computer science majors to assist students with e-portfolio development (1 in year 2, and 1 in year three at 20 hours per week @ \$12.00 per hour X 38 weeks)	0		0
Hire faculty as WAC/WID leaders	Identify four faculty members as leaders (each faculty member will be given 25% released time with 5% yearly increase) (4 x 2 classes x \$3,800)	0		0
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	0		0
Identify and train Peer Tutors	Train 12 Peer Tutors 3 in year 2, 3, 4 and 5 for a total of 12 @ 15 hours per week X 30 weeks)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activity for Languages and Literature faculty	Course development and faculty development workshop for First-Year Writing Program (20 faculty @ \$200 and 10 faculty @ \$500)	9,000	9,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	689	689	
Faculty development activities for WAC and WID faculty leaders	Pilot faculty development workshop for select faculty with leadership roles in QEP development (20 faculty from across the disciplines in spring 2009 @ \$500 per faculty member)	10,000	10,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	765	765	
Faculty development activities for university faculty across the disciplines	A) Faculty develop workshops to train faculty for their role in developing the culture of writing and critical thinking skills(3-4 weeks involving 150-200 faculty throughout the university) (1 wk. X 500.00 per week X 200)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0		0
	B) Training for new faculty (15X\$500.00)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0		0
	C) Follow-up training for faculty (50 faculty per year at \$200 per faculty member)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0		0
Speakers and workshop facilitators for faculty development workshops	Travel and Honorariums	5,000		5,000
Program Assessment and Evaluation	Training, travel and honorariums	5,000	5,000	
Instructional resources and technology support for Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Software, hardware, supplies, educational resources, publishing, and related activities of WEPS	25,000	15,605	9,395
E-Portfolio development and learning outcomes management	TrueOutcomes for learning outcomes and assessment management	30,000		30,000
	Totals	207,494	82,099	125,395

**Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement
For Fiscal Year 2010**

Activity	Description	2009-2010		
		Total	E&G	Title III
Hire or appoint QEP Director	75% Released time to implement QEP (8 courses @ \$3,800 per course for fall/spring/summer)	31,920	31,920	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	11,172	11,172	
Hire Director of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	100% of time devoted to Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (based on yearly salary of \$60,000.00 with 5% yearly increase)	63,000	63,000	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	22,050	22,050	
Hire three Professional Writing Tutors	Hire three professional Writing Tutors (2 in year 2 and 1 in year 3) (\$45,000 per year, ten month basis with 5% yearly increase)	90,000		90,000
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	31,500		31,500
Hire technician to provide e-portfolio assistance in WEPS	Identify senior computer science majors to assist students with e-portfolio development (1 in year 2, and 1 in year three at 20 hours per week @ \$12.00 per hour X 38 weeks)	9,120	9,120	
Hire faculty as WAC/WID leaders	Identify four faculty members as leaders (each faculty member will be given 25% released time with 5% yearly increase) (4 x 2 classes x \$3,800)	30,400	30,400	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	10,640	10,640	
Identify and train Peer Tutors	Train 12 Peer Tutors 3 in year 2, 3, 4 and 5 for a total of 12 @ 15 hours per week X 30 weeks)	27,000		27,000
	FICA @ 0.765%	2,066		2,066
Faculty development activity for Languages and Literature faculty	Course development and faculty development workshop for First-Year Writing Program (20 faculty @ \$200 and 10 faculty @ \$500)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for WAC and WID faculty leaders	Pilot faculty development workshop for select faculty with leadership roles in QEP development (20 faculty from across the disciplines in spring 2009 @ \$500 per faculty member)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for university faculty across the disciplines	A) Faculty develop workshops to train faculty for their role in developing the culture of writing and critical thinking skills(3-4 weeks involving 150-200 faculty throughout the university) (1 wk. X 500.00 per week X 200)	100,000		100,000
	FICA @ 0.765%	7,650		7,650
	B) Training for new faculty (15X\$500.00)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0		0
	C) Follow-up training for faculty (50 faculty per year at \$200 per faculty member)	0		0
	FICA @ 0.765%	0		0
Speakers and workshop facilitators for faculty development workshops	Travel and Honorariums	20,000		20,000
Program Assessment and Evaluation	Training, travel and honorariums	5,000		5,000
Instructional resources and technology support for Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Software, hardware, supplies, educational resources, publishing, and related activities of WEPS	10,000		10,000
E-Portfolio development and learning outcomes management	TrueOutcomes for learning outcomes and assessment management	10,000		10,000
	Totals	481,518	178,302	303,216

**Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement
For Fiscal Year 2011**

Activity	Description	2010-2011		
		Total	E&G	Title III
Hire or appoint QEP Director	75% Released time to implement QEP (8 courses @ \$3,800 per course for fall/spring/summer)	33,516		33,516
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	11,731		11,731
Hire Director of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	100% of time devoted to Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (based on yearly salary of \$60,000.00 with 5% yearly increase)	66,150		66,150
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	23,153		23,153
Hire three Professional Writing Tutors	Hire three professional Writing Tutors (2 in year 2 and 1 in year 3) (\$45,000 per year, ten month basis with 5% yearly increase)	139,500	139,500	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	48,825	48,825	
Hire Technician to provide e-portfolio assistance in WEPS	Identify senior computer science majors to assist students with e-portfolio development (1 in year 2, and 1 in year three at 20 hours per week @ \$12.00 per hour X 38 weeks)	18,240	18,240	
Hire faculty as WAC/WID leaders	Identify four faculty members as leaders (each faculty member will be given 25% released time with 5% yearly increase) (4 x 2 classes x \$3,800)	31,920	31,920	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	11,172	11,172	
Identify and train Peer Tutors	Train 12 Peer Tutors 3 in year 2, 3, 4 and 5 for a total of 12 @ 15 hours per week X 30 weeks)	54,000	54,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	4,131	4,131	
Faculty development activity for languages and literature faculty	Course development and faculty development workshop for First-Year Writing Program (20 faculty @ \$200 and 10 faculty @ \$500)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for WAC and WID faculty leaders	Pilot faculty development workshop for select faculty with leadership roles in QEP development (20 faculty from across the disciplines in spring 2009 @ \$500 per faculty member)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for university faculty across the disciplines	A) Faculty develop workshops to train faculty for their role in developing the culture of writing and critical thinking skills(3-4 weeks involving 150-200 faculty throughout the university) (1 wk. X 500.00 per week X 200)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
	B) Training for new faculty (15X\$500.00)	7,500		7,500
	FICA @ 0.765%	574		574
	C) Follow-up training for faculty (50 faculty per year at \$200 per faculty member)	10,000		10,000
	FICA @ 0.765%	765		765
Speakers and workshop facilitators for faculty development workshops	Travel and Honorariums	5,000		5,000
Program Assessment and Evaluation	Training, travel and honorariums	5,000		5,000
Instructional resources and technology support for Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Software, hardware, supplies, educational resources, publishing, and related activities of WEPS	10,000		10,000
E-Portfolio development and learning outcomes management	TrueOutcomes for learning outcomes and assessment management	10,000		10,000
Totals		491,177	307,788	183,389

**Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement
For Fiscal 2012**

Activity	Description	2011-2012		
		Total	E&G	Title III
Hire or appoint QEP Director	75% Released time to implement QEP (8 courses @ \$3,800 per course for fall/spring/summer)	35,192	35,192	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	12,317	12,317	
Hire Director of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	100% of time devoted to Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (based on yearly salary of \$60,000.00 with 5% yearly increase)	69,458	69,458	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	24,310	24,310	
Hire three Professional Writing Tutors	Hire three professional Writing Tutors (2 in year 2 and 1 in year 3) (\$45,000 per year, ten month basis with 5% yearly increase)	146,475	146,475	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	51,266	51,266	
Hire Technician to provide e-portfolio assistance in WEPS	Identify senior computer science majors to assist students with e-portfolio development (1 in year 2, and 1 in year three at 20 hours per week @ \$12.00 per hour X 38 weeks)	18,240	18,240	
Hire faculty as WAC/WID leaders	Identify four faculty leaders (each faculty member will be given 25% released time with 5% yearly increase) (4 x 2 classes x \$3,800)	33,516	33,516	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	11,731	11,731	
Identify and train Peer Tutors	Train 12 Peer Tutors 3 in year 2, 3, 4 and 5 for a total of 12 @ 15 hours per week X 30 weeks)	54,000	54,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	4,131	4,131	
Faculty development activity for Languages and Literature faculty	Course development and faculty development workshop for First-Year Writing Program (20 faculty @ \$200 and 10 faculty @ \$500)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development Activities for WAC and WID faculty leaders	Pilot faculty development workshop for select faculty with leadership roles in QEP development (20 faculty from across the disciplines in spring 2009 @ \$500 per faculty member)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty Development activities for university faculty across the disciplines	A) Faculty develop workshops to train faculty for their role in developing the culture of writing and critical thinking skills(3-4 weeks involving 150-200 faculty throughout the university) (1 wk. X 500.00 per week X 200)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
	B) Training for new faculty (15X\$500.00)	7,500	7,500	
	FICA @ 0.765%	574	574	
	C) Follow-up training for faculty (50 faculty per year at \$200 per faculty member)	10,000	10,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	765	765	
Speakers and workshop facilitators for faculty development workshops	Travel and Honorariums	5,000	5,000	
Program Assessment and Evaluation	Training, travel and honorariums	5,000	5,000	
Instructional resources and technology support for Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Software, hardware, supplies, educational resources, publishing, and related activities of WEPS	10,000	10,000	
E-Portfolio development and learning outcomes management	TrueOutcomes for learning outcomes and assessment management	10,000	10,000	
	Totals	509,475	509,475	

**Virginia State University
Budget for Implementing Quality Enhancement
For Fiscal Year 2012**

Activity	Description	2012-2013		
		Total	E&G	Title III
Hire or appoint QEP Director	75% Released time to implement QEP (8 courses @ \$3,800 per course for fall/spring/summer)	36,952	36,952	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	12,933	12,933	
Hire Director of Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	100% of time devoted to Writing/E-Portfolio Studio (based on yearly salary of \$60,000.00 with 5% yearly increase)	72,931	72,931	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	25,526	25,526	
Hire three Professional Writing Tutors	Hire three professional Writing Tutors (2 in year 2 and 1 in year 3) (\$45,000 per year, ten month basis with 5% yearly increase)	153,799	153,799	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	53,830	53,830	
Hire Technician to provide e-portfolio assistance in WEPS	Identify senior computer science majors to assist students with e-portfolio development (1 in year 2, and 1 in year three at 20 hours per week @ \$12.00 per hour X 38 weeks)	18,240	18,240	
Hire faculty as WAC/WID leaders	Identify four faculty members as leaders (each faculty member will be given 25% release time with 5% yearly increase) (4 x 2 classes x \$3,800)	35,192	35,192	
	Fringe Benefits @ 0.35%	12,317	12,317	
Identify and train Peer Tutors	Train 12 Peer Tutors 3 in year 2, 3, 4 and 5 for a total of 12 @ 15 hours per week X 30 weeks)	54,000	54,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	4,131	4,131	
Faculty development activity for Languages and Literature faculty	Course development and faculty development workshop for First-Year Writing Program (20 faculty @ \$200 and 10 faculty @ \$500)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for WAC and WID faculty leaders	Pilot faculty development workshop for select faculty with leadership roles in QEP development (20 faculty from across the disciplines in spring 2009 @ \$500 per faculty member)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
Faculty development activities for university faculty across the disciplines	A) Faculty develop workshops to train faculty for their role in developing the culture of writing and critical thinking skills(3-4 weeks involving 150-200 faculty throughout the university) (1 wk. X 500.00 per week X 200)	0	0	
	FICA @ 0.765%	0	0	
	B) Training for new faculty (15X\$500.00)	7,500	7,500	
	FICA @ 0.765%	574	574	
	C) Follow-up training for faculty (50 faculty per year at \$200 per faculty member)	10,000	10,000	
	FICA @ 0.765%	765	765	
Speakers and workshop facilitators for faculty development workshops	Travel and Honorariums	5,000	5,000	
Program Assessment and Evaluation	Training, travel and honorariums	10,000	10,000	
Instructional resources and technology support for Writing/E-Portfolio Studio	Software, hardware, supplies, educational resources, publishing, and related activities of WEPS	10,000	10,000	
E-Portfolio development and learning outcomes management	TrueOutcomes for learning outcomes and assessment management	10,000	10,000	
	Totals	533,690	533,690	0

APPENDIX A:

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT SURVEY

FORM

DEVELOPING THE VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

SURVEY

OF

Faculty, Administration, Students, Staff, Alumni, and other Constituents

Virginia State University is in the process of developing a Quality Enhancement Plan as part of our reaffirmation of accreditation in March 2008. According to SACS, "the QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student learning." The Quality Enhancement Planning Team has the responsibility of helping to develop the Plan, and it solicits your ideas in selecting a topic. In addition to participating in one of the Open Forums, you can help us by completing this survey.

Questions

1. Please identify 3 or 4 topics (issues) that you think are critical to improving student learning at VSU.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

2. Of the topics (issues) listed, which one do you think would have the greatest impact on improving student learning?

3. Why do you think this topic/issue is important?

Identifying Information

Name: _____ (optional)

Department: _____ School: _____

Teaching Area: _____ Administrative Unit: _____

Please check (✓) the title that best describes you.

____ Faculty

____ Administrator

____ Staff

____ Student

____ Board Member

____ Alumnus/Alumna

Thank you for your input.

Please return the survey by e-mail to: fthomas@vsu.edu or mail to Freddy L. Thomas, Box 9072, Department of Languages and Literature, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA 23806. Also, you may drop the completed form in the QEP Suggestion Box in 208 Harris Hall.

OPEN FORUMS

February 1, 2007	-	3:30 p.m.
February 6, 2007	-	3:30 p.m.
February 7, 2007	-	4:00 p.m.
February 7, 2007	-	6:00 p.m.
February 12, 2007	-	4:00 p.m.

Harris Hall - Colson Auditorium

APPENDIX B:

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT SURVEY

RESULTS

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

Student Learning Focus	Related Topics	Non-Student Learning Focus
Focus on reading and writing skills	Service learning	Strong team building among staff
Teach Information literacy	International studies/curriculum	Social activism and entrepreneurship
Teach mathematical estimation		Project development
Critical thinking	Study skills/learning skills	Internships and service learning
Focus on writing and speaking	Improve presentation skills	Teaching in fields of expertise and experience
Stress analytical and critical thinking skills	Interactive teaching	Collaboration between VSU and other institutions
Provide reading in the content areas	Faculty/student interaction	Greater coordination within the GE program
Encourage information literacy across the curriculum	Student centered learning	Strategic management
Offer writing intensive courses	Develop appreciation for learning	Project management
Offer speaking intensive course	Support services for reading and writing	Beneficial learning experiences
Improve critical thinking		Enable wireless learning
Provide students with more technology	More elective courses	Helping students learn to maintain their own records for graduation
Improve foreign language instruction	Develop mentoring programs for students	Comfortable seating in classrooms
Encourage writing across the curriculum	Establish writing center	Aesthetically pleasing learning environments
Offer Intensive writing courses	Develop anti-plagiarism policy	Faculty who can relate to students
Provide opportunities for students to write more in courses	Improve academic environment	Provide for choices and more academic extra curricular activities
Improve mathematical skills	Improve academic advising	Improve dialogue between students/faculty/staff
Improve student writing skills	Enhance academic environment	Offer online classes for all school areas
Improve student critical thinking skills	Develop study abroad programs	Increase evening class offerings
Improve student critical reading skills	Use of technology in the classroom and out of classroom	Improve curricula offerings
Improve reading and writing skills	Improve teaching effectiveness	Improve services to students
Develop critical thinking skills of	Increase student opportunities to	Create learning assistance center

students	engage in research/outreach	and student academic support services
Provide remedial English/writing/grammar	Improving ethical behavior in top management	Create Afro-American Studies department
Offer remedial mathematics	Help students develop motivation to learn	Make university catalogs available to students
Develop computer literacy	Organize tutorials to help students improve learning	Provide more financial aid to students
Improve technology skills of students	Provide professional development programs for students	Understanding the global society
Provide solid mastery of good writing skills	Developing good character	Hiring faculty capable of teaching our students
Expose students to multi-literacies	advising	
Stress the importance of quality reading and writing skills	Student dispositions/faculty dispositions	Improving learning facilities
Improve student communication skills	Library use	Hands-on-training
Develop excellent writing skills	Improve advising	Classroom discipline
Encourage reflective practice in all disciplines	Create self-paced learning environment	Reading and writing center
Improve writing competence and critical thinking skills	Ethical development/self discipline	Recognition of students' academic achievements
Improve writing skills	Develop managerial skills/integration of skills	Computer consoles for every classroom
Improve critical thinking	Develop conceptual learning	A distinguished lecture series
Improve oral communication skills	Better understanding and use of library services	Increase faculty research
Improve reading and writing skills	Hands-on experiences	Provide financial aid and/or organize workshops for student financial aid
Improve mathematical skills	Students' participation in class such as team projects	Instill a sense of pride and self-respect in our students
Enhance the use of technology in the classroom/out of classroom	Internships related to major field of study	Shift in paradigms to encourage high academic performance/classroom decorum
Improve writing skills	Provide resources that focus on improving student writing ability	Provide tutorial services
Enhance information technology proficiency	Stress importance of class over other social/university activities	Provide more financial aid/on-campus working opportunities
Improve oral and written communication skills	Improving student ethical training	Schedule classes in longer blocks of contact time
Improve of analytical thinking skills	Increasing student motivation to learn	Creating projects that provide real life experiences/internships
Improve student writing skills	Provide strong ethical training	Increase quality of incoming students
Improve oral and written	Encourage active learning	Develop cooperation among

communication skills		students
Improve analytical reasoning skills	Offer courses in ethics	Improve skills and knowledge of teachers
Improve student technical writing/grammar improvement	Promote smaller class sizes	Provide more financial aid
Improve mathematical skills of students	Provide more access to technology in each classroom	Provide more classes related to new technology
Improve technical writing skills		Provide some curriculum related activities
Improve student skills basic mathematics/statistics		Provide more time for studying/reduce class load
Improve writing skills		Require labs in mathematics and writing
Improve mathematical/logical background		Require speech communication laboratory
Develop library skills		Require exist exams in mathematics, writing, and speech
Improve student background in English and mathematics		Require students to obtain a laptop computer upon admission
Improve student writing ability/library skills		Require/enforce attendance policy
Enhance technology skills		Raise admission standards and promote diversity
Enhance student reading skills		Involve students in community organizations and institutions
Foster critical thinking		Increase internship opportunities
Develop writing across the curriculum program		Provide 24 hour access to labs
Improve reading skills		Ban internet access in normal lecture classes
Improve student study skills		Scholarship/facilities/library
Improve writing skills		Speed-up conversion of all classrooms to smart classrooms
Improve student communication skills		Reduce faculty teaching loads
Teaching students intensive writing and speaking skills		Provide more opportunities for graduate student support
Improve student critical thinking skills		Create virtual classroom
Develop reading and writing skills		Hire faculty that speak English fluently
Enhance student academic skills		
Improve student oral and written communication skills		Invest in training and mentoring of instructors, faculty, and teaching assistants
Improve mastery of good writing skills		Identify students who want to learn and faculty who want to teach

Improve student information literacy skills		
Improve written skills		
Improve writing ability and oral communications skills		
Improve writing, reading, and critical thinking ability		
Develop critical thinking		
Develop critical thinking through writing		

APPENDIX C:
LETTER FROM PROVOST
AND
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AND
STUDENT AFFAIRS
TO FACULTY REGARDING
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

MEMORANDUM

A Reminder

FROM: Eric Thomas, Provost and Vice President
for Academic and Student Affairs

TO: Faculty, Administration, Staff, Students, and Alumni
Virginia State University

DATE: January 17, 2007

RE: SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation

I am writing to remind you of an extremely important endeavor in which the university is involved and to encourage your participation in the process. For several months now, the university has been undergoing a periodic review of all aspects of its operation to develop a Compliance Certification document that is required to reaffirm its accreditation by the Commission on Colleges (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

As part of the university reaffirmation, Virginia State University is required to submit a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The Quality Enhancement Plan "addresses a well-defined issue or issues directly related to improving student learning," and its development requires broad participation by all constituents of the university academic community. Virginia State University is committed to providing the required resources during the next five to ten years in developing and implementing a forward looking plan designed to significantly enhance student learning throughout the university.

A year ago, the General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Curriculum and Academic Issues Committee of the VSU Faculty Senate, examined the performance of VSU's students on the College Base Test of ETS and used the findings to revise and broaden the General Education Program. The new General Education program was instituted in the 2006 Fall Semester. In November 2006, after exhaustive discussions, the General Education Committee recommended several topics to the Quality Enhancement Planning Team for consideration in selecting a topic for the QEP.

Page -2-
SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation
February 7, 2008

Over the next few weeks, Dr. Freddy L. Thomas, the QEP Director, and the QEP Planning Team will solicit suggestions for a QEP topic through a series of university-wide open forums and a campus-wide e-mail survey. I invite and encourage all members of the university community to participate in this part of the reaffirmation process. Our goal is to select a topic that will result in meaningful learning experiences for our students.

Please see the dates for the Open Forums on the attached sheet.

APPENDIX D:

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLANNING

TEAM

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLANNING TEAM

Dr. Freddy L. Thomas	Director, Quality Enhancement Plan
Dr. Donna Crawford	Director, General Education Program
Mr. Ray Davis	Representative, VSU Alumni Association
Dr. Robert DeLong	Chemistry/Physics - School of Engineering, Science and Technology
Dr. Deborah Goodwyn	Representative, VSU Faculty Senate
Dr. Dawit Haile	Mathematics/Computer Science - School of <hr/> Representative, VSU Student Government
Dr. Renee Hill	History and Philosophy - School of Liberal Arts and
Dr. Weldon Hill	Dean, School of Liberal Arts and Education
Mr. Dennis Jones	Finance and Administration
Mrs. Paula McCapes	Representative, VSU Staff
Dr. Linda Person	Athletics/Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation
Ms. Rosezelia Roy	Students with Disabilities - Student Affairs
Dr. Cheryl Stampley	Social Work - School of Liberal Arts and Education
Dr. Eric Thomas	Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Dr. Vykuntapathi Thota	Associate Dean of Graduate School/Dean of Summer School
Dr. Elsie Weatherington	Dean, Library Services
Dr. Deanne Williams	School of Agriculture
Dr. Keith Williamson	Engineering - School of Engineering, Science, and Technology
Dr. Dong Yoo	Computer Information - School of Business

APPENDIX E:

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**MEMBERS OF GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
2005 - 2006**

Renee A. Hill, Chair	History and Philosophy	
Majid Amini		History
	and Philosophy	
Ghyasuddin Ahmed		Sociology,
	Social Work, and Criminal	
Asmare Atalay		
	Agriculture	
Diann Baecker		Languages
	and Literature	
Kwadwo Bawuah		Economics
Kenneth Bernard		Mathematics
	and Computer Science	
Moula Cherikh		
	Computer Information Systems	
Donna Crawford		Languages
	and Literature	
Carl Garrott		
	Languages and Literature	
Nassen Ghariban		
		Engine
		ering
		and
		Techn
		ology
Deborah Goodwyn		Languages
	and Literature	

Fabio Guerinoi		Mathematics and Computer Science
Ethel Haughton		Music, Art and Design
Lawrence Hawthorne		Music, Art and Design
Kay Heath		Languages and Literature
Weldon Hill		Dean, Liberal Arts and Education
Jewel Hairston		Agriculture
J. Randy Holmes		Languages and Literature
Amir Javaheri		Engineering and Technology
Gary MacDonald		Languages and Literature
Rebecca Nelson		Mathematics and Computer Science
Ben Nwoke		Engineering and Technology
Emmett Ridley		Director, Institutional Planning and Assessment
Hildegard Rissel		Languages and Literature
Ehsan Sheybani		Engineering and Technology
Freddy L. Thomas		Languages and Literature
W. Eric Thomas		Academic and Student Affairs

APPENDIX F:
UNIVERSITY PLANNING COUNCIL
AND
COMMITTEES

**UNIVERSITY PLANNING COUNCIL
2006 - 2007**

Adkins-Easley, Mona	Associate Vice President for Human Resources
Ansari, Ali	Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Research, and Outreach
Amini, Majid	Associate Professor, Department of History and Philosophy
Brown, Larry	Associate Dean, School of Engineering, Science, and Technology
Bejou, David	Dean, School of Business
Cone, Clementine	Vice President for Administration and Finance
Dial, Cortez	Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff
Garner, Sanda G.	Chair, Faculty Staff
Goodwyn, Deborah	Chair, Faculty Senate
Harris, Wesley	President, SGA
Hill, Weldon	Dean, School of Liberal Arts and Education
Hobbs, Alma	Dean, School of Agriculture
Hunter, James	Vice Provost
Jones, Dennis	Director, Budget Office
Marchand, Judy	Chief Information Officer
Reed, Thomas	Director, University of Relations
Ridley, Emmett L.	Director, Institutional Planning and Assessment
Shackleford, Michael	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Singfield, Marie	Administrative Assistant to the Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Thomas, W. Eric	Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Thomas, Freddy L.	Director, SACS Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Turner, Robert L.	Vice President for Development
Weatherington, Elsie	Dean, University Library
Wilson, Carolyn	Vice Chair, Faculty Senate
Yarbrough, Patricia	Special Assistant to the President

UNIVERSITY PLANNING COUNCIL COMMITTEES

I. Academic Excellence Committee

Co-Chairs:	Deborah Goodwyn W. Eric Thomas	Members:	Judy Rios (SGA) Thelma Jefferson (SS) Joyce Edwards (FS) Ben Nwoke (FS)
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II. Superb Co-Curricular Activities Committee

Co-Chairs:	Michael Shackelford Wesley Harris	Members:	Aimee Smith (SGA) Sandra Garner (SS) Nasser Ghariban (FS) Cheryl Adeyemi (FS)
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III. Research Agenda for the 21st Century Committee

Co-Chairs:	Ali Ansari W. Eric Thomas	Members:	Student Representative (SGA) Deressa Miller (SS) Asmare Atalay (FS) Isis Walton (FS)
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IV. New Millennium Technology Committee

Co-Chairs:	Elsie Weatherington Judy Marchand	Members:	Student Representative (SGA) Paula McCapes (SS) Ephrem Eyob (FS) Earl Newby (FS)
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V. Progressive Financial Management Committee

Co-Chairs:	David Bejou Clementine Cone	Members:	Student Representative (SGA) Linda Scott (SS) Kwadwo Bawuah (FS) David Crosby (FS)
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VI. Outstanding Facilities Committee

Co-Chairs: Clementine Cone
Carolyn Wilson

Members: Student Representative (SGA)
Daphne Lee (SS)
Roger Doss (FS)
Cheryl Stampley (FS)

VII. Premier Development Program Committee

Co-Chairs: Robert Turner
W. Weldon Hill

Members: Student Representative (SGA)
Monique Robinson (SS)
Milton Faison (FS)
Thomas Larose (FS)

VIII. President's Office and Advancing the Athletics Cause Committee

Co-Chairs: Cortez Dial
Mona Atkins-Easley

Members: Student Representative (SGA)
Barbara Taylor (SS)
Gilbert Gipson (FS)
Majid Amini (FS)

APPENDIX G:
HALLMARKS OF WRITING INTENSIVE
COURSES

**(Adopted from the University of Hawaii
Writing Program (with permission))**

HALLMARKS OF WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES

1. **The course uses writing to promote the learning of course materials.** Instructors assign formal and informal writing, both in class and out, to increase students' understanding of course material as well as to improve writing skills.
2. **The course provides interaction between teacher and students while students do assigned writing;** in effect, the instructor acts as an expert and the student as an apprentice in a community of writers. Types of interactions will vary. For example, a professor who requires the completion of one long essay may review sections of the essay, write comments on drafts, and be available for conferences. The professor who requires several short papers may demonstrate techniques for drafting and revising in the classroom, give guidance during the composition of the papers, and consult with students after they complete their papers.
3. **Writing contributes significantly to each student's course grade.** Writing assignment must make up at least 40% of each student's grade. If not, the course syllabus must state that students must satisfactorily complete all writing assignments to pass the course with a "D" or better.
4. **The course requires students to do a substantial amount of writing—a minimum of 4,000 words, or about 16 pages.** This may include informal writing. Depending on the course content, students may write analytic essays, critical reviews, journals, lab reports, research reports, or reaction papers, etc. In-class exams and drafts are not counted toward the 4,000-word minimum.
5. **To allow for meaningful professor-student interaction on each student's writing, the class is restricted to 20 students.** Professors who team teach or who are assisted by a teaching assistant may request that the enrollment be higher as long as a 20-1 student faculty ratio is maintained.

APPENDIX H:

PORTFOLIO SCORING GUIDE

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

Each portfolio should be read holistically and given a single comprehensive score on a six-point scale (“6” is high and “1” is low). In determining that single score, do not average each essay but judge the quality of the portfolio as a whole. In doing so, give greater weight to the longer and more substantial pieces, and reward variety and creativity.

With electronic portfolios, give greater weight to the writing than to the presentation. If the writing does not pass, the portfolio fails regardless of the quality of the presentation.

Please consult the student’s instructor or F.L. Thomas if you believe a portfolio does not meet the stated requirements or if for any other reason you have trouble scoring it.

6 A portfolio that is excellent in overall quality. It is characteristically substantial in content (both length and development) and mature in style. It demonstrates an ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully and to use language creatively and effectively. Voice tends to be strong, and there is usually a clear sense of audience and context. Often, there is a close connection between the writer’s sense of self and the writing and/or a sense of thematic unity within the separate portfolio pieces. A “6” portfolio typically takes risks that work—either in content or form—and challenges the reader by trying something new.

In addition to the above criteria, an electronic portfolio displays the following qualities in presentation and critical thinking:

The presentation is both creative and effective. It is aesthetically pleasing and appropriate to the particular rhetorical context. As with the writing, there is a clear sense of audience. In addition, the reader gets a clear sense of the character of the writer. The design does not overwhelm the content, but rather compliments it.

Critical thinking skills are demonstrated by the quality of the links made between documents. The writer goes beyond the required minimum number of links and uses links to demonstrate critical thinking skills (such as the process used in preparing a paper). Each link works and adds something significant to the overall persuasiveness of the portfolio.

5 A portfolio that is very good in overall quality. It suggests the excellence that the “6” portfolio demonstrates. Typically, a “5” portfolio is substantial in content, although its pieces are not as fully developed as a “6,” and it uses language effectively but not as creatively as a “6.” It suggests an ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully, and its voice is clear and distinct if

not powerful. Sense of audience and context is clearly present if not always firm. A “5” portfolio tends not to take as many risks as a “6.”

In addition to the above criteria, an electronic portfolio displays the following qualities in presentation and critical thinking:

The presentation is effective but perhaps not as creative as a “6.” The writer’s character may not be fully individualized or the design entirely appropriate to the rhetorical context. Nevertheless, it is evident that care was taken in creating the design, which compliments, rather than overwhelms, the content.

Critical thinking skills are demonstrated through the quality of the links made between documents. The writer may not include many links beyond the required minimum, but all of the links work and add something significant to the overall persuasiveness of the portfolio.

4 A portfolio that is good in overall quality. The writing is competent both in content and style. There are more strengths than weaknesses, but there may be an unevenness of quality or underdevelopment in one or two pieces. The reader may want “more” to be fully convinced of the writer’s ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully and to use language effectively. There is a sense of audience and context, but some of the writing may seem formulaic or lack strong voice. There tends to be minimal risk-taking or originality.

In addition to the above criteria, an electronic portfolio displays the following qualities in presentation and critical thinking:

The presentation is good, but perhaps not very creative. Generally, it is appropriate to the audience and rhetorical context. It presents a competent, if not unique, sense of the writer’s character. Some aspects of the design may be ineffective or difficult to read.

Critical thinking skills are demonstrated through the quality of the links made between documents. The writer may not go beyond the required minimum number of links, or the relevance of the links may not always be apparent. However, the overall impression of the writer’s critical thinking skills is good.

3 A portfolio that is fair in overall quality. It suggests the competence that a “4” portfolio demonstrates. Strengths and weaknesses tend to be evenly balanced—either within or among the essays. One or more the pieces may be too brief or underdeveloped. There is some evidence of the writer’s ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully and to use language effectively, but it is offset by recurring problems in either or both content and style. A “3” portfolio often lacks a clear sense of audience and a distinctive voice.

In addition to the above criteria, an electronic portfolio displays the following qualities in presentation and critical thinking:

The presentation is fair and satisfies the minimum requirements in terms of design. The design may appear to be formulaic or be difficult to read. It may also be inappropriate to the

given rhetorical situation (for example, it may be too informal either in language or in the images presented).

Critical thinking skills may be difficult to assess because the student provides no more than the minimum required number of links. Alternatively, the writer may provide more than the minimum number of required links, but the files linked to appear to serve no rhetorical purpose or may not work.

2 A portfolio that is below average in overall quality. It does not suggest the writing competence that a “3” portfolio does. Weaknesses clearly predominate over strengths. The writing may be clear, focused, and error-free, but it is usually thin in substance and undistinguished in style. Two or more of the pieces may be either short and undeveloped or abstract and vague. Moreover, the writer rarely takes risks, relying instead on formulas and clichés. There is little evidence of the writer’s ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully. The few strengths of a “2” are more than overbalanced by significant weaknesses.

In addition to the above criteria, an electronic portfolio displays the following qualities in presentation and critical thinking:

The presentation is poor. It may lack distinction or any sense of creativity. Alternatively, the design may be distinctive but overwhelm content, appear irrelevant or inappropriate to the content, or make the portfolio difficult to read.

Critical thinking skills appear weak. The writer may not have provided even the minimum number of links required. Links may not work.

1 A portfolio that is poor in overall quality. There are major weaknesses and few, if any, strengths. A “1” portfolio lacks the redeeming qualities of a “2.” It is usually characterized by brief pieces that are unoriginal and uncreative in content and style. The portfolio seems to have been put together with very little time and thought.

The presentation is poor and appears to have been hastily constructed.

Critical thinking skills appear weak. The writer may not have provided even the minimum number of required links and at least one of those links do not work.

INTERPRETATION OF PORTFOLIO SCORING SCALE

Portfolio Raw Score	Numerical Score	Grade Equivalent
6	100	A
5	90	B+
4	80	B
3	70	C
2	60	D
1	0	F