Elon University

Writing Excellence Initiative

Quality Enhancement Plan

For Submission To
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

DRAFT

This draft is prepared for review and discussion by
Elon’s faculty, staff and students.

December 12, 2012
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CHAPTER 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Elon University is prepared to embark on a five-year Writing Excellence Initiative that will significantly enhance the writing abilities of all Elon students, undergraduate and graduate, in every major and program. The Initiative fulfills a requirement for Elon’s reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. More important, it will increase our ability to educate our students as “engaged minds, inspired leaders, and global citizens,” a phrase that summarizes our educational mission.

Student Learning Outcomes
For the QEP, we have developed three student learning outcomes.

   By the time of graduation, every Elon student will be fully prepared to do the following:

1. **Write in a discipline**: Engage effectively through writing with the variety of readers, purposes, and contexts addressed by specialists and professionals in their fields of study.

2. **Write as a citizen**: Engage effectively through writing with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.

3. **Write to create and apply knowledge**: Communicate effectively through writing the results, analysis, and implications of in-depth, critically examined, and appropriately acknowledged information gathered from relevant sources.

Action Plan
The Writing Excellence Initiative is a coordinated, institution-wide project that will engage the energy and creativity of all Elon faculty, staff, and students.

Faculty in each academic department will define field-specific writing outcomes consistent with the QEP’s outcomes for each of their major programs. Departments will then create, implement, and assess plans for teaching its students to achieve the outcomes. The General Studies Program and Student Life Division will follow similar processes, adapting their outcomes, plans, implementations, and assessment in ways that take advantage of the specific opportunities for writing instruction that arise in their interactions with students.

To provide overall leadership for and coordination of our QEP, we will create the Elon Center for Writing Excellence by combining our Student Writing Center and Writing Across the University Program. The new Center will diversify and greatly expand the support for writing and writing instruction offered to faculty, staff, and students. We will place it at the symbolic and practical heart of Elon’s intellectual life, Belk Library, and we will open satellite locations to better serve the entire university.

Many other units on campus will make significant contributions to the Initiative, including the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, Institutional Research Office, New Student Programs Office, Office of Academic Advising, and Student Government Association.
Organizational Structure
The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will lead the Writing Excellence Initiative, entrusting detailed oversight to the Assistant Provost/Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, who will chair the University Writing Excellence Council, with faculty, staff, and student members.

Departments, programs, and other units across the university will provide their plans and assessment results to the University Writing Excellence Council through their deans or other customary channels.

For efficiency and sustainability, as much as possible aspects of the Writing Excellence Initiative will be integrated into existing policies, procedures, and practices.
CHAPTER 4

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The ultimate goal of Elon’s QEP, the Writing Excellence Initiative, is to establish writing as a signature element of an Elon education, one that is embraced by our students, appreciated by our graduates, and celebrated by our administrators, faculty, and staff. To reach our goal, this plan engages every one of our students and involves every faculty and staff member at our university.

1. BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

The Writing Excellence Initiative will benefit all Elon students, undergraduate and graduate, in every major and program. Because writing proficiency is essential to success in any discipline or profession, the level of writing ability our students develop here will prepare them well for life after Elon. In addition, writing is a powerful tool for learning that helps students gain mastery of the knowledge and skills they are learning in their courses and gaining in their other Elon experiences beyond the curriculum. Our writing QEP will enable our graduates to know, understand, and do more than would otherwise have been the case.

2. OUR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

We have developed three student learning outcomes that challenge us to devise a university-wide approach to the teaching and learning of writing. Through our QEP, faculty, staff, and students will work together to achieve them.

By the time of graduation, every Elon student will be fully prepared to do the following:

1. Write in a discipline: Engage effectively through writing with the variety of readers, purposes, and contexts addressed by specialists and professionals in their fields of study.

2. Write as a citizen: Engage effectively through writing with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.

3. Write to create and apply knowledge: Communicate effectively through writing the results, analysis, and implications of in-depth, critically examined, and appropriately acknowledged information gathered from relevant sources.

3. SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF OUR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Two features of these student learning outcomes are especially important to us. First, we are focusing on students’ abilities to write effectively in the ways people write after graduation. Our graduates will be career-ready, graduate- or professional-school ready—and ready to participate fully through writing in their communities. Even those who choose not to pursue careers or advanced study in the fields of their majors at Elon will possess the writing abilities needed to make a positive impact in whatever endeavors they decide to undertake.
Second, our student learning outcomes focus on engaged writing, the writing through which our graduates will interact with, collaborate with, argue with, and affect others. Engagement is a central theme of Elon’s approach to education. We strive to enact engaging pedagogies and create an engaging learning environment. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, we are at or above the average rating for the top ten percent of all NSSE schools for providing students with enriching educational experiences, active and collaborative learning opportunities, and frequent student-faculty interaction. A major component of our General Studies Program is the Experiential Learning Requirement. Our Law School, which The National Jurist recently recognized as one of the top 20 innovative law schools in the country, includes a Center for Engaged Learning in Law. This year, we inaugurated the Center for Engaged Learning, which is designed to become a premier site for national and international exchange of research, theory, and practice.

Because engaged learning holds such a prominent place in Elon’s culture, our QEP’s focus on engaged writing helps all of us at Elon appreciate the ways the Initiative will help us pursue our central goals. Our QEP is an additional, powerful way of enabling Elon to become “more Elon.”

4. OTHER DESIRED OUTCOMES

While our three student learning outcomes provide a focus around which we will organize many of our QEP actions, these actions also address a much broader set of goals. In addition to the writing abilities designated in our student learning outcomes, we hope our graduates will have learned to use writing effectively for self-exploration, self-reflection, and self-expression. We hope that they will appreciate well-crafted writing by others, contribute productively to the collaborative writing teams that are a common feature of the academic and non-academic world, and be willing and able to help others with their writing.

The Writing Excellence Initiative also aims to help all members of the Elon community write effectively, including faculty and staff who wish to increase their writing proficiency.

We aspire to become known widely as a university that is especially effective in helping its students write well and use writing as tool for learning.

And we want to become a major contributor to national and international discussions of writing and the teaching of writing in higher education.

The chapters that follow describe our plans for pursuing all of these objectives.
CHAPTER 5

BEST PRACTICES IN INSTITUTION-WIDE WRITING INITIATIVES: LITERATURE SEARCH AND MODEL PROGRAMS

The overall goal of our QEP, the Writing Excellence Initiative, is to transform our existing and effective Writing Across the University Program and Student Writing Center into one of the most effective programs in the country for developing the writing and thinking abilities of all our students. We developed the plan described in the next chapter through an extensive effort to identify best practices in institution-wide writing initiatives. Nationally and internationally, the understanding of what constitutes best has evolved significantly in the past decade. The best practices identified are based on new research, lessons learned from the successes and failures of the writing across the curriculum movement that originated in the 1970s, and models being developed and adopted by universities that are investing significantly in new ways of advancing their students’ writing abilities. The following list names schools whose programs have been especially helpful to us.

- Auburn University
- Chalmers University of Technology (Gothenburg, Sweden)
- Clemson University
- Duke University
- Indiana University
- Miami University (Ohio)
- North Carolina State University
- Queen Mary College (London, England)
- Stanford University
- University of Minnesota
- University of Missouri
- University of Wisconsin

Through our study of the programs at these universities and our literature search, we identified nine groups of best practices that we are incorporating in our QEP project. These best practices guide our decisions that range from the goals we set, through the way we will design and implement the Writing Excellence Initiative, to the ways we will promote sustainability and continuous improvement for it.

BP 1. ESTABLISH GRADUATION-ORIENTED GOALS FOR ALL STUDENTS
   a. Directly target the writing students will do after graduation
   b. Enhance the writing abilities of all students

Our examination of best practices in institution-wide writing initiatives begins with the way they define their overall goals. All aim to prepare students to write effectively after graduation. An emerging best practice involves the way universities pursue this goal. Studies by Beaufort, Dias et al., Freedman, and Medway and Pare (among others) have revealed the struggles many college graduates have as they try to learn how to write competently in their professions. Graduates encounter these difficulties because of the substantial differences between the kinds of writing they learn to do in school and the kinds demanded in their careers, a difference that is captured in the title of a book edited by Dias: World’s
Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Settings. Consequently, the new best practice in establishing goals for institution-wide writing initiatives is to directly target the writing students will do after graduation by replacing instruction and practice in writing school-genres such as the term paper, in which students address their professors for the purposes of demonstrating their knowledge, with instruction and practice at writing the genres used in the students’ fields of study (Auburn, Chalmers, Miami). Sometimes termed “authentic” assignments (Beaufort), the latter involve teaching students to write to the kinds of readers they will address after they leave college, readers whose purposes for reading and criteria for evaluating writing differ greatly from those of college instructors. In addition to targeting the writing done in the disciplines and professions they are studying, authentic assignments may also include the kinds of writing through which college graduates participate in public discussions of issues of local, regional, and global importance (Clark, Grabill, S. Rose, Simmons).

Institution-wide writing initiatives also vary in the portion of their student bodies that they aim to benefit. Many programs concentrate their efforts on a subset of their students, such as first-year students, undergraduates, or students perceived to have significant writing deficiencies. The best practice pursued by all of our model programs is to aspire to help every undergraduate and graduate student, no matter how proficient already, to write even more expertly.

BP 2. BASE THE OVERALL APPROACH ON A ROBUST UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MAKES GOOD WRITING
a. Recognize that what makes good writing and thinking varies from context to context
b. Treat writing and thinking as different aspects of the same activity
c. Establish overall goals and centralized monitoring, but entrust implementation to each program
d. Include the variety of technologies with which people will write in the twenty-first century

Four best practices supported by our literature survey and the examples of our model programs concern the ways good writing is defined. Most important is the practice of recognizing that what makes good writing differs from context to context (Bean; Carter, Writing; Forsman; Herrington). Chemists would not be able to publish a report on their research in a peer reviewed chemistry journal if they wrote it by following the model of an article published in a literary studies journal about a play by Shakespeare. One best practice in institution-wide writing programs is to recognize the significance of differences among the kinds of good writing and, therefore, to help students develop the ability to write well in specific contexts, including (but not necessarily limited to) the contexts of the fields in which they are majoring. Their adoption of this best practice is one feature that distinguishes our model programs from programs that focus only on generic writing skills they believe will assure success in any context.

A closely allied best practice is to treat writing and thinking as different aspects of the same thing (Carter, Ways; Forsman; Russell, Thaiss). The way people in any field write is so closely tied to the ways they think and act that writing and thinking are different aspects of the same activity: to write like a chemist, sociologist, historian, or literary scholar requires one to perform the intellectual work of a chemist, sociologist, physicist, historian, or literary scholar. This relationship between writing and thinking is one reason that writing is such an effective means of learning. To learn to write in a course in any other field is to learn to think like a specialist in that field, at least if the writing being taught is authentic. Even intellectual tasks that educators typically speak of generically, such as critical thinking and information literacy, differ from field to field—and a way to learn to how a field performs them is through writing (Bean; Bowles-Terry; Condon, Assessing; Lewis; Selber; VanHome). To operationalize the best practice of treating writing and thinking as different aspects of the same thing, faculty can fully integrate the writing assignments and outcomes with the other assignments and goals of their courses (Burge, Townsend). Student writing centers can develop strategies for collaborating with librarians in
developing the information literacy and critical thinking abilities of the students who consult them (Miami, Indiana).

The context-specific nature of good writing leads directly to a best practice involving the assignment of responsibility for designing, implementing, and assessing the actions taken to develop students’ writing abilities. While the overall goal is institutional, the link between writing and learning and the context-specific nature of “good” writing makes each academic department the most effective locus of action. They are uniquely qualified to define the writing outcomes for their programs—because they know the domain-specific kinds of writing prepared by specialists in their fields. Likewise, because they understand the contexts, readers, communication strategies, and intellectual processes that are inextricably linked with authentic writing in their fields, they are also uniquely qualified to provide instruction in that writing. They are also uniquely qualified to assess the effectiveness of their students’ writing because they are much more capable than outsiders of judging how well a piece of writing will work in their field. Consequently, the best practice for the overall design of institution-wide writing programs is for the university to entrust implementation details to departments while it also establishes overall goals, provides the support necessary for success, and maintains ongoing review of department actions (Townsend; Auburn, Miami, NCSU, Minnesota).

An additional best practice related to the definition of good writing is to expand the definition to encompass writing done in multimedia genres as well as in print or digital files that resemble print (Council, Council et al., Grabill et al., Porter, Porter, Sheridan, WPA, Yancey, Miami, Minnesota, and Stanford). Many university graduates will need to be able to communicate in twenty-first-century modes.

BP 3. TAKE A CURRICULUM-WIDE APPROACH

a. Have students write throughout their studies and time in college
b. Design programs to develop students’ writing abilities progressively throughout their years of study
c. Teach for transfer of writing knowledge and skills from course to course and situation to situation

A best practice shared by all of our model programs is to take, in various ways, a curriculum-wide approach aimed at assuring that students write a great deal throughout their years of study. The first reason for wanting to assure that students write extensively is that learning to write effectively takes a long time, lots of practice, and lots of feedback. University faculty, staff, and administrators—even writing specialists—continue to learn throughout their careers. Consequently, it is unrealistic to imagine that in one first-year composition class, undergraduates would learn all that is needed in their future studies, to say nothing of their lives after graduation, or that graduate students could become outstanding writers from a few written projects in their courses. Another reason for aiming to involve students in a great deal of writing is that more writing leads to more engagement in the deep learning activities recognized as producing the growth in students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities that are the goals of higher education. Based on interviews with hundreds of students at several dozen universities, Light concluded that “The results were stunning. The relationship between the amount of writing for a course and the students’ level of engagement . . . is stronger than the relationship between students’ engagement and any other course characteristic” (55). In Academically Adrift, Arum an Roksa found one striking exception to their overall conclusion that, as evaluated by their methodology, college students make no appreciable progress from one year to the next: Students who took writing intensive courses along with courses that required substantial amount of reading made the progress that was otherwise
opportunities to undertake their teaching whatever focuses alignment on the students’ time at the university. This best practice is an application of constructive alignment, in which learning outcomes for courses and for entire degree programs are explicitly stated; teaching methods are chosen that are likely to achieve the objectives; students are asked to perform the tasks identified in the objectives; the tasks and associated instruction are scaffolded to lead students to levels of task performance that are appropriate for the students, course, and program; and assessment focuses on the students’ abilities at the end of their study to perform the tasks at the desired level (Biggs, Biggs and Tang). For writing, constructive alignment has been adapted to reimagine courses that satisfy traditional writing intensive course requirements that are anchored in students’ majors (often called a writing-in-the-disciplines requirement). Usually, programs think of these courses as independent of one another. When constructively aligned, they are coordinated to progressively develop students’ writing abilities as the students advance from the introductory to the culminating courses in their programs (Beaufort, Burge, Hall, Sageev, Smit; Chalmers, Miami).

Another best practice is to teach students in a way that enhances their ability to apply in a novel situation the relevant knowledge they gained in another context. Beaufort, Carroll, Moore, Nelms and Dively, Perkins, Wardle, and Yancey, among others, have identified effective techniques that substantially increase students’ abilities to recognize the opportunity to draw on existing knowledge and their ability to apply that knowledge effectively. This best practice not only supports the steady, intentional development of their writing abilities through constructively aligned courses, but also prepares them to write effectively in the new contexts in which they will find themselves after graduation.

**BP 4. INCORPORATE THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

a. Incorporate the writing students do in their courses  
b. Incorporate writing students do with faculty outside of their courses  
c. Incorporate writing students do with Student Life and other staff  
d. Incorporate students’ self-sponsored writing

A best practice adopted by many of our model programs is to reach beyond the curriculum for opportunities to develop students’ writing abilities. Some incorporate well-designed writing assignments, instruction, and feedback. Examples include the mentoring faculty give to students applying for internal or external research grants and the assistance that career centers provide students about their employment and graduate school applications. Even the large amount of writing students undertake on their own, without any connection with the university, can help students develop their writing abilities (Fishman, Grabill et al., Roozen). At Elon, we are already incorporating writing assignments and feedback in conjunction with student employment in certain positions. All writing, whatever the occasion, provides students with a learning opportunity.

**BP 5. MAXIMIZE STUDENT LEARNING FROM EACH WRITING EXPERIENCE**

a. Provide explicit instruction about ways to write the assigned communications effectively,  
b. Make meaning-making assignments in which students authentically engage in the kinds of writing done by disciplinary specialists and professionals in the fields they are studying  
c. Make writing and thinking expectations clear  
d. Incorporate an interactive writing process that provides students with feedback while they are working on their assignments
e. Set class sizes at a level that promotes effective teaching and learning of writing

Every institution-wide writing program wishes to maximize the learning that will occur with each writing experience students have. One of the most obvious best practices for helping students increase their writing abilities is also one of the most challenging. Many faculty across the university make writing assignments and then collect the results on the due date without providing students with any of the writing techniques and strategies they could learn while working on the project. Abundant research has demonstrated the value of giving students explicit instruction in the conventions, strategies, and techniques used to communicate effectively with particular genres (Bawarshi and Reiff, Dwyer Greene, Mathison, Rutz). Covil demonstrated that explicit teaching not only increases writing quality, but also alters student writing practices and increases self-efficacy. However, there are ways to help faculty who are not writing specialists provide effective writing instruction based on what they already know about writing in their fields and without requiring them to study the teaching of writing (Beaufort, Burge). Not coincidentally, they involve using authentic assignments.

In addition to providing explicit instruction, faculty can increase student learning by following three best practices in assignment design: create meaning-making assignments (ones in which students create knowledge rather than merely report), include an interactive writing process in which students receive feedback while working on their assignments, and provide clear expectations of the instructor’s writing expectations. Anderson et al. demonstrated that adding any one of these features increases students’ engagement in three kinds of deep learning activities—higher order learning activities, integrative learning activities, and reflective learning activities—and that it produces greater self-reported gains in practical competence, personal and social development, and general education learning.

An additional way to maximize student learning from each assignment provided in a course is to create a teaching situation that promotes effective teaching and learning of writing. Students benefit from individual attention to their work. Faculty need time to guide students through the writing process and give them meaningful feedback on drafts. The larger the class, the less time faculty can devote to each student. After classes reach a certain size, faculty feel compelled to limit the number or scope (or both) of the writing assignments and instruction. While many factors influence class size, a best practice is to restrict enrollment for at least the courses that place the most emphasis on writing or to provide instructors of those courses with additional help, for instance through a graduate assistant (Association, Glau, Townsend, Zubizaretta).

BP 6. PROVIDE THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO ENSURE SUCCESS

a. Provide support faculty and staff need to succeed at teaching writing
b. Provide support faculty and staff need to succeed with their own writing
c. Provide support to all students for the many kinds of writing they do
d. Integrate support for faculty, staff, and students into a single unit

Providing the support needed by faculty and students is a best practice followed by all of our model programs, although the scope of this support varies. All of our model programs expend substantial energy on workshops and individual consultations that help faculty design effective writing activities, assignments, and instruction that support their course goals without becoming overwhelmed by the paper load. A few also help departments define writing outcomes for their students and review and revise their curricula in order to enable their students to achieve them (Carter; Miami, Minnesota, North Carolina State). A few advise faculty about their own writing (Duke, xxx). We do not know of any university that offers any of these supports on a systematic basis for staff, but we conclude that doing so would be a best practice, especially for schools that emphasize staff contributions to the institution-wide writing initiative as extensively as we do.
The best practice in supporting students is to offer substantial help with all the writing they do, including all the types of writing, including self-sponsored writing, that they create during their time at the university (see BP 4).

Offering faculty, staff, and student support in the same administrative unit is an additional best practice because the information exchanged between the three areas enhances the ability of each to pursue their goals effectively and because it emphasizes the unitary nature of the university’s commitment to writing (Childers; Auburn, Duke, Miami, Minnesota).

**BP 7. CREATE A CULTURE OF WRITING**

a. Create a culture in which the activities involved with enhancing student writing abilities are central, prestigious, and satisfying parts of faculty and staff life

b. Create a culture in which students value the writing instruction they receive from faculty and staff, strive to increase their writing abilities, take pride in their writing, and enjoy writing

Attempting to create favorable attitudes toward writing, teaching writing, and learning to improve one’s writing is a best practice that is pursued by all of our model programs. Their attitudes toward writing affect the motivation of faculty, staff, and students to engage in teaching, learning, and related activities that will enhance student writing and thinking abilities (Driscoll and Wells). Major contributors to a culture of writing have been mentioned above: providing many opportunities for writing (BP 4); providing instruction that enables faculty, staff, and students to see progress in student writing (BP 5); and providing the support necessary for faculty, staff, and students to succeed with their teaching and learning. Our model programs also create contexts in which faculty, staff, and students can talk about writing and also share their writing, teaching techniques, and written products. Other strategies include recognizing and celebrating their achievements with respect to the teaching and learning of writing.

**BP 8. DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

a. Integrate writing initiatives with existing learning outcomes, policies, procedures, and practices

b. Implement change at a pace that promotes success

c. Maintain a robust research program focused on writing and its teaching

d. Engage faculty and staff in developing the institution’s goals, programs, and resources, as well as their ability to teach others

e. Engage students in developing the institution’s goals, programs, and resources

f. Embrace change as the program and institution develop

Since the 1970s, student writing centers have continued to thrive and, in many cases, expand. In contrast, many institutional writing initiatives that were launched in the first three decades of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement have atrophied (Holdstein, Townsend). A set of best practices focused on sustainability have been developed through examination of the programs that have persisted and of strategies adopted by new or revived programs. These measures include integrating writing initiatives into existing, ongoing policies, procedures, and practices regarding assessment and proposals of new courses and programs (Townsend); implementing change at a pace that ensures faculty and staff are able to develop effective revisions so that they are able to see positive results from their efforts (Miami, Minnesota, North Carolina State); and maintaining a robust research program that creates an ongoing intellectual engagement with writing and its teaching (Townsend; Duke, Miami).

Research programs can include students as researchers (J. Rose; Miami). Additional ways to create for sustainability are to involve faculty, staff, and students’ in the program’s design and implementation and to maintain openness to change as the program and institution change (Townsend, Miami, Missouri).
BP 9. ASSESS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

a. Integrate writing into ongoing assessment programs, particularly of students’ preparation at the point of graduation for the writing and thinking they will do afterwards
b. Assess student artifacts using authentic criteria
c. Assess other indicators of institutional effectiveness that writing impacts
d. Assess the effectiveness of the programs and units that contribute to the WEI’s goals

The best practice in assessment of any educational endeavor is to examine systematically gathered evidence to identify new opportunities for doing even better. Several assessment practices enable universities to find ways to improve continuously their institution-wide writing initiatives (Huot, Re(Articulating); Huot, Defining). The first is to examine representative samples of students’ written work (Anson, Paretti). Because writing and thinking are different aspects of the same thing, the writing and thinking criteria used in this examination should be fully integrated with one another (Condon, Accommodating; Condon, Assessing; Lewis). Because the goal is to prepare students for authentic writing students will do after graduation and because students’ accomplishments at graduation are the aggregated result of students’ entire program of study, assessment should focus on their writing at the point of graduation, using criteria that will be applied to the writing they will do afterwards (Beaufort).

A second and supplementary best practice in assessment is to evaluate the initiatives that aim to influence the ways faculty and staff work with student writing (Bean and Earenfight). Their effectiveness can be assessed through various direct methods, such as collecting and reviewing the writing assignments given to students.

A third best practice in assessment uses indirect measures (Howe). Data from national surveys of students and faculty can indicate the emphasis put on writing and the extent to which students credit their institutions with increasing their abilities as writers. Especially helpful are writing modules of the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, which will provide fine-grained information about such factors as the extent to which faculty apply the best practices in assignment design (see BP 5). Other national or home-grown surveys can be used.

Finally, assessment of highly valued outcomes that are not related to specific programs can be assessed. The gains students make through the writing in their courses are not limited to the specific learning outcomes that belong to those assignments and activities. This writing is also associated with gains in personal, non-cognitive areas that are consistent with general values of higher education, including self-reported personal and social development (Anderson et al.), practical and professional competence, and self-confidence competence (Anderson et al., Perpignan). Examination of trends in these educational outcomes could also provide insights into ways of improving a university’s institution-wide writing initiatives.
QEP ACTIONS:
AN INSTITUTION-WIDE FOCUS ON ENGAGED WRITING

Elon’s QEP, the Writing Excellence Initiative, is a coordinated, institution-wide project that aims to make writing a signature experience of an Elon education for all students, undergraduate and graduate. It builds on the many longstanding curricular and co-curricular programs, and practices that are central to Elon’s mission.

The QEP’s actions will focus on our three Student Learning Outcomes:

By the time of graduation, every Elon student will be fully prepared to do the following:

SLO 1. **Write in a discipline:** Engage effectively through writing with the variety of readers, purposes, and contexts addressed by specialists and professionals in their fields of study.

SLO 2. **Write as a citizen:** Engage effectively through writing with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.

SLO 3. **Write to create and apply knowledge:** Communicate effectively through writing the results, analysis, and implications of in-depth, critically examined, and appropriately acknowledged information gathered from relevant sources.

This chapter outlines the major actions that will be taken in support of our Writing Excellence Initiative by five primary actors:

1. Academic Departments.
2. General Studies Program.
3. Student Life Division.
4. New Elon Center for Writing Excellence.
5. Students, staff and faculty working alone and in programs across the University.

Because the Writing Excellence Initiative is collaborative, the intersections and connections between these actors will be essential. This chapter presents the actors separately to clarify the distinct contributions and roles of each.

1. ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

Academic departments will contribute to the QEP’s goal of ensuring that all students have exemplary preparation in writing by focusing on the writing of students majoring in their own programs. Departments department will begin by creating the following items for each of their degree programs.

1. Writing outcomes consistent with the selected QEP outcome(s) for its graduating students.

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1 Throughout this section, the terms “program” and “major” include concentrations that have their own student learning outcome assessment plans.
2. A description of the current writing instruction it provides to develop students’ abilities to achieve the department’s outcomes.

3. A plan for progressively increasing students’ proficiency in writing in at least one genre appropriate to the department’s outcomes.\(^2\)

4. An assessment plan focused on the writing of its graduating students. Each department will create these four items on the schedule it believes will produce the highest-quality results [BP 2c].\(^3\) Departments eager to proceed immediately may decide to complete all four in 2013-2014 (the first year of the QEP). Departments that believe they will produce better results by proceeding at a more deliberate pace or believe they will benefit from seeing the models established by other departments will be encouraged to do so. Departments with more than one major may establish a separate schedule for each. All departments, however, will commit to completing all four items by the end of the 2015-2016 academic year (the third year of the QEP) so they can enact one full assessment cycle in the final two years of the QEP.

Although academic departments are likely the exclusive actors for Student Learning Outcome 1 (writing in a discipline) and will quite naturally generate goals for it, they may elect to focus, also, on one or both of the other outcomes (writing as a citizen, writing to create or apply knowledge) that align with the department’s broader goals. For some departments, Outcome 2 or 3 may be identified as the primary focus.

**Process**

The following paragraphs describe the processes by which departments will create the four items they will develop.

1. **Define writing outcomes for graduating students**
   Departments will need to create or refine the writing outcomes for each of their majors to align with the learning outcome(s) of the QEP that they will pursue [BP 1a, 2a].

2. **Describe the current instruction that develops students’ writing abilities**
   Departments will describe how the courses taken by their majors develop the writing abilities identified in their writing outcomes. Because their writing outcomes apply to all students majoring in their programs [BP 1b], departments will distinguish the abilities taught in required courses from the additional abilities students benefit from learning in courses that some, but not all, majors take.

3. **Plan for progressively increasing students’ proficiency at writing field-specific genres**
   To develop their students’ abilities to writing effectively in the complex situations encountered by graduates, departments will build on existing writing instruction (described in #2 above) to create plans for progressively increasing students’ proficiency in writing at least one genre that the department has identified as linked to its learning outcomes [BP 3b]. Plans should illustrate how at least three courses within a major’s required and elective curriculum complement one another to develop students’ writing abilities within at least one genre.

   Because students write within and beyond the major, departments are encouraged to consider and plan for all of the opportunities their students will encounter to develop as writers, from introductory and capstone courses to undergraduate research, internships, and other curricular or co-curricular activities [BP 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c].

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\(^2\) A genre is a type of communication that has a characteristic target audience, purpose, and conventions, such an article for a scientific journal, article for a scholarly journal, and feasibility report for management.

\(^3\) BP is an abbreviation for “Best Practice.” See Chapter 5.
4. **Assess the writing of graduating students**

Departments will create and implement assessment plans for continuously improving the writing instruction they provide their students [BP 9]. To determine its cumulative effectiveness, they will assess writing done by their students at the point of graduation. Using assessment results, departments will identify the place or places in their required courses where adjustments will enable them to raise the effectiveness of their writing instruction to an even higher level. For each assessment criterion, departments will evaluate their students’ writing in terms of the range of levels of performance that are appropriate for new graduates in their field.

**The QEP Assessment Cycle**

During the five years of the QEP (2013-2018), departments will employ for at least one full cycle of the writing assessment they planned. In order to make assessment as efficient as possible, departments will be encouraged to integrate assessment of their writing outcomes with assessment of their other learning outcomes. The Center for Writing Excellence will actively assist departments in creating and conducting efficient assessments, and will provide appropriate resources to support departmental writing initiatives.

To assure that departments have adequate time to develop their assessment procedures, follow best assessment practices, interpret their results thoughtfully, and then develop and implement impactful revisions to their programs, QEP assessment will be on a two-year cycle unless majors or departments require a faster cycle [BP 8b]. Typically, departments will devote the first year of their QEP assessment cycle to develop and conduct their assessments, interpret the results, and plan refinements which they will implement the following year. On the third year, the cycle will begin again.

**Evolutionary Process**

The Writing Excellence Initiative is designed to foster exploration and creativity, supported by well-designed assessment. As departments create the four items and enact the assessment cycle, they will be encouraged and supported to shift and change their work as appropriate. Learning outcomes, current writing instruction, and assessment plans all can and should be revised and improved throughout the process [BP 8f].

**Support**

Throughout QEP’s five years and beyond, the Center for Writing Excellence will offer many forms of assistance [BP 6a], including general programs and resources of use to all departments. It will also provide focused support to individual departments, for instance, by leading department-specific workshops and by facilitating department discussions and assessment sessions. Additional forms of support are listed later in this chapter, including grants departments can use for pilot projects, course development, creation of responses to assessment results, and travel to off-campus workshops and conferences. The Center also will help departments that want assistance preparing persuasive proposals to deans or other sources for resources to help them to teach writing more effectively.

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2. **GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAM**

Elon’s General Studies Program provides a substantial opportunity for advancing students’ writing abilities. It includes 58 credit hours, of the 132 required for graduation, spread among the following components:
• **First-Year Core**, which consists of Writing: Argument and Inquiry (ENG 110), The Global Experience (GST 110), a calculus or statistics course, and a class in contemporary wellness issues.

• **Studies in the Arts and Sciences**, requiring two courses from approved lists in each of four areas (expression, civilization, society, and science).

• **Advanced Studies**, defined as two courses at the 300 or 400 level in the arts and sciences outside the major.

• **Interdisciplinary Capstone Seminar**, the capstone to the General Studies Program. There are also two additional components that may be satisfied in various ways, some of which involve course enrollment while others do not.

• **Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR)**, which may be satisfied through an internship, practicum, research, study abroad, student teaching, service learning, leadership, or various other approved experiences.

• **Foreign Language Requirement**, which may be satisfied by demonstrating proficiency or taking courses.

As they satisfy these requirements, students already engage in writing and related inquiry, information literacy, and critical thinking practices that are related to all three of our QEP’s student learning outcomes.

The following paragraphs provide details concerning new ways the General Studies Program will contribute to the Writing Excellence Initiative.

1. **Enhance the General Studies Program’s already substantial efforts to help students develop their writing abilities**
   General Studies will take the following steps to enhance its effectiveness at developing students’ general writing abilities.

   • Define or refine learning outcomes for writing that are appropriate to each component of the General Studies Program and linked to the QEP’s student learning outcomes [BP 2a, 3a, 4a, 4b].

   • Describe the current writing assignments, instruction, and feedback students receive throughout the General Studies Program [BP 8a].

   • Enhance the materials, guidance, and preparation provided to faculty teaching GST 110 and the GST interdisciplinary capstone seminars [BP 6a].

   • Identify and share model practices already in use in the General Studies Program [BP 6a].

   • Collaborate with writing experts across the university to help faculty and staff incorporate best practices into their General Studies courses and activities [BP 6a, 8d].

   • Devote special attention to explaining the importance, centrality, and continuity of the Program’s emphasis on writing in materials that describe the program for incoming students [BP 3c].

2. **Strengthen students’ preparation for engaging effectively through writing with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance (Student Learning Outcome 2)**
   To sharpen its focus on preparing students preparation of this type of writing, which is already included in its goals, the program will take the following additional actions:
• Incorporate assignments and instruction in this type of writing into the activities that satisfy the Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR) [BP1a, 4a, 4b].

• Revise the form faculty use to propose new GST capstone seminars so that these courses are more closely aligned with the QEP’s second student learning outcome (to prepare students to engage effectively through writing with other members of their communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance) [BP 1a, 4a].

• Beginning in 2013-2014, partner with writing experts across the university to provide workshops and other resources that assist faculty in developing this element of the GST capstone seminars [BP 1a, 4a].

3. **Prepare students to communicate effectively using 21st century digital media and genres**

The Program will begin by incorporating in all sections of ENG 110 of instruction in reading, thinking critically about, and writing in digital media and genres [BP 2d].

4. **Catalyze enhancements in the teaching and learning of writing across the university**

The faculty of the General Studies Program are the faculty of departments and programs across the university. The pedagogical and writing-specific knowledge and experience gained by the faculty who teach its courses and lead its activities can radiate throughout the university as they share what they have learned with colleagues in their home departments and units. To catalyze the dissemination of best practices in the teaching and learning of writing across the university, the General Studies Program will take the following new actions:

• Enable and encourage non-English faculty to teach ENG 110 [BP 8d]. Develop a robust faculty development program in 2013-14 and to be initially implemented in 2014 that includes course-reassignment, course and pedagogical development support, materials and resources, and professional recognition to create a vigorous, cross-disciplinary, full-time, first-year writing faculty.

• Create and distribute writing assignments and teaching strategies that facilitate writing instruction based on each year’s common reading [BP 6a, 8a]. The common reading is the book chosen for all incoming students to read before arriving on campus for their first Elon classes.

5. **Enhance attention to students’ writing in GST 110**

The General Studies Program and the Center for Writing Excellence will collaborate to improve significantly the contribution that Elon’s Global Experience course (GST 110) makes to the development of students’ writing abilities. This action involves several related elements, including new resources and training for faculty who teach GST 110 paired with institutional support to reduce class size from 25 toward 18 in those sections [BP 5e, 6a].

GST 110, which every Elon undergraduate takes in his or her first year, is already designated as a writing-intensive course. The reduction in class size will enable GST instructors to pay even more attention to the writing and the writing process of each student. To prepare faculty to take full advantage of this new instructional context, the Center for Writing Excellence will work with the GST Program to create an intensive workshop for participating GST 110 instructors on best practices in writing instruction.

The positive effects of these changes will reverberate throughout the undergraduate program by raising the level of writing proficiency of all first-year students. According to the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement, Elon’s first-year students are no more likely than their peers in three benchmark groups (Southern private colleges, engagement-focused colleges, and all NSSE participating institutions) to credit their college with helping them learn to write clearly and
effectively. In the context of the Elon’s extraordinarily favorable results in so many other areas, this result challenges us. For the majority of students who enroll in the required first-year writing course—ENG 110, Writing: Argument and Inquiry—the changes to GST 110 will provide a robust supplement. Equally important, fully one of every four Elon undergraduates does not take ENG 110 because of credit from AP, transfer or another source. These students will benefit immensely from taking at least one course in their first year at Elon that is enriched with extensive writing instruction; students who take both ENG 110 and GST 110 will have an even stronger foundation of writing proficiency on which Elon faculty can build during students’ next three years at Elon.

The changes to GST 110 will also increase substantially the effectiveness of writing instruction throughout the university. All GST 110 instructors are regular Elon faculty (no temporary, visiting, or adjunct faculty), coming from every undergraduate department at the university. As an additional benefit of Elon’s new investment in this course, faculty who teach it will be able to apply the best practices they learn to their other courses, and they will be able to share their knowledge and skills with colleagues in their home departments.

The changes in the GST 110 will be phased in gradually, beginning in the first year of the QEP (2013-2014), when the Program will offer several pilot sections taught faculty who have participated in the new writing workshop for GST [BP 8b]. This number of reduced-size sections will be expanded over (an anticipated) three years, with revisions made to the process based on student outcomes and faculty feedback [BP 8f].

3. STUDENT LIFE

For over a decade, Elon’s Student Life Division has focused more intensively on developing students’ writing abilities than its counterparts at any other university we know of. In 2000, the Division launched the Student Writing Competency Across the Division Initiative. Through it, the Division incorporated student writing activities and instruction in many of its programs, such as those in leadership, service learning, and religious life. It also instituted writing expectations for many of its student employees.

The Division’s long-standing commitment to student writing exemplifies the best practice of supplementing the instruction students receive in their classes by providing writing activities, instruction, and feedback in their co-curricular activities [BP 4c]. These additional experiences increase the amount of writing practice students receive [BP 3a] and extend the range of writing situations with which they are familiar. The knowledge and skills related to writing that students gain in Student Life will advance their accomplishments on all three of our QEP’s student learning outcomes.

The following paragraphs describe the major new actions that Student Life will take to support the Writing Excellence Initiative. (Note that Student Life also leads several programs that satisfy our Experiential Learning Requirement. Its QEP actions related to these programs are discussed in the preceding section on the General Studies Program.)

1. **Identify ways to contribute even more extensively to the development of students’ writing abilities**

   As its initial step in supporting the Writing Excellence Initiative, Student Life will take the following steps to systematically enhance its effectiveness at developing students’ writing abilities.

   - **Define general goals and outcomes for student writing in the Division.** Because the Division’s programs, services, and offices engage students in writing in so many different ways, the Division will define general goals and then assist individuals and units in shaping their own, more specific versions of them [BP 2c].

Writing Excellence Initiative          Discussion Draft
• Identify additional opportunities to incorporate student writing into its programs [BP 3a].
Building on information collected in 2011, the Division will conduct a survey to learn where
writing assignments and instruction are—and are not—being provided to students. Also, the
Division will convene meetings at which staff can share their suggestions for extending its
support of the QEP.

2. Identify and share model practices developed by Student Life staff
In the dozen years since the Division launched the Student Writing Competency Across the Division
Initiative, individual staff and units have developed many effective practices that can serve as
models for others. The survey of writing activities and instruction will gather sample assignments,
writing guides, and other materials that can be used in workshops and can be made available online
for others’ use at a website the Center will create [BP 6a].

3. Increase the effectiveness of the Division’s current writing activities and instruction
In collaboration with the Center for Writing Excellence, the Division will help staff adapt and apply
the best practices used by faculty [BP 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d]. By employing these same practices, Student
Life staff will help students transfer writing skills used in their classes to their Student Life writing—
and vice versa [BP 3c].

4. Develop assessment strategies for continuously improving the Division’s student writing activities
Because Student Life offices and staff engage students in such a wide range of writing tasks, they
will develop a variety of context-specific methods for assessing the effectiveness of their instruction.
Nonetheless, the Division’s assessment will include evaluation of actual student writing and, where
possible, employ criteria that would be applied to the writing students are likely to do after
graduation [BP 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d].

5. Charge the Student Life Writing QEP Committee with ongoing leadership of the Division’s
contributions to the Writing Excellence Initiative
After Elon selected writing excellence as the focus of its QEP, Student Life created a Writing QEP
Committee to consider ways the Division could most effectively contribute to the Writing Excellence
Initiative. Student Life will ask this committee to provide ongoing leadership for its QEP effort and
coordinate with the Center for Writing Excellence to provide the Division’s staff with the support
and resources needed to excel in this endeavor [BP 2c, 4a, 4b].

4. ELON CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE
To provide overall leadership for and coordination of our QEP, we will create the Elon Center for Writing
Excellence by combining our Student Writing Center and Writing Across the University Program. [BP 6d].
By moving these two previously separate units into the same location where they will function under a
single name, we will foster coordination of programs and generate other synergies not possible at
present. The new Center will serve as a focal point and unified source of vision and inspiration for the
Writing Excellence Initiative.

We will locate the new Center at the visual, symbolic, and practical heart of Elon’s intellectual life, Belk
Library. Its primary activity area will be in the large, open space at the center of the first floor, along with
the Elon’s reference librarians, near our Teaching & Learning Technologies office, and next to an
extensive array of computers used by students, faculty, and staff. We will design this area as an inviting,
highly functional space where we also can highlight and celebrate student, faculty, and staff writing
activities and accomplishments. We will also develop satellite locations to better serve the entire
university.
The Center will diversify and greatly expand the support for writing and writing instruction offered to faculty, staff, and students. Just as important, however, the Center will act as a catalyst by encouraging and helping others to contribute their energies and talents. It will also conduct research and assist faculty, staff, and students to conduct research that will enhance our capacity to achieve our aspirations for our students' writing—and will establish Elon as an important participant in the national and international conversations about writing in higher education.

Support for Faculty and Staff
Among the many ways it will support faculty and staff efforts related to our Writing Excellence Initiative, the Center will take the following actions:

1. **Help faculty and staff develop students’ writing abilities to an even higher level**
   Elon’s faculty and staff are highly motivated to improve student writing, and they are effective at it. According to the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement, Elon seniors give significantly greater credit to their college for increasing their ability to write clearly and effectively than do their peers at three groups of benchmark institutions (southeast private, engagement schools, and all NSSE schools). Yet, we believe that we can do even better—much better—if we act creatively and productively. Through innovative programs and services, the Center will assist faculty and staff to adopt high-impact strategies that enhance student writing without taking more faculty and staff time.

   For many faculty and staff, this effort will involve refining—rather than augmenting—what they do now. For those who could benefit students by providing additional writing instruction, the Center will focus on the twin goals of effectiveness and efficiency. Always, it will help faculty and staff use writing in ways that help them achieve the broader learning outcomes for students, whether the students are in their first year, senior year or graduate study, and no matter the discipline or program [BP 6a, 6b].

2. **Help academic and Student Life departments and programs with their QEP efforts**
   As part of the Writing Excellence Initiative, faculty and staff will engage in collective discussions and projects within their departments and programs. (These are described later in this chapter.) In consultation with departments and programs, the Center will develop workshops, resources, and other forms of assistance that can help at every step. [BP 6a, 6b]

3. **Encourage and support experimentation, creativity, and development of expertise**
   The Center will develop several programs to encourage and support faculty and staff who desire to explore to ways improve their own work with student writing, as well as those who wish to acquire knowledge about teaching writing that they can share with colleagues [BP 6a, 7a, 8d].
   - Offer grants for course development.
   - Fund participation at conferences on student writing.
   - Appoint interested faculty and staff as Center for Writing Excellence Fellows so they can work closely on Center projects.
   - Support the use of advanced students as “writing TAs” in courses.
   - Assist faculty and staff in developing conference proposals and articles on the teaching of writing.
   - Help faculty apply for external funding for the study of student writing.
• Support pilot projects through which groups of faculty or entire departments and programs seek to improve student writing.
• Help departments prepare persuasive proposals to their deans or other sources for resources that will enable them to teach writing more effectively.

4. **Develop interdisciplinary and interdivisional collaboration**
   Faculty and staff in all fields have much to teach and learn from one another. In addition to working with individual faculty members, departments, and programs, the Center will foster collaboration across department and school lines [BP 6a]. For example, the Center will form an interdisciplinary task force to develop a common set of generative writing terms that faculty and staff across the university can use in their various courses and contexts when talking with students about writing. Use of these terms will aid the transfer of writing knowledge from situation to situation, helping students become more flexible writers who are better able to apply past learning in new contexts [BP 3c].

5. **Help faculty and staff with their own writing**
   The more successful faculty and staff are with their own writing, the more effectively they can serve as role models for students. The more confident they are in their own writing abilities, the more confidently they will be able to teach students to write well. Equally important, the more attention Elon devotes to the writing abilities of all members of our community, including staff who have little or no contact with students, the better able we will be to create an institutional culture in which writing, teaching writing, and striving to improve one’s writing are valued activities for everyone [BP 6b].

6. **Support other major Initiatives**
   The Center for Writing Excellence will support the many initiatives at Elon that involve student writing—or could [BP 8a]. For example, students who perform internships to fulfill our Experiential Learning Requirement write reflections on their experience. Working with the faculty and staff who mentor students in these experiences, the Center could explore ways to tighten the fit between their learning goals and the reflection prompts they provide students. As another example, writing has the potential to contribute to many of the goals of the Residential Campus Initiative. By working closely with the faculty, staff, and students who are creating new residence life opportunities across campus, the Center will not only enhance writing on campus but also support an important institutional priority.

7. **Highlight, share, and celebrate successes**
   One goal of the Writing Excellence Initiative is to create a culture of writing in which faculty and staff see writing the pursuit of writing excellence as an essential element of providing students with a superior education. Faculty and staff can inform and inspire one another [BP 7a]. The Center will take every opportunity to nurture the growth of this element of Elon’s culture, for instance, by arranging internal conferences at which Center grant recipients and others share their successes, featuring faculty accomplishments at the Center’s website, and creating displays at its location in Belk Library.

8. **Assess the effectiveness of its work with faculty and staff**
   The Center will regularly assess its work with faculty and staff, making improvements as appropriate, to meet the evolving needs of the Writing Excellence Initiative and the university. The Center’s assessment plan is described in more detail in the assessment chapter later in this report.
Support for Students
The Center for Writing Excellence will expand the Writing Center’s existing services and programs for students, institute new ones, and, where appropriate, foster the development of student writing support at other places in the university.

1. **Increase significantly the number of students receiving support for their writing**
   At present the Writing Center offers nearly 2,000 peer consultations per year, plus a limited number of workshops, including ones for incoming international students and students participating in the Multicultural Center and the Watson-Odyssey Scholars Program. The new Center’s goal will be to triple the annual number of consultations by 2017-2018 and to engage some 1,000 students annually in other Center programs [BP 1b, 6c]. As one step toward this goal, the Center will develop an online consulting service for students who are studying off-campus, who are on internships, or who are otherwise distant from campus. The Center also will experiment with innovative programs for students such as writing retreats and boot camps, and will enhance its online resources for student writers.

2. **Expand greatly the variety of kinds of writing with which students can obtain support**
   The modest resources currently dedicated to the Writing Center have restricted the scope of its work. With the QEP’s new resources, the Center will expand the range of writing projects with which the students can receive assistance.
   - Increase the variety of disciplinary and professional genres with which the Center is prepared to assist students, paying careful attention to interrelated writing, inquiry, information literacy, and critical thinking skills that are involved with each [BP 1b, 2a, 6c].
   - Increase the Center’s ability to help students with writing not assigned in courses, including Honors theses, job and fellowship applications, and reports prepared in connection with Student Life employment and activities [BP 1b 4b, 4c, 4d].
   - Increase attention to assisting students who are not native speakers of English [BP 1b].
   - Increase the attention given to assisting students with digital and multimodal forms of writing [BP 2d].

3. **Increase the depth with which students can discuss their writing with a consultant**
   Increase the ability of the student consultants and their student clients to talk in-depth about the students’ writing [BP 2b]
   - Extend the length of consultations from 30 to 45 minutes
   - Enables students to sign up with the same consultant for subsequent appointments as they work through large projects.

4. **Integrate writing, information literacy, and technology resources for students at Belk Library**
   The new Center will collaborate with the reference librarians and with Teaching & Learning Technologies, which is also located in Belk Library, to form a triad of services for student writers. The Writing Center has established a strong foundation for this work through its Library Connections Program [BP 2b].

5. **Encourage and support students’ self-sponsored writing**
   To nurture the learning that occurs when students write on their own, without prompting from faculty and staff [BP 4d], the new Center will develop (and will support existing) projects, programs, and activities to encourage students’ self-sponsored writing. These will include writing contests, public readings by students of their writing, spoken word competitions, and performances of student-written songs. The new Center will also co-sponsor lectures on writing for student
audiences (including some designed for students in our graduate programs), and the Center will assist students who want to start magazines and other print and online publications.

6. **Encourage and support student participation in developing the Center**
   The new Center will be most appealing and engaging for students if students are deeply involved in its development and ongoing plans and activities. It will include its student consultants and other student employees in planning, executing, and evaluating its programs and services [BP 8e]. It will also support the student consultants’ continuing development by enabling them to attend professional conferences related to writing centers. In addition, the Center will offer grants available to all students for research projects and travel to conferences about writing in higher education [BP 8e], as well as student-initiated event and projects [BP 8e].

7. **Engage faculty and staff in the Center’s student programming**
   The Center will encourage and support faculty and staff who wish to participate in it, whether for the sake of what they can contribute or what they can learn from the experience [BP 8d]. For those who wish to become most deeply involved, it will provide support Faculty/Staff Fellows, and it will sponsor faculty- and staff-initiated projects that provide support for student writing.

8. **Celebrate student writing accomplishments**
   To make writing highly visible as a central, prestigious, and rewarding part of the student experience at Elon, the Center will devise a variety of ways to highlight and publicize to students the writing accomplishments of other students, such as prizes won, plays performed, and articles published in off-campus journals and magazines [BP 7b].

9. **Assess the effectiveness of its work with students**
   The Center will regularly assess its work with students, making improvements as appropriate, to meet the evolving needs of the Writing Excellence Initiative and the university. The Center’s assessment plan is describe in more detail in the assessment chapter later in this report.

**Support for Research**
Elon is already contributing significantly to knowledge about writing in higher education through the scholarly activity of diverse faculty and staff, and its sponsorship of the three-year Elon Research Seminar on “Writing and the Question of Transfer,” which has attracted eminent scholars from across the nation. In several ways, the Center for Writing Excellence will seek to significantly increase writing research at Elon [BP 8c].

- Providing research grants to faculty, staff, and students to encourage and support writing-specific research.
- Encouraging students to conduct studies of writing through the Undergraduate Research Program.
- Helping faculty, staff, and students design research projects focused on writing and the teaching of writing.
- Assisting faculty, staff, and students across the university with preparation of conference papers and articles about the teaching of writing in college.
- Providing travel funds for faculty presenting conference papers on writing research.
- Conducting the Center’s own studies.
5. MANY OTHER ACTORS

The previous sections of this chapter have described actions in support of the Writing Excellence Initiative that will be taken by four entities. In addition, many other departments and individuals will be active in achieving the QEP goals.

These other actors include many who have not been named identified earlier: Elon 101, which will provide students with their initial understanding of writing’s centrality in an Elon education; Academic Advising, which plays an important role in guiding all students to the resources that help them achieve their highest potential; the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, whose efforts to support engaged pedagogy parallel the Writing Excellence Initiative’s focus on engaged writing; the Student Professional Development Center’s intensive work with students on writing for potential employers; and many, many more.

As we developed the action plans described in this chapter, several groups indicated their eagerness to contribute in ways that we have yet to define. They include the Parents Council, Young Alumni Council, Student Government Association; and non-academic departments outside Student Life.

In sum, our QEP project, the Writing Excellent Initiative, will be a truly university-wide effort to increase the writing abilities and enrich the entire university experience for every Elon student.
CHAPTER 7

Timeline

The QEP will unfold over five years, engaging every academic department and program, as well as the Student Life Division and other units, in pursuit of Elon’s aspirations for writing. Although our approach encourages different departments and programs to proceed at different paces depending on their particular needs and goals, overall the QEP has a single timeline: Within five years of the launch of the Writing Excellence Initiative, all academic departments and co-curricular units will have identified writing outcomes, developed and implemented plans for achieving these outcomes. They also will have completed at least one cycle of assessing student writing linked to their student learning outcomes, designing improvements in their instruction and program based on assessment results, and acting on their improvement plans. To assure the sustainability of the Writing Excellence initiative beyond the QEP period, they will have integrated writing and assessment of writing into their comprehensive planning and assessment procedures.

Throughout the QEP and beyond, Elon will develop the resources and capacities needed to support, catalyze, and celebrate the widespread activities envisioned in the Writing Excellence Initiative. Elon enters this QEP with a strong foundation, including the Writing Center and the Writing Across the University Program. By bringing these two programs together into the new Center for Writing Excellence in a high-profile location in Belk Library, Elon will create a visible symbol of its renewed commitment to writing at the university. Over the next five years, the Center for Writing Excellence will expand and deepen its support for student, faculty, and staff writing—and will regularly assess both the Center’s and Elon’s progress towards our goals.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 (on the following pages) summarize the timelines for major actions associated with the Writing Excellence Initiative. A darkening of the maroon in a cell indicates the level of engagement with or completion of an action.
<p>| Table 7.1 Timeline for QEP Actions by Academic Departments, General Studies Program, and Student Life Division |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <strong>Actions</strong> | <strong>Year 1</strong> 2013-2014 | <strong>Year 2</strong> 2014-2015 | <strong>Year 3</strong> 2015-2016 | <strong>Year 4</strong> 2016-2017 | <strong>Year 5</strong> 2017-2018 |
| <strong>Academic Departments</strong> | | | | | |
| Define writing outcomes | | | | | |
| Describe current writing instruction | | | | | |
| Create progressive development plans | | | | | |
| Establish assessment plans | | | | | |
| Conduct first assessment cycle | | | | | |
| <strong>General Studies Program</strong> | | | | | |
| Define writing outcomes | | | | | |
| Review current writing instruction | | | | | |
| Create progressive development plan | | | | | |
| Establish assessment plans | | | | | |
| Conduct first assessment cycle | | | | | |
| <strong>Student Life Division</strong> | | | | | |
| Define writing outcomes | | | | | |
| Review current writing | | | | | |
| Create progressive development plans (in units where it is possible to do so) | | | | | |
| Establish assessment plans | | | | | |
| Conduct first assessment cycle | | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Year 1 2013-2014</th>
<th>Year 2 2014-2015</th>
<th>Year 3 2015-2016</th>
<th>Year 4 2016-2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Establish the New Center</td>
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<td>Integrate the Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum Program to create the Center for Writing Excellence</td>
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<td>Create new location: Phase 1</td>
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<td>Create new location: Phase 2</td>
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<td>Expand web and other online resources</td>
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<td>Develop coordination with reference librarians and with Teaching &amp; Learning Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess the actions taken to establish the new Center</td>
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<td>Support for Faculty and Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer expanded and new support programs for individuals</td>
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<td>Offer expanded and new support programs for departments and schools</td>
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<td>Offer grants for teaching projects</td>
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<td>Offer grants for writing-specific research</td>
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<td>Help faculty and staff with their own writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlight, share, celebrate success</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess support for faculty and staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Year 1 2013-2014</td>
<td>Year 2 2014-2015</td>
<td>Year 3 2015-2016</td>
<td>Year 4 2016-2017</td>
<td>Year 5 2017-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for Students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase number of consultations offered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase variety of kinds of writing supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase depth of support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrate information literacy and technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage and support self-sponsored writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage students in Center development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlight and celebrate success</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess support for students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for Writing-Specific Research</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer grants to faculty, staff, students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage undergraduate research on writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist with preparation of presentations, articles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide funds for travel to deliver papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct the Center's own studies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight and celebrate success</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess support for writing-specific research</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 8

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

To guide our Writing Excellence Initiative, we will establish an organizational structure that is integrated with our current systems for efficiency, follows our institutional traditions for sustainability, enlists the broad participation to achieve maximum impact, and provides a high level of flexibility so we can take entrepreneurial advantage of the opportunities that arise in the years ahead. This structure involves the following components:

1. Administrative Leaders
2. Advisory Committees
3. Lead Actors
4. University-Wide Network of Partners

1. Administrative Leaders

Consistent with the centrality of the Writing Excellence Initiative to Elon’s mission and educational aspirations, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Steven House will lead the Writing Excellence Initiative. He will entrust detailed implementation and oversight to Assistant Provost Peter Felten, who will chair and be assisted by the new University Writing Excellence Council (described in in section 2 below). Assistant Provost Peter Felten has chaired the QEP Committee since December 2011. His experience faculty development includes seven years as the founding Director of Elon’s Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and his appointment to lead the new Center for Engaged Learning. In 2009-2010, he served as President of the international Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education.

The new Center for Writing Excellence will integrate two long-standing programs, whose directors will have expanded portfolios and resources as they pursue goals of the Writing Excellence Initiative. Both directors currently report to Assistant Provost Felten and will continue to do so.

Director, Writing Center. In existence for more than 15 years, this Center provides peer consultations and workshops for students. In conjunction with the QEP, the Director will be provided with support from a full-time program assistant (shared with the Director of Writing Across the University), an additional course release annually (from two to three), and other forms of support. Dr. Paula Rosinski, Associate Professor of English, who has directed the Center for the past seven years, will continue to provide its leadership.

Director, Writing Across the University Program. For more than 20 years, we have had an effective Writing Across the Curriculum Program led by a faculty member with two course releases per year. In anticipation of the QEP, the university added substantial new resources to the program, reconfigured the director’s position from two-course reassignments per year to a full-time administrative appointment with faculty rank, and changed its name to Writing Across the University. After a national search, in mid-2012, Elon hired Dr. Paul Anderson as Director of
Writing Across the University and Professor of English. Dr. Anderson served as the founding director of the endowed Center for Writing Excellence at Miami University (Ohio).

2. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Three university-level advisory committees with broadly representative memberships will guide the Writing Excellence Initiative. In addition to providing advice, members of all three committees will serve as advocates and ambassadors for the Writing Excellence Initiative and the Center for Writing Excellence.

University Writing Excellence Council. The new Council will monitor the Writing Excellence Initiative and make recommendations to Assistant Provost Felten, who will chair the Council. Among its resources will be the plans and reports created as part of the QEP by academic departments, the General Studies Program, Student Life Division, and Center for Writing Excellence. The Institutional Research Office and Center for Writing Excellence will assist by will aggregating and analyzing this information and other assessment data.

To assure that the Council is able to evaluate and make recommendations that take include the full breadth of perspectives at Elon, its members will include faculty, staff, students, and administrators who are appointed by the Provost in consultation with Academic Council (for faculty), the Staff Council (for staff), and the Student Government Association (for students). Dr. Anderson and Dr. Rosinski will both be ex officio members of the Council.

The Council will perform preliminary work in late spring 2013, and will formally assume its duties at the start of the 2013-2014 academic year. At least twice each academic year the Council report to the university community on the Initiative’s progress and plans.

Center for Writing Excellence Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee. Building on the foundation of the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee, a long-standing faculty committee, this new committee will also include staff. The committee will monitor and make recommendations concerning all aspects of the Center from the perspective of the faculty and staff.

Appointed by the Provost, the members will be drawn from all academic divisions and a variety of units in Student Life.

For 2013-2014, the committee will be co-chaired by Dr. Rosinski and Dr. Anderson, and the committee’s work will focus on establishing the new Center for Writing Excellence. After that first year, the committee’s charge and structure will evolve to meet the needs of the Center.

Center for Writing Excellence Student Advisory Committee. This new committee will enlist the initiative, creativity and leadership of Elon students in providing advice concerning all aspects of the Center’s activities, especially those impacting students directly. Members will play an important role in advocating for writing excellence and the Center among students.

Appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Student Life Division, Deans, others who interact with students in various contexts, the members will be broadly representative of Elon’s undergraduate and graduate student body.

For 2013-2014, the committee will be convened by Dr. Rosinski and Dr. Anderson, and the committee’s work will focus on establishing the new Center for Writing Excellence. After that first year, the committee’s charge and structure will evolve to meet the needs of the Center.
3. LEAD ACTORS

As described in this report, academic departments, the General Studies Program, the Student Life Division, and the new Center for Writing Excellence will take leadership roles in achieving the Writing Excellence Initiative’s goals. The first three will use established organizational structures for communicating their plans and reports to the University Writing Excellence Council and for receiving recommendations and guidance from the Council. They will be assisted by the Institutional Research Office and the Center for Writing Excellence in gathering and analyzing relevant data.

Academic departments will report their plans and assessment results to their deans’ offices, which will aggregate the reports for forwarding to the Council. As consistent with their own mission and goals, the deans will also provide their departments with guidance concerning the student writing and its teaching. The Council will communicate (as appropriate) with deans, department chairs, or other leaders to provide its guidance.

The General Studies Council will gather, interpret, and report plans, assessment data, and other relevant information concerning the General Studies Program, and it will receive the Council’s recommendations concerning the program.

Student Life units will report the Student Life Writing Committee, which will aggregate and analyze data for the University Writing Council. In turn, the Council will communicate with the Vice President for Student Life, other division administrators, and program leaders.

The Center for Writing Excellence will prepare annual reports on its services and programs, including both its plans and assessment results, for the Council and the Elon community.

4. UNIVERSITY-WIDE NETWORK OF PARTNERS

All of the individuals and units described above will actively engage other offices and programs in the Writing Excellence Initiative. Table 8.1 identifies some of these additional partners, who will be joined by others as the QEP develops. These partners will engage in the QEP in ways that complement their existing goals and practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Research</td>
<td>Assist with design of local surveys; administer national ones; help with analysis of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Engaged Learning</td>
<td>Collaborate in developing research on the teaching and learning of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Collaborate in developing faculty and staff abilities to teach and use writing effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belk Library</td>
<td>Collaborate in helping students, staff and students with the inquiry and critical thinking required for effective writing; support faculty in designing and implementing effective writing assignments that involve research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning Technologies</td>
<td>Help students faculty, and staff learn to write effectively with digital technologies; help faculty and staff teach writing with digital technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Communications</td>
<td>Publicize writing instruction, activities and accomplishment to internal and external audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Program; Elon College, Business, Communications, Teaching, and Leadership Fellows Programs</td>
<td>Assist in enhancing the writing abilities of students in these programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Advancement</td>
<td>Help apply for grants and donations to support writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research Program</td>
<td>Help engage undergraduates in research about writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Cultural Programs</td>
<td>Help engage students in writing outside of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Sponsored Programs</td>
<td>Help obtain grants for writing projects and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Academic Advising</td>
<td>Help students see writing as an integral and pervasive element of an Elon education; encourage use of resources for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella Cannon Centre for International Studies</td>
<td>Help engage students in writing during study abroad and study USA experiences, both within and outside of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Centro de Espanol</td>
<td>Help engage students in writing outside of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Professional Development Center</td>
<td>Help engage students in writing outside of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring Center</td>
<td>Coordinate in helping students improve writing in the broader context of their learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Admissions</td>
<td>Help advertise writing as a feature of an Elon education to a prospective students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of New Student Programs</td>
<td>Help establish writing as a central feature of an Elon education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Council</td>
<td>Help students understand the importance of writing; mentor students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Alumni Council</td>
<td>Help students understand the importance of writing; mentor students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 9

RESOURCES

Elon University is deeply committed to the success of the Writing Excellence Initiative. To supplement the resources described in this chapter, we will seek external funding with the help of the University Advancement Office and the Sponsored Programs Office.

This chapter describes the resources we will provide for the QEP in four categories.

1. Budget to create a home for the new Center for Writing Excellence.
2. Center for Writing Excellence budget to support faculty and staff writing.
3. Center for Writing Excellence budget to support student writing.
4. Budget for new faculty lines to support the reduction of GST 110 class size.

This chapter presents the budgets separately to clarify the distinct aspects of each, but the intersections and overlaps between these separate budgets and programs will be central to the success of the Writing Excellence Initiative.

1. CREATING A HOME FOR THE NEW CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

The home for the new Center for Writing Excellence in the center of the first floor of Belk Library will symbolize the central role writing plays in an Elon education and it will substantially enhance the Center’s ability to support faculty, staff, and student activities related to the QEP. We will create this space in two phases through the collaborative work of the Center for Writing Excellence, Belk Library, and Teaching & Learning Technologies, under the guidance of Elon’s office of Planning, Design, and Construction Management.

**Phase 1.** In summer 2013, we will move the student consultation area from the small room it now occupies into the large, open space at the center of the library’s first floor, which will be the site of the Center’s eventual new home. For 2013-2014, we will furnish this temporary space with new technology, furniture, and signage designed to create an inviting, efficient area for the Center’s expanding number of consultations; new programming for students, faculty, and staff; and collaboration with the reference librarians and Teaching & Learning Technologies. We will also establish a space in the library for the Center’s new program assistant.

**Phase 2.** During the 2013-2014 academic year, we will create the permanent space for the Center. Working with an external architect, we will integrate it visually and functionally with the areas for Elon’s reference librarians and Teaching & Learning Technologies staff. We will base this design on the local needs of the QEP, the insights we gain by observing use of the temporary activity area, examination of national models of exemplary writing centers. The new Center will be built during summer 2014.

Table 9.1 summarizes the budget for the new Center’s home. Because this is a capital project, these are one-time, non-recurring, funds.
Table 9.1 Budgets for Creating a Home for the New Center for Writing Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Phase</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1.</td>
<td>Summer 2013</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create the</td>
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<tr>
<td>expanded,</td>
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<tr>
<td>temporary</td>
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<tr>
<td>space for</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>on the Belk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>first floor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 2.</td>
<td>Fall 2013 –</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create the</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>permanent</td>
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<tr>
<td>location by</td>
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<tr>
<td>redesigning</td>
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<tr>
<td>the first</td>
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<tr>
<td>floor of</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belk Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This new space not only will support the Center’s programs and services, but also house its staff. The Center’s staff at the start of the QEP will be:

1. The current director of the Writing Center, Dr. Paula Rosinski. With the launch of the QEP, this position will grow from the current support of two course reassignments per academic year to three reassignments plus one month of summer salary.

2. The current director of the Writing Across the University Program, Dr. Paul Anderson. For the 2012-2013 academic year, in anticipation of the QEP, this position changed from two course reassignments per year to a full-time administrator with faculty rank.

3. A new program assistant to support all of the programs and services of the new Center.

4. Writing Center student consultants, who, in larger numbers, will continue to provide individual consultation and other services to students.

As the QEP develops, the Center’s staff will expand to include additional student consultants and, depending on need, also may grow to include faculty or staff fellows, associate directors, or persons in similar positions. The anticipated budget for these new positions is included in sections 2 and 3 below.

Table 9.2 Staff for the New Center for Writing Excellence, 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Additional Funds Needed, Beginning in 2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director, Writing Center</td>
<td>Full-time faculty with course reassignment</td>
<td>1 course reassignment plus 1 month summer salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Writing Across the University</td>
<td>Full-time administrator with faculty rank</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Assistant, Center for Writing Excellence</td>
<td>Full-time staff</td>
<td>Salary and benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. PROVIDING FACULTY AND STAFF SERVICES AND SUPPORT

As described in Chapter 6, the Center for Writing Excellence will help faculty and staff become more effective and efficient teachers of writing by expanding the Writing Across the University Program’s current services and providing new services and support. The Center’s new program for faculty and staff will include the following.

- Grants to departments and programs to support effective practices and course/curriculum development related to writing.
- Workshops, speakers, and other programs on writing instruction.
- Learning communities for faculty or staff who are working together over time on a writing or writing instruction project.
- Student assistants on writing for courses/departments.
- Grants to support faculty and staff travel to learn about or to present papers on writing.
- Faculty Fellows at the Center, as needed, to supplement existing resources, for instance by helping faculty in art and music use writing effectively.
- Programs and services to support faculty and staff as writers.
- Support for faculty- and staff-led research on writing.
- Assessment of the Center’s work with faculty and staff.

Table 9.3 shows the budgets for the Center’s faculty and staff services and support throughout the QEP period. Their steady growth will provide just-in-time resources for the Center as more faculty and staff engage in the Writing Excellence Initiative over the next five years.

As it adapts the allocation of its budget to meet growing and changing needs, the Center will consult with its Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee and its Student Advisory Committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of the QEP</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Budget Increase</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 0¹</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$255,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$315,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Year 0 budget increase represents start-up funds for the Writing Across the University Program combined with existing funds from the Writing Across the Curriculum Program. It does not include the salary and benefits for the Director of Writing Across the University.
3. PROVIDING STUDENT SERVICES AND SUPPORT

As described in Chapter 6, the Center for Writing Excellence will expand its services and support for students’ writing. This expansion will include the following.

- Increased number and scope of individual writing consultations with students.
- Workshops, speakers, retreats, and other programs on writing.
- Contests, celebrations, and other events to highlight student writing.
- Grants for student-initiated events and research on writing.
- Grants to support student travel related to writing and research on writing.
- Faculty Fellows at the Center, as needed, to supplement existing resources, for instance by providing needed expertise, such as helping advanced undergraduate or graduate students in STEM disciplines develop specialized writing abilities.
- Programs and services to support self-sponsored student writing.
- Assessment of the Center’s work with students.

Table 9.4 shows the budgets for the Center’s student services and support throughout the QEP period. The steady growth of these budgets will provide just-in-time resources for the Center as more undergraduate and graduate students engage with its expanding programs over the next five years.

As it adapts the allocation of its budget to meet growing and changing needs, the Center will consult with its Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee and its Student Advisory Committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of the QEP</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Budget Increase</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 0&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$22,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>$72,500</td>
<td>$95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$305,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Year 0 budget includes the funds provided to the Student Writing Center. It does not include the course reassignments for the Director of the Writing Center.
4. REDUCING GST 110 CLASS SIZE TOWARD 18

As described in Chapter 6, the Writing Excellence Initiative will enhance the foundational writing instruction that all Elon undergraduates receive in their first year. This effort, which will focus on The Global Experience course (GST 110), will require two types of resources.

1. Additional faculty development for GST 110 faculty, which is accounted for in the Center’s budget described in section 2 above.

2. Additional faculty lines to ensure that departments have the full-time faculty necessary to continue to staff GST 110 as we create more sections in order to reduce class size from 25 toward 18.

The additional faculty lines will be created through the Provost’s annual process for allocating new faculty lines, in consultation with the academic deans and departments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of the QEP</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Additional Sections Offered</th>
<th>New Faculty Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 0</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 10

ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Well-conceived and thoughtfully executed assessment is critical to our ability to attain the goals embodied in our QEP, the Writing Excellence Initiative. Assessment provides the basis for evaluating our experiments and pilot projects, engages us in a process of continuous improvement during and after the QEP period, and continually renews our focus on our aspiration for writing at Elon.

Our overall approach is to assign responsibilities for assessment to the units whose QEP actions are being assessed. These units are in the best position to devise appropriate assessment criteria, interpret assessment data, and devise efficacious improvements based on the results. Their reports on what they have learned and how they plan to respond will be collected and examined by the University Writing Excellence Council, which will provide overall, university-wide guidance for the QEP, as described in the next chapter.

To assure that our assessment plans are sustainable, we will integrate them into our other assessment processes, policies, and procedures, which, having been found in compliance with Comprehensive Item 3.3.1, provide a strong foundation on which to build our QEP work. The Center for Writing Excellence and the Institutional Research Office will assist units in designing, conducting, and interpreting assessment. The Center will also provide needed resources to help units act on their assessment results.

Along with all other features of our QEP, our assessment strategies will evolve as we proceed. However, the overall framework outlined in this chapter will guide our work throughout the QEP. The following sections describe our plans for assessing the following aspects of the QEP:

1. Improvement in Student Writing
2. Progress in the QEP
3. Center for Writing Excellence Actions
4. Elon’s “Culture of Writing”

1. ASSESSING IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT WRITING

We will use both direct and indirect methods for assessing and continuously improving our efforts to develop students’ writing abilities.

Direct Assessment of SLOs

The Writing Excellence Initiative is an institution-wide effort that continues to build the writing abilities of our undergraduate and graduate students throughout their studies with us. Consequently, although we will assess students’ writing in many aspects of our curriculum, the ultimate measure of our success will be our students’ abilities at the point of graduation. Thus, the primary evidence of our success will be students’ writing capacities as demonstrated in the writing they produce in their final one or two semesters.
While every element of the university will contribute to the students’ growing proficiency as writers, assessment activities will be conducted primarily by academic departments, the General Studies Program, and the Student Life Division.

**Academic Departments.** All academic departments will follow the same general assessment process, adjusting as necessary to address particular circumstances. In the last one or two semesters of a major’s curriculum, students will complete a writing assignment that is designed to demonstrate their proficiency in writing related to the department’s relevant student learning outcomes. This assignment (or these assignments) should build on the coordinated writing instruction offered by the department. Departments will then collect clean copies (that is, samples without marks or grades by the professor) of this writing.

Faculty in the department will evaluate these writing samples to determine which outcomes their instruction has been most successful in helping their students achieve and which offer the most substantial opportunities for program improvement. The Center for Writing Excellence will support departments in this work by, for example, helping to determine what proportion of the writing samples should be evaluated and by offering advice on developing and using a rubric to conduct the evaluation.

The assessment cycle will continue with department faculty determining how they will modify their program and pedagogy to better prepare their students as writers. The cycle will close with the department implementing the changes the faculty have identified. Because the goal of assessment is continuous improvement, the identification and implementation process will indicate that a department has met its assessment responsibilities.

Departments will use current assessment reporting practices, such as the Annual Reports on Assessment Progress (ARAPs), to document their QEP-related work. The University Writing Excellence Council will review copies of department reports, providing feedback and support as appropriate. The Council also will aggregate results from department reports to analyze writing outcomes at the division, school, and university levels. The Council will share its findings and recommendations with appropriate parties and with the campus as a whole.

**General Studies Program.** The General Studies Program’s assessment plan will closely resemble the one employed by academic departments. As part of its special focus on SLO 2, General Studies interdisciplinary seminars will ask students to write a communication in which they address a specific, non-specialist audience on an issue of local, regional, or global significance. The Center for Writing Excellence will provide any support needed on this assessment process.

To begin, the General Studies Program will collect a sample of these assignments from randomly selected General Studies seminars. These samples then will be evaluated by a group of faculty who teach in General Studies, using a rubric that aligns with the Program’s writing outcomes but that also allows for the diversity of topics and assignments used in General Studies seminars. Results will be reported to both the faculty teaching these seminars and the General Studies Council. Based on these results, the General Studies Council will identify and make revisions to the program that will enhance students’ abilities to write as citizens. It will report its results to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

**Student Life Division.** The contexts in which the Student Life Division works with student writing are much more diverse than is the case for academic departments and the General Studies Program. Consequently, the Division’s assessments will be more locally developed, with guidance from the Student Life Writing Committee and support from the Center for Writing Excellence. Individual units will report their assessment results to the Student Life Writing Committee, which will aggregate
results to analyze writing outcomes at the division. The committee will report its results to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

Indirect Assessment of SLOs
To supplement the information gained through our dispersed direct assessment, the Center for Writing Excellence and Institutional Research Office will employ surveys and focus groups to gather faculty, staff, and student perceptions of our effectiveness at helping students achieve our three QEP learning outcomes. The Center and the Institutional Research Office will also examine responses to relevant questions from externally administered surveys, such as the question on the National Survey of Student Engagement that asks students to indicate the extent to which their experience at their college contributed to “their knowledge, skill, and personal development” related to “writing clearly and directly.” By comparing student responses from different years, the Center for Writing Excellence and the Institutional Research Office will gain an approximate indicator of the impact of the Writing Excellence Initiative. They will report the results of these analyses, including both areas of notable progress and issues in need of attention, to the University Writing Excellence Council, and they will share the results with the campus.

2. ASSESSING PROGRESS ON THE QEP
In addition to assessing the results of the Writing Excellence Initiative, we will assess the work of each of the major contributors to the initiative, examining both their progress in implementing their QEP actions and the quality of their implementations.

- In Year One of the QEP, academic departments will choose and report to their deans the schedule they wish to follow in implementing the four major steps to be accomplished in the first three years (defining their writing outcomes for students, describing the current writing instruction in the curricula, developing a plan for progressively developing students’ writing abilities, and establishing an assessment plan). As they complete each step, they will report their results to their deans, with a copy to the University Writing Excellence Council. As they complete each assessment cycle, they will report what they did, what they found, and what changes or refinements they will make. The Council will review these reports individually and in aggregate to detect trends; make recommendations at the division, school, and university levels; and identify ways the university can better support department efforts.

- During Year One, the General Studies Program will report to the University Writing Excellence Council its schedule for implementing its QEP actions. As it completes each assessment cycle, it will report its results and response plans to the University Writing Excellence Council.

- During Year One, the Student Life Division will ask each of the units that now works or will be working with student writing to report to the Student Life Writing Committee its schedule for identifying student learning outcomes, learning activities, and an assessment plan. The Committee will summarize the results for the University Writing Excellence Council. Beginning in Year Two, each contributing Student Life unit will report annually its assessment results to the Committee, which will examine them collectively for insights into ways it can improve its support for student writing in the Division. It will provide a divisional report to the University Writing Excellence Council each year.
3. ASSESSING THE CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

Assessment of the Center for Writing Excellence will be especially important, given the important role the Center will play in supporting the other major contributors to the Writing Excellence Initiative as well as the direct role it plays in supporting student learning. Each year, the Center will establish and report to the University Writing Excellence Council its plans and goals for the coming twelve months. After Year One of the QEP, it will also report on its results from the year before. The following sections outline the assessments the Center will make, some continually, some at appropriate intervals, of its services for faculty and staff and for students.

Faculty and Staff Services

For the Center for Writing Excellence to have the desired impact on writing at Elon, it must engage with a significant number of faculty and departments across the University. The Center will establish and maintain a database recording these contacts and include the results in its annual report to the University Writing Excellence Council.

Equally important will be the quality of its services for faculty and staff. In addition to collecting evaluations from each of its workshops and other programs, the Center will conduct survey and focus groups to identify opportunities for improvement. The following questions indicate the kinds of data it will collect.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the Center for Writing Excellence. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

a. I have learned how to create more effective writing assignments and activities from the Center.

b. The Center has helped my department or program discuss ways to improve student writing.

c. The Center has helped my department or program take practical steps to improve student writing.

d. The Center has increased Elon faculty’s ability to help students write better.

In all assessments, faculty and staff will be asked to suggest improvements and identify additional services they desire.

Because the Center’s major responsibilities include helping faculty improve the writing instruction they provide, it will also use data from faculty and student surveys to gather baseline data in spring 2013 for comparison in future years, with assistance from the Institutional Research Office. Especially helpful will be the questions in the new writing module created by the National Survey of Student Engagement. This NSSE module gathers information from students concerning the frequency with which faculty employ evidence-based best practices when assigning writing. The Center will also analyze responses to a parallel writing module in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, which asks faculty how often they employ the best practices.

The Center will use similar methods to assess the assistance it provides faculty and staff with their own writing.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of its services for faculty and staff to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

Student Services

Building on the Writing Center’s existing efforts, the new Center will develop processes to assess the outcomes of its student consultations and other programs. The Center will analyze these data at the end
of each academic term so that the results can be used to modify offerings in the term ahead. The Center will include the results and its plans in its annual report to the University Writing Excellence Council.

The Center will ask students who use its consultation services to complete evaluations at the end of each session. In addition to being used for mentoring individual consultants, the aggregated results will be analyzed to gain insights into ways the Center can improve the training provided in the workshop student consultants receive before working at the Center and the in-service training the Center will begin to require. Also, the student consultants will be asked to evaluate their preparation and training and to suggest improvements.

Each year, the Center will survey and conduct focus groups with students who have used the Center’s services and programs in the previous terms. The following questions for students who used the consultation services indicate the kinds of survey data it will collect.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

a. I was able to improve the writing I came to the Center to talk about.
b. I learned techniques that I have used in other writing I’ve done.
c. I am a better writer as a result of visiting the Center.
d. A professor commented on my improved writing.
e. My grades have gone up because of my visit to the Center.
f. I plan to visit the Center for further help.
g. I would recommend the Center to a friend.
h. I told someone else about how my writing consultation benefited me.

The Center will also seek faculty perceptions and suggestions concerning its student services. For example, the faculty survey mentioned above will ask respondents the extent to which they agree with such statements as, “Students I know who visited the Center learned how to organize their writing more effectively” and “Students I know who visited the Center learned how to argue their positions more effectively.” Analogous questions will be asked of staff.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of its services for students to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.

4. ASSESSING ELON’S “CULTURE OF WRITING”

An overarching goal of our QEP is to establish a culture of writing in which faculty, staff, and students all see writing as a signature feature of any Elon education.

The Center’s major assessment instrument for gauging the establishment of a culture of writing among students will be a survey constructed and administered by the Center and the Institutional Research Office. We will first administer the survey in spring 2013 in order to gain baseline data and then again in the third and fifth years of our QEP. The following questions indicate the kinds of survey data we will collect.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
a. Writing ability is important to my success in my career.
b. Writing ability is important to my success in my personal life.
c. I want to be a better writer.
d. Elon faculty have helped me become a better writer.
e. Elon staff have helped me become a better writer.
f. I wish I had received more instruction at Elon in writing well.

In the faculty and staff survey described above, the Center will ask respondents about their perception of the culture of writing among students. Possible questions (phrased for faculty) include the following.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

a. Students in my classes are highly motivated to learn how to write effectively.
b. Students in my classes welcome the writing I assign.

Other indicators of the development of a culture of writing include the number, variety, and visibility of student-led events and publications as well as the extent to which faculty talk with each other and with students about their writing projects and processes.

Annually, the Center will report results of its assessment of its services for faculty and staff to the University Writing Excellence Council and share them with the campus.
CHAPTER 11

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