

# Executive Summary of Word Up! Transforming Writing at STU

**Word Up! Transforming Writing at STU** is an ambitious and comprehensive Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to improve students' writing skills. While Word Up! focuses on our undergraduate students with a particular emphasis on first-year students, we believe that it will transform St. Thomas University by fostering the creation of a campus-wide culture of writing.

The goal of Word Up! is to improve student writing at the undergraduate level. This goal will be accomplished through three major initiatives:

1. Writing Communities
2. Writing Intensive Courses
3. Writing in the Discipline Courses

To meet this goal, we have developed clear and measurable Student Learning Outcomes. Progress toward our goal will be measured by continual assessment of student achievement with these outcomes.

## **First-Year Writing Communities (WC)**

First-Year Writing Communities form the centerpiece and foundation of our QEP. They are modeled on learning communities, a nationally proven strategy for improving student engagement and success. Our Writing Communities link first-year composition courses with lower-division General Education Requirement (GER) courses and sections of our first-year seminar. The Writing Communities will be thematically linked and cohorts of first-year students will enroll in all three courses that comprise the community.

## **Writing Intensive Courses (WI)**

Building upon the foundation of Writing Communities, we will develop Writing Intensive courses at the sophomore and junior levels. Faculty

will propose appropriate courses for development into Writing Intensives. These courses will focus more heavily on writing, and written assignments will form a significant component of the course. The first Writing Intensive courses will be launched in Year Two of our QEP.

## **Writing in the Discipline Courses**

The third and final component of Word Up!, the development of Writing in the Discipline courses, builds on the foundation of the Writing Communities and the reinforcements of the Writing Intensives. Programs will be encouraged and incentivized to develop senior-level Writing in the Discipline

courses and to subsequently make these three-credit courses major requirements. Writing in the Discipline courses will provide a capstone to a four-year program of writing instruction that has taken students from first-year Writing Communities through and Writing Intensive courses to Writing in the Discipline – a transformational multi-year and multi-tiered writing experience.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

At the heart of our QEP are Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). We have developed five outcomes for the WC and WI initiatives:

1. Knowledge of Writing Conventions (Grammar, Syntax, Spelling): Students will identify and use

correct grammar, syntax, and spelling in their writing.

2. Knowledge of Writing Conventions (Citation and Quotation): Students will use appropriate citation and quotation in their writing.

3. Writing Organizational Skills: Students will organize their writing with a clear and cohesive structure (i.e., introduction, conclusion, paragraph organization, thesis statement).

4. Writing Research Skills: Students will find and evaluate primary and secondary sources using writing conventions appropriate to their discipline and utilizing technological and library resources.

5. Writing Argumentation Skills: Students will understand and evaluate materials from different perspectives and will write responses that effectively integrate their course materials.

We have developed two additional SLOs for our Writing in the Discipline initiative.

1. Conventions of the Discipline: Students will demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the subject and will use specialized concepts of the discipline to demonstrate understanding.

2. Rhetoric of the Discipline: Students will use genre, format, language and tone appropriate to the discipline and maintain an appropriate sense of audience as established by professionals within that discipline.

Our QEP's assessment plan uses both direct and indirect means to measure these SLOs and a process for information gathering, analysis, and sharing that will ensure feedback for continual improvement.

**Word Up!**

