Quality Enhancement Plan Impact Report

Section 1. Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

In March 2011, Savannah State University (SSU) presented a proposal for its inaugural Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *The Write Attitude*. QEP initiatives were developed and implemented with the support of senior administration, all colleges, faculty, staff, students, and student organizations. To give critical support to the QEP and to assure its accomplishments, SSU created an Office of the QEP and hired a Director to execute the plan, analyze its results, and implement improvement actions.

The initial five goals of the QEP were to: (1) expose students to positive attitudes toward writing so that they would understand writing as an essential form of communication for their academic and professional success; (2) provide students with the opportunity to experience a variety of writing opportunities, ranging in type and scope, at all levels of all disciplines; (3) engage students in activities that incorporate peer interaction with and feedback on their writing; (4) have faculty motivate students through their commitment to a pedagogy of learning-through-writing; and (5) have students interact with faculty and staff who are committed to providing writing occasions that emphasized professional-level writing components and competency in extra-curricular activities and university services.

The original proposal stated that as a result of the QEP, students would be able to: (a) produce college-level writing in a variety of situations and/or courses; (b) properly conduct academic research; (c) use appropriate rhetorical strategies in their writing; (d) construct academic essays with appropriate content, purpose, and support; and (e) evaluate how their own attitudes regarding writing affect their writing ability.

Achievement of these five outcomes (a-e) would be assessed using a robust combination of direct and indirect measures for both formative and summative purposes, including, but not limited to, evaluating student writing with rubrics, surveys, focus groups, participation rates, and institutional data related to student academic performance, persistence, and completion. The original outcomes were to be achieved through **implementation of the following strategies:** (i) the establishment of minimum writing requirements for core General Education courses; (ii) introducing and assessing the effectiveness of low-stakes writing; (iii) designing and implementing rich faculty and staff professional development opportunities, including faculty and staff writing seminars, workshops, and best practices symposia; (iv) creating and hosting annual conferences showcasing and honoring student writing in each college; (v) developing a student and a faculty writing fellows program; and (vi) providing programs to meaningfully link Savannah State students to the greater Savannah community, with particular attention focused on K-12 student writing initiatives.

Section 2. Changes Made to the QEP and Reasons for Modification

The changes made to the QEP during the course of implementation fit into three categories: (1) modifications to the original goals and outcomes for the QEP; (2) changes to the assessment and educational research plan; and (3) the addition of a communications plan and coordinator.

2.1. Modifications to Goals and Outcomes: In the 2011 Report of the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Committee, the review committee recommended that SSU's QEP should be "narrowed to one broad goal that captures the vision of the importance of writing, specifically attitudes toward writing."[1] The committee further stated that while the new goal "does not have to be measurable or addressed in the assessment, from the goal, a limited number of learning outcomes should be derived."[2] In direct response to these suggestions, SSU created one new, over-arching goal related to attitude and converted most of its previous goals into performance indicators in an improved assessment plan (see Table 2). Additionally, many of the five original outcomes were incorporated into the two revised student learning outcomes displayed in Table 1. These amendments to the goal, outcomes, and assessment plan underpinned the implementation of *The Write Attitude* from summer 2011 – fall 2016*.

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[1] Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, "Report of the Reaffirmation Committee," Savannah State University, March 2011, page 20.

[2] Ibid.

Table 1: Modified Goal and Student Learning Outcomes

Goal	*The Write Attitude* will increase positive attitudes about the activity and value of writing in Savannah State University's students, faculty, and staff.
SLO1	Students will express favorable attitudes toward writing in a context that includes increased opportunities to engage in the writing process.
SLO2	Students will produce competent college-level writing that demonstrates an awareness of purpose and audience, an understanding of content, the ability to select appropriate support for idea development, and exhibits appropriate style or disciplinary conventions, in a variety of academic contexts.

2.2. Changes to Assessment and Educational Research Plan: In May 2014, at the mid-point of QEP implementation, SSU commissioned a senior director for research and assessment at an acclaimed regional university to serve as an external consultant. The primary function of this consultant was to conduct a review of the data collection and assessment practices for *The Write Attitude.* The reviewer characterized *The Write Attitude* as having "a robust, formative approach to assessment that allows for responsive change designed to enhance the program as it evolves," but recommended a more strategic and streamlined approach to data collection moving forward. Consequently, the QEP team discontinued three early assessments.

The New Student Perceptions of Writing Survey: This survey was employed early in implementation to learn about the needs of incoming student cohorts in order to expand relevant, responsive, student-centered programming through data-driven decision making. Figure 1 illustrates how the survey results were used to create targeted offerings in response to assessment data. The first administration of the New Student Perceptions of Writing Survey in summer of 2012 showed that incoming freshmen (n=705) indicated that they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about the writing process and that they felt they needed assistance with writing fundamentals. To examine which writing fundamentals in particular, the QEP developed the Student Perception of Writing Skills Survey and administered it as a pre- and post-test in fall 2012 in various first-year courses. From those pre-test results, a series of ten voluntary, co-curricular grammar workshops around the topics identified in the data were designed. That data set also revealed that the top self-reported area of difficulty with essay writing was, by far, "getting started," so an additional essay-writing workshop series to emphasize writing as a process was designed and began in spring 2013. From there, the QEP further revised the New Student Perceptions of Writing Survey for summer 2013 to gain additional insights that led to creating three other skills-building workshop series (see Table 4 for a complete list). After this initial use of the survey to inform programming, the QEP office engaged in a tactical inventory of other surveys that were being conducted as part of institutional assessment activities and was able to identify alternate sources – namely, the SSU administration of national surveys including the Consumer Intelligence Research Partners (CIRP) and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) – that provided parallel data and allowed for the suspension of the New Perceptions of Writing Survey.

Figure 1: Use of New Student Perceptions of Writing Survey to Inform Initial QEP Implementation
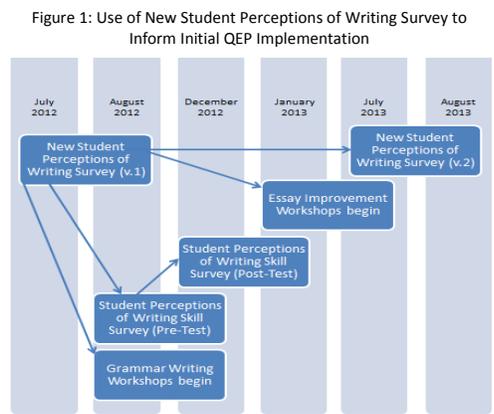
Additionally, two other surveys that helped shape initial implementation of the QEP were eliminated: the **Student Perception of Writing Skills** and the **Attitudinal Writing Taxonomy** surveys. Like the New Student Perceptions of Writing survey, both were used to try to elicit student and faculty feedback to create a better-targeted curriculum and co-curricular activities focused on writing and reducing writing apprehension in the initial implementation phase of the QEP. Concerns about survey fatigue and an over-reliance on indirect measures for assessment given the time, resources, and expertise available, led the QEP leadership to conclude that these surveys could be discontinued and assessment efforts more specifically directed at capturing data regarding students' experience(s) of the QEP in, and beyond, the classroom would be the focus.

2.3. Communications Additions: During spring 2014, a QEP Communications Coordinator was hired because the QEP needed additional assistance to organize and disseminate the vast set of writing resources *The Write Attitude* had amassed. The QEP communications strategy yielded outreach results (see Figure 2) that included several successful writing-related social media campaigns; an improved website as an important repository for QEP materials (qep.savannahstate.edu); a semester-based newsletter, *The Write News*, to highlight QEP achievements and feature articles and poems written by SSU students, faculty and staff, and guests; recorded interviews with acclaimed authors who visited campus; and many writing-based radio shows, broadcasted around the world from the SSU radio station.

Section 3. Impacts on Student Learning and the Student Learning Environment

The Write Attitude ambitiously sought to improve both student learning and the student learning environment by: (1) developing students' writing skills and sense of self-efficacy regarding writing; (2) providing faculty with training to support a campus-wide learning-through-writing pedagogical approach and its assessment; (3) offering staff professional development on writing topics; and (4) building and maintaining the SSU Writing Center as a hub of writing development for students, faculty, and staff alike. All four components played key roles in SSU's continuous improvement processes. Additionally, there were several unanticipated – but positive and powerful – outcomes for the QEP. Table 2 provides a synopsis of the measurement and impact of the QEP, with greater detail about results provided in the subsequent subsections of Section 3.

Figure 2: Communication & Outreach Results by Activity

QEP Communication & Outreach

QEP Radio Shows	14
Recorded Interviews	32
Issues of *The Write News* Newsletter	8
Issues of *QEP Highlights*	36
Original Videos on YouTube	21
QEP Communications & Dissemination Sources	111

1,306
Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram followers

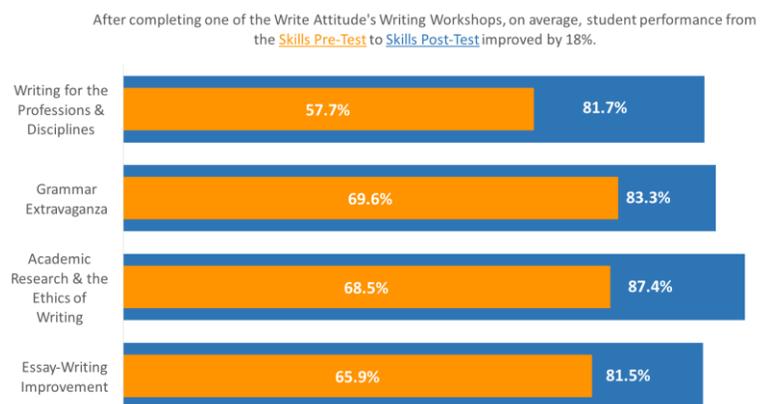**22,299**
QEP Website Users

Table 2: Improved Student Learning Outcomes, Measures, Indicators, and Results Overview

Goal	The Write Attitude will increase positive attitudes about the activity and value of writing in Savannah State University's students, faculty, and staff.		
Student Learning Outcomes	**Measures**	**Indicators**	**Results**
Student Learning Outcome #1 (Affective Domain) *Students will express favorable attitudes toward writing in a context that includes increased opportunities to engage in the writing process.*	• Daly Miller Writing Apprehension Test • Attitudinal Profile Taxonomy	Students in the 2012 freshman cohort will report lessened apprehension regarding writing during their senior year.	**TARGET MET** See Daly Miller, p. 6
	• SSU Writing Center Appointment Records • Satisfaction Surveys	The number of student visits to the SSU Writing Center will increase by 25% each academic year.	**TARGET MET** See Figure 7
	• Student Event Participation Tallies • Satisfaction Surveys	The number of extracurricular and co-curricular activities involving writing will increase by 5% each academic year.	**TARGET MET** See Table 4
	• Faculty Development Seminar Rosters and Portfolios • Satisfaction Surveys	At least 25 faculty will complete a QEP Faculty Development Seminar, will incorporate lessons and elevated instruction through writing into their courses, and provide data about their experiences.	**TARGET MET** See Table 5
	• Attendance Sign-in Sheets • Satisfaction Surveys	Faculty will produce better-constructed writing assignments and will also increase the number of writing opportunities in their courses.	**TARGET MET** See Table 5
	• Annual Faculty Travel Logs	At least three faculty members will participate in scholarship and/or conferences related to the QEP each academic year.	**TARGET MET** See Table 5

Goal	The Write Attitude will increase positive attitudes about the activity and value of writing in Savannah State University's students, faculty, and staff.		
Student Learning Outcomes	**Measures**	**Indicators**	**Results**
Student Learning Outcome #2 (Cognitive Domain) *Students will produce competent college-level writing that demonstrates an awareness of purpose and audience, an understanding of content, the ability to select appropriate support for idea development, and exhibits appropriate style or disciplinary conventions, in a variety of academic contexts.*	• QEP University Writing Rubrics • Attendance Sign-in Sheets	At least 70% of students will achieve scores of Satisfactory or greater on the QEP Writing Rubric.	**TARGET MET** See Table 3, Figures 4, 5 & 6
	• Writing Workshop Pre- and Post-Tests	Students will exhibit ≥ 10% gains in weekly writing workshop post-test scores.	**TARGET MET** See Figure 3
	• QEP University Writing Rubrics Usage Tally • Core Courses Syllabi with QEP Statement and Expression of Minimum Writing Requirements • Faculty Development Seminar Rosters and Portfolios	Faculty will increase the number of courses involving higher frequencies of writing opportunities in program and general education core courses.	**TARGET MET** See Rubric Usage Tally, p. 5
	• Faculty Development Workshop Tallies • Satisfaction Surveys	Faculty will conduct at least 5 workshops per academic year with peers to share best practices on writing instruction and writing to learn techniques.	**TARGET MET** See Table 4

3.1. Impact on Students: Benefitting from sustained institutional support, SSU's QEP successfully enhanced student learning and the student learning environment. Student learning, understood as a change in attitude, skills, and/or behavior over time,[3] has been impacted in three significant ways at SSU regarding writing. First, the university has seen **demonstrable improvement of student writing skills** through direct measures of student performance like pre- and post-test scores and the QEP Writing Rubric ratings. The **pre- and post-testing of student learning** was conducted during the co-curricular SSU Writing Workshops. The QEP developed and implemented four different series of co-curricular workshops to help students improve their writing skills on a variety of topic like grammar, essay writing, academic writing and the ethics of research, writing for the disciplines, and writing in the professions. From fall 2012 through fall 2016, in partnership with the SSU Writing Center and the Asa H. Gordon Library, the QEP offered 372 different writing workshops that were attended by 3,096 participants. In addition to the robust levels of participation in these voluntary sessions, Figure 3 shows student attendees made substantial learning gains across all workshops, on all topics.

Figure 3 Direct Evidence of Student Learning via QEP Workshops (Pre- and Post-Test Results)

After completing one of the Write Attitude's Writing Workshops, on average, student performance from the Skills Pre-Test to Skills Post-Test improved by 18%.

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Writing for the Professions & Disciplines	57.7%	81.7%
Grammar Extravaganza	69.6%	83.3%
Academic Research & the Ethics of Writing	68.5%	87.4%
Essay-Writing Improvement	65.9%	81.5%

The next direct measure of improved student learning was collected through the **QEP Writing Rubric**. This instrument was developed during a fall 2012 university-wide assessment working group session. Faculty groups, sorted by disciplinary affiliation, came to consensus and crafted descriptions of

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[3] Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DePietro, M., Lovett, M.C., Norman, M.K., & Mayer, R.E. (2010). *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

excellent, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory performance on the areas of: (a) awareness of purpose and audience; (b) understanding of content; (c) selection of appropriate support; (d) exhibition of proper style/disciplinary conventions; and (e) writing mechanics and usage. This process allowed the QEP to create a tool that would retain the distinctive features of all disciplinary writing genres while measuring constant features of successful writing across the institution. Ultimately, from fall 2012 through fall 2016, 6,802 pieces of student writing were assessed by 98 faculty members on 837 assignments from 18 programs, spanning all colleges and the general education core curriculum. In all, there were 17,737 distinct applications of a QEP Writing Rubric to evaluate student writing on campus. This represents a vast proliferation of writing based assignments, development of writing instruction, and assessment of writing on SSU's campus. SSU's two-course sequence for composition (English 1101 and 1102), required of all graduates, used the QEP writing rubric the most. Analyzing the results of this direct assessment of student writing from AY 2012 - 2013 through AY 2015 - 2016 for English 1101 and English 1102 (see Table 3), reveals that for 1101, the overall student writing skills improved over the course of the QEP, with an increase in the percentage of student work with a rating of "Excellent" and a decrease in the percentage of student work with a designation of "Unsatisfactory." Ratings for English 1102 presents a more complicated picture, showing very similar improvements through AY 2013 -

Table 3: English 1101 & 1102 Rubric Assessment Results AY2012-2013 through AY2015-2016						
	Fall 2012			**Spring 2013**		
	English 1101			**English 1102**		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Awareness of Purpose & Audience	26%	51%	23%	29%	54%	17%
Understanding of Content	6%	62%	32%	22%	49%	29%
Selection of Appropriate Support	8%	62%	30%	19%	53%	28%
Exhibition of Proper Style/Disciplinary Conventions	28%	54%	18%	22%	59%	19%
Writing Mechanics & Usage	23%	33%	44%	18%	60%	22%
Overall Rating of Writing Skill	5%	67%	28%	18%	69%	13%
	Fall 2013			**Spring 2014**		
	English 1101			**English 1102**		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Awareness of Purpose & Audience	15%	52%	33%	27%	62%	11%
Understanding of Content	14%	59%	27%	27%	63%	10%
Selection of Appropriate Support	11%	57%	32%	23%	57%	20%
Exhibition of Proper Style/Disciplinary Conventions	9%	46%	45%	20%	53%	27%
Writing Mechanics & Usage	12%	68%	20%	23%	66%	11%
Overall Rating of Writing Skill	10%	54%	36%	22%	69%	9%
	Fall 2014			**Spring 2015**		
	English 1101			**English 1102**		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Awareness of Purpose & Audience	30%	43%	27%	25%	43%	32%
Understanding of Content	28%	49%	23%	25%	50%	25%
Selection of Appropriate Support	24%	51%	25%	20%	44%	36%
Exhibition of Proper Style/Disciplinary Conventions	23%	49%	28%	16%	40%	44%
Writing Mechanics & Usage	21%	55%	24%	20%	53%	27%
Overall Rating of Writing Skill	25%	51%	24%	21%	46%	33%
	Fall 2015			**Spring 2016**		
	English 1101			**English 1102**		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Awareness of Purpose & Audience	32%	50%	18%	32%	52%	16%
Understanding of Content	30%	57%	13%	28%	57%	15%
Selection of Appropriate Support	24%	56%	20%	21%	56%	23%
Exhibition of Proper Style/Disciplinary Conventions	23%	54%	23%	21%	49%	30%
Writing Mechanics & Usage	22%	58%	20%	21%	63%	16%
Overall Rating of Writing Skill	23%	56%	21%	24%	54%	22%

2014, and then higher "Unsatisfactory" scores in Spring 2015, with a return to decreasing "Unsatisfactory" scores in Spring 2016. That said, "Excellent" ratings of student work from 1102 continued to increase. There are several potential explanations for this, including increased rigor of assignments for English 1102 based on changes made in response to the previous year's discussion of assessment results. Based on the results of this rubric-based direct assessment of student writing, the QEP's focus on English 1101 as the entry point for the majority of Savannah State students appears to have had a positive impact, as illustrated by Figures 4 & 5, which depict the improvement of students' overall writing skills, with a dramatic increase over four years in student work rated as "Excellent," and a steady decrease in student work rated as "Unsatisfactory" at the end of English 1101. Moving forward, SSU will review the pedagogical approach and curricular structure of English 1101 in

collaboration with English faculty and the SSU Writing Center to try to identify high-impact teaching practices and assignment design parameters that could potentially be infused into the delivery of English 1102 to try to replicate these results.

Figure 6 provides rubric scoring results from across all upper-division (3000- and 4000-level) courses that voluntarily used the QEP Writing Rubric to assess student learning. Courses came from all colleges, representing pre-professional programs, the arts, humanities, and STEM disciplines. Within upper division courses, student work was rated quite highly, with only 17% or less of student work failing to achieve at least a "Satisfactory" rating.

Beyond the direct measures of student skill improvement, the second significant overall effect on student learning is measured by the **improved attitudes students displayed** about their sense of confidence as writers, their willingness to write, and their valuation of writing, broadly construed. The most dramatic illustration of improved attitudes about writing can be seen in the results of the **Daly Miller Writing Apprehension Test**. Created in 1975 and validated by over 40 years of empirical research, the Daly Miller was created under the assumption that early negative writing experiences contribute greatly to writing apprehension. This survey was administered over the course of the QEP as both a self-diagnostic tool for students as well as an assessment tool to monitor changes in students' writing anxiety over time. Analysis of Daly Miller results for the cohort of students entering SSU in fall 2012 and graduating in fall 2016 reveal dramatic changes in students' self-reported levels of anxiety over the course of their time at SSU. While not possible to establish singular causality between the QEP and shifts in student attitudes, the dramatic changes in attitude from first year to senior year contribute substantially to the conclusion that the QEP has had a favorable impact on student learning. For example, on the items: (1) "I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated," 58% of first-year students *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*, while by senior year 80% *Strongly Disagreed* or *Disagreed* with this statement; (2) "I am nervous about writing," 61% of first-year students *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*, while by senior year 68% *Strongly Disagreed* or *Disagreed* with this statement; and (3) "I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them," 56% of first-year students *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*, while by senior year 78% *Strongly Disagreed* or *Disagreed* with this statement. These results solidly indicate that students reported a dramatic lessening of apprehension by their senior year.

Figure 4: Direct Evidence of Student Learning from English 1101 via Assessment with the QEP Writing Rubric: Overall Rating of Writing Skill

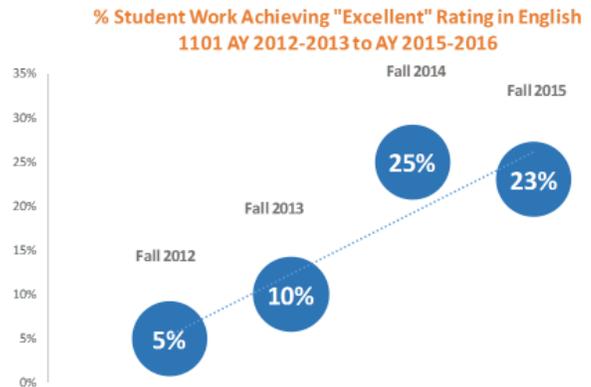% Student Work Achieving "Excellent" Rating in English 1101 AY 2012-2013 to AY 2015-2016

Figure 5: Direct Evidence of Student Learning from English 1101 via Assessment with the QEP Writing Rubric: Overall Rating of Writing Skill

% Student Work Achieving "Unsatisfactory" Rating in English 1101 AY 2012-2013 to AY 2015-2016
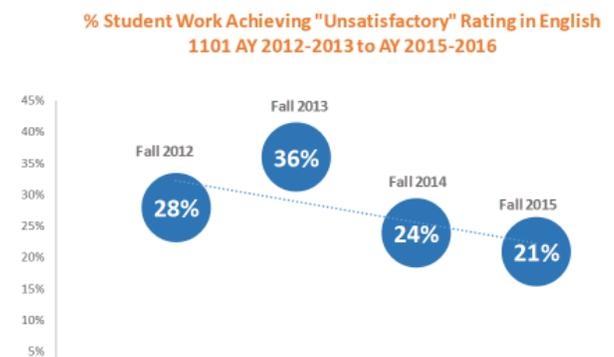
Figure 6: Direct Evidence of Student Learning from Upper Division Coursework via Assessment with the QEP Writing Rubric

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Awareness of Purpose & Audience	22%	61%	17%
Understanding of Content	23%	65%	12%
Selection of Appropriate Support	27%	61%	12%
Exhibition of Proper Style/Disciplinary Conventions	26%	58%	16%
Writing Mechanics & Usage	28%	61%	11%
Overall Rating of Writing Skill	26%	62%	12%

The third learning opportunity for student development included a multitude of **events, activities, and leadership roles** designed to **elevate the learning environment** and to support students in the various kinds of writing they compose, personally and academically. Each opportunity strived to improve writing skills to and promote positive attitudes about writing. Topics spanned all types including things like creative writing, technical writing, poetry, workplace communications, journalism, self-publishing, and writing for social media. They were delivered in a range of formats like lectures, readings, discussions, and hands-on workshops. The 4,588 student participants in these programs (see Table 4 for complete list) expressed overwhelming satisfaction and indicated they learned as a result of their attendance on post-event surveys.

Table 4: Student Development Activity Types for an Enhanced Educational Environment

Development Type	Description	Participants
QEP Student Ambassadors	The QEP Student Ambassadors are volunteers that assist in hosting campus initiatives and events that influence the larger student population to participate in and embody "The Write Attitude." *Spring 2012 – Fall 2016*	57 Student Ambassadors
QEP Student Interns	The QEP Student Interns are student employees that assist in communications and student outreach activities, having a unique opportunity to develop leadership skills as well as abilities related to their careers. *Fall 2014 – Fall 2016*	8 Student Interns
Student Writing Fellows	Student Writing Fellows are a part of the QEP Writing Fellows Program at the SSU Writing Center. These expert student employees are paired with interested professors to assist with the writing in their courses. *Fall 2012 – Fall 2016*	11 Student Writing Fellows
Peer Writing Tutors	Peer Writing Tutors are skilled student employees who work 19 hours per week in the SSU Writing Center assisting other students with their writing projects. *Fall 2012 – Fall 2016*	24 Peer Writing Tutors
On-campus Writing Events for Students	The QEP has designed and offered several writing-related events during each academic year: lectures, workshops, and discussions with authors, poets, scholars, and professionals as well as poetry readings. *Fall 2012 – Fall 2016: 134 events*	4,588 instances of student participation
Weekly Writing Workshops	Four separate series: Grammar Extravaganza, Essay-Writing Improvement, Writing for the Professions and Disciplines, and Academic Research and the Ethics of Writing. *Fall 2012 – Fall 2016: 372 workshops*	3,096 instances of student participation
Lunch and Learn "Real World" Writing Series	Sessions in this series give students an opportunity to learn from and network with leaders, local employers and SSU alumni, so they can see how important writing is in the "real world" workplace. *Spring 2012 – Fall 2016: 30 Lunch and Learn sessions*	774 instances of student participation
Writing Contests	The QEP offers numerous writing-related contests to all students on campus. Essay, poetry, problem-solving proposals, and social media contests are the most common ones. *Fall 2012 – Fall 2016: 48 Writing-related Contests, 124 winners*	1,389 instances of student participation
Writing Features/ Performances	Articles and posts written by students have been published in the QEP newsletter *The Write News* and on the QEP website. Also students have been performing on the QEP Radios Shows, *Poetry in the Air* and *The Writer's Way*. *Spring 2014 – Fall 2016: 22 articles, 5 blogs, 71 writing-related performances (radio shows)*	98 instances of student participation
On-Campus Student Writing Conferences	Student writing showcases allowed students to feature their writing capabilities while giving them the chance to practice sharing their written ideas in academic settings. *Spring 2011 – Fall 2016: 6 SSU Annual Research Days, 6 Annual Liberal Arts Symposia, 4 COBA Research Days, 2 Math Research Days*	738 student presenters from CLASS, COBA and COST
GRST 6101: Graduate Academic Writing	In addition to weekly lessons on effective academic writing, students choose a major writing project to develop throughout the semester. The project is work-shopped on a regular basis over the duration of the course. Students develop skills in drafting and revision techniques, writing for their specific academic audience, and giving and receiving criticism. Appropriate writing projects may include thesis chapters, internship/practicum reports, capstone writing projects, papers for publication or conference presentation, and more. *Fall 2014*	19 graduate students
Partnerships with the K-12 Public Schools	SSU QEP Student Ambassadors, SSU students, faculty, and staff participated in writing partnerships at Thunderbolt Elementary School, Jenkins High School, Deep (after school creative writing program in area middle schools) and the STEM 360 summer science program for junior high students. *Fall 2012 – 2016: 22 QEP Student Ambassadors, 15 Students, 7 Faculty, 3 Staff*	37 instances of student participation

3.2. Impact on Faculty and Staff: Faculty and staff play an essential role in the process of creating a culture of positive attitudes toward writing among Savannah State University students. As mentors and models, professors are best suited to inspire involvement an engagement with writing. Likewise, in their daily contact with students, staff members also have influence and an ability to shape student perceptions of writing. It was our aim to have students interact with faculty and staff who were trained and committed to providing an **enhanced educational environment** focused on writing in both the classroom and through university services and offices. See Table 5 for an overview of the recurring development activities conducted for these two important groups of stakeholders.

Table 5: Faculty and Staff Development Activity Types for an Enhanced Educational Environment

Development Type	Description	Participants
Faculty Development Seminar	This 8-week instructional program is designed to teach best practices in assignment design, assessment, pedagogy, and writing instruction across the curriculum. Educational research conducted. ***Summer 2011 – Fall 2016: 5 Faculty Development Seminars***	27 QEP Teaching Fellow graduates from CLASS, COBA, COST, and CAS
Faculty Development Workshops	These workshops keep faculty members current on the latest pedagogical innovations in writing instruction and writing-to-learn techniques. The workshops allow faculty to learn from one another, interact with others in different disciplines, share experiences and suggestions, and build their personal portfolio. ***Fall 2011 – Fall 2016: 114 Faculty Development Workshops***	715 instances of participation from CLASS, COBA, COST, and CAS
Faculty Writing Fellows	Faculty Writing Fellows are faculty members who log 75 hours per term at the SSU Writing Center to assist students with their writing. They primarily work with students in their disciplinary area of expertise, but are available to help any student in need. FWFs conduct research on best practices in pedagogy and writing instruction in their discipline, and deliver one QEP Faculty Development Workshop to share their findings. ***Fall 2012 – Fall 2016***	41 Faculty Writing Fellows from CLASS, COBA, and COST
QEP Best Practices in Writing Pedagogy Symposium	SSU presenters shared their expertise and ideas on productive exercises they've developed and used in their own classrooms, as well as new teaching techniques they had learned about at faculty development conferences on writing. ***Spring 2012: 2 days, 36 sessions***	19 Faculty and Staff presenters from CLASS, COBA, COST, CAS, and the SSU Writing Center
Assessment Training Sessions	Assessment trainings helped participants become better evaluators of student writing. Assessment training topics have included: rubric development, norming/calibration, curricular mapping, strategic planning for program goals/outcomes related to writing, and LiveText (Assessment Management System) trainings. ***Fall 2013 – Fall 2016: 75 sessions***	448 instances of Faculty participation from COST, COBA, CLASS, and SOTE
First Year Experience Training	These sessions with FYE instructors focused upon QEP-related curriculum and writing-to-learn activities such as "Overcoming Writer's Block," "College-Level Writing Expectations," and "Best Practices for Effective FYE Writing Instruction." ***Summer 2012***	7 Faculty from COST, COBA, and CLASS
Writing-Related Conference Attendance	Faculty and staff members interested in traveling to conferences related to writing development and instruction were assisted with travel expenses by the office of the QEP. ***Spring 2012 – Fall 2016: 17 conferences***	62 instances of participation by SSU Faculty and Staff from CLASS, COBA, QEP, and the SSU Writing Center
Staff Professional Development	The QEP offered professional workshops related to writing development to staff members on campus. Topics included: Email Etiquette, Memorandum Writing, Report Writing, Writing for Performance Evaluations, and Writing and Professional Communication in the Workplace ***Summer 2012 – Fall 2016: 8 workshops***	115 instances of participation by SSU Staff from several departments

3.3. Impact on/of Savannah State's Writing Center: Before implementation of the QEP, the SSU Writing Center only had two full-time staff members and very limited resources. That capacity has now grown to include a new facility, a director, a coordinator, three full-time professional tutors, six faculty writing fellows, two student writing fellows, four peer tutors, and five work-study student employees. This expansion has allowed the Center to grow its tutoring appointments by 130% since the first year of QEP implementation, to serve over 20% of SSU's student population (see Figure 7). It has also provided the ability for Center outreach to include classroom presentations, peer review facilitation, weekly writing workshops for students, and regular faculty development activities. On the tutoring session satisfaction survey (n=4,932), 98% reported that they learned strategies/skills that will improve their academic success and 97% indicated that their tutoring session made

Figure 7: Writing Center Utilization since Inception of QEP

Since the full implementation of the QEP in 2012-2013, completed student appointments at the Writing Center **more than doubled.**

1683 — 2012-2013
2821 — 2013-2014
2681 — 2014-2015
3877 — 2015-2016
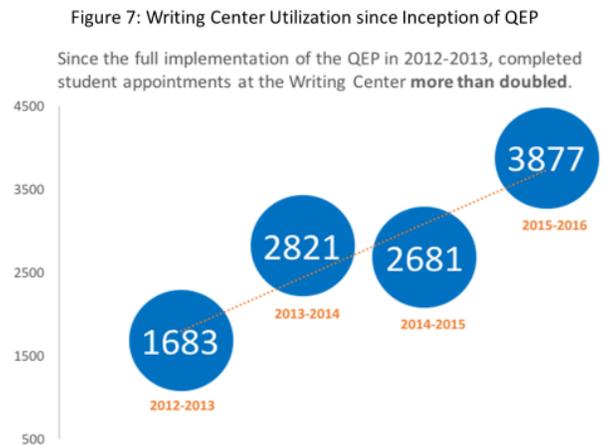
them feel more confident in their writing skills. Another significant set of comparisons reflects the GPAs and retention rates of students frequenting the Center versus those students who did not (see Figures 8 and 9). This powerful data indicates that, in terms of impact on the student learning environment, the SSU Writing Center is the quintessential example of the direct, positive impact of the QEP as it helped to provide students with a **reinforcing and supportive educational environment** which contributes positively to students' overall academic experience by fostering a personal sense of themselves as successful students and writers.

Figure 8: Writing Center Utilization and GPA

On average, Savannah State students who went to the Writing Center had higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs) than students who did not.

Average GPA for students who went to the Writing Center (2014-2016)

2.71

2.47

Average GPA for students who did not (2014-2016)

Figure 9: Writing Center Utilization and First Year Retention Rates

1st time, full-time Savannah State freshman who went to the Writing Center were retained at a higher rate than their peers who did not go to the Writing Center.

Did Not Go to Writing Center   Went to Writing Center

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Fall 2015-Spring 2016*   91.4%

Fall 2015 to Fall 2016   69.1%

Fall 2014 to Fall 2015   66.9%

*Only Fall to Spring Semester retention rates available at time of reporting.

3.4. Unanticipated Outcomes: There were several outcomes that were not necessarily anticipated but yielded positive results for the institution, students, faculty, and greater community. First, although the QEP was designed to intersperse writing curriculum and enhancements throughout the university, the way that the assessment of the writing across programs truly **bolstered a culture of assessment** on campus was not expected. Our faculty development trainings on evaluation practices in the classroom and the use of the QEP Writing Rubric in many core courses richly contributed to satisfying other SACSCOC standards related to assessment. Having activities from *The Write Attitude* embedded in multiple programs, and assessment activities conducted under the auspices of QEP requirements wound up supporting program assessment requirements vis-à-vis student learning (3.3.1.1.) and/or general education requirements (3.5.1.). Specifically, the rubric assessment for QEP fed into general education assessment which fed into a broader institutional approaches to program assessment. In using the activities of curriculum mapping and strategic planning around writing goals in the programs, program coordinators were able to apply those techniques to broader assessment planning related to content-specific program learning outcomes and program outcome planning. Certainly all programs are not at the same level of maturation regarding assessment at the institution; however, we believe that the QEP has helped redirect and reinvigorate faculty energies when it comes to learner-centered assessment.

Next, not having a teaching and learning unit on campus, the QEP unexpectedly became the university's location for **faculty development** on campus. This interaction fostered rich inter-disciplinary collaborations that yielded many "scholarship of teaching and learning" projects and research that was publically presented at several academic and assessment conferences. *The Write Attitude* has been presented as a model for faculty development and formative assessment in venues like the annual SACSCOC meeting, HBCU faculty development networks, and writing center/administration conferences. Ultimately, *The Write Attitude* was able to foster a sense of collegiality and teamwork between and amongst faculty, staff, and administrators, centered on a critical aspect of students' affective and cognitive wellness — the ability to write.

Additionally, the QEP as a **student leadership** opportunity was another area that we had not expected during our planning. The student interns and QEP Student Ambassadors formed an impactful learning community and received personal development as writers and professionals while they served to model the positive attitudes about writing for other students. Without their participation, *The Write Attitude* would not have enjoyed the overwhelming success it did. Lastly, the QEP's impact exceeded the boundaries of our campus through our partnerships with local schools, non-profit organizations, and through public lectures and addresses, social media, and radio broadcasts. *The Write Attitude* became known as a signature program at SSU and had visibility that garnered much **positive attention for the institution in the community**.

Section 4: Lessons Learned by the Institution

The Write Attitude educational research yielded many significant findings that have helped to shape our approach to student learning and development on campus. Insights gained include: (1) students who report writing enjoyment also report higher rates of writing quality; (2) students do not sufficiently acknowledge awareness and/or use of the writing process upon entry to college; (3) students value writing most when it is evidently related to their future careers; (4) written communication as an essential learning outcome is first among equals — it transcends all departments, disciplines, and programs, and when aligned, it provides the best measure of transferrable skills in students; (5) writing is a skill as well as a vehicle through which student learning may improve — in fact, the act of writing itself is a learning strategy; (6) by using student written work as evidence in the assessment process, we have created a system by which assessment of learning has become assessment *for* learning (over and against more simplistic measures like multiple choice tests, etc.); (7) elevating the focus from collecting data to gathering evidence has a powerful impact upon program efficacy; (8) starting small, with experimentation in a focused area, is a powerful strategy for initiating pedagogical innovation and curricular change through intentional piloting and incremental developments; **(9) the SSU Writing Center is an invaluable retention resource on campus; and (10) all quality QEPs dedicated to improving student learning in the classroom are fundamentally about faculty development.**

Conclusion: Institutionalization and Next Steps

Through our campus-wide initiative to enhance student learning by improving attitudes about writing, *The Write Attitude* has created a dynamic learning environment where the activity and value of writing are pervasive. The QEP has provided comprehensive resources that have had measurable impact upon our students' attitudes and confidence with writing. Students have been afforded increased opportunities to engage in the writing process and have been able to consistently produce competent college-level writing in a variety of academic contexts. The university-wide levels of participation in QEP activities have been extensive. However, although the QEP has represented a resounding success for SSU, our work is not done. The last two lessons learned by the institution above (9 and 10) frame the foundation for the continuation of *The Write Attitude* at SSU. Namely, the University is committed to continuing the substantial impacts of the SSU Writing Center by committing state resources in place of the funds that were once only afforded through a QEP Title III Activity. This investment will continue to help our student writers receive the co-curricular services and learning opportunities that have been pivotal for their education and attitude enhancement on campus. Likewise, having a centralized location that offers faculty development aimed at improving teaching is critical to improving student learning and upholding a campus culture of reflective assessment. Guidance on evaluation of student learning within the programs, and further faculty development on all aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment, will be accomplished by recasting the current Office of the QEP as the new Center for Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development (CTEFD). The mission of the new office will be to promote the improvement of instruction on campus and to support faculty engagement in the scholarship of teaching, learning, and assessment (SoTLA). Educational research projects, curriculum modifications, teacher technique training, assessment-supportive activities, and faculty leadership roles that will be fostered through the new CTEFD include: (a) continued support for General Education learning assessment and program-level review, broadly construed; (b) facilitation of strategic planning sessions with programs around outcomes related to student learning and faculty development; (c) rubric creation, norming, and calibration sessions; (d) ENGL 0999 (Developmental Writing) and ENGL 1101/1102 (Freshman Year Composition) orientation, curriculum alignment, and teacher trainings; (e) Team Enthymeme Pilot: a continuation of a unified approach to writing instruction across select general education courses (Freshman Year Composition, First Year Experience, and Critical Thinking and Communication) to reinforce transferability of skills; (f) Interactive Cover Letter Pilot: a continuation on an experiment for faculty delivery of useful, interactive, and actionable feedback on writing products that de-emphasize grades in favor of process; (g) various other pilot pedagogy projects on low stakes writing, peer review, scaffolded writing assignment designs, etc.; (h) Faculty Writing Fellows; (i) Faculty Teaching Fellows; and (j) Faculty Assessment Fellows.

In sum, these two ways of institutionalizing the important effects of *The Write Attitude* at SSU will collaborate through an intentional, forward-looking partnership. A deliberate connection between the SSU Writing Center and the Center for Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development represents the strongest possible combination for continuing the promising work of this QEP to help SSU address a critical concern — namely, the retention, completion, and success of our students.

<u>**Executive Summary**</u>

Below is the QEP overview submitted to SACSCOC shortly after accreditation reaffirmation in 2011:

**The Write Attitude: Enhancing Student Learning
by Fostering Positive Attitudes toward Writing**

**A Quality Enhancement Plan for
Savannah State University, Savannah, GA**

SSU's QEP project addresses a general challenge facing universities nationwide and reflects particular needs of SSU students. It reflects SSU's commitment to ensuring that students are prepared for rigors of the classroom, success in the workplace, and an orientation toward life-long learning. SSU's QEP focuses both on learning outcomes and also on environmental factors to create a culture of writing that will have a positive impact on student, faculty, and staff attitudes about, as well as, practices in writing.

SSU's Write Attitude project seeks to enhance student learning by providing: 1) cross-curricular requirements and initiatives for increased writing opportunities and 2) co-curricular activities to emphasize training in writing skills and competencies. Moreover, these interventions are expected to have a corollary impact on improving critical thinking and reading comprehension, as a writing-to-learn approach holistically integrates these important aptitudes. As a result, in turn, rates of retention and graduation are expected to be positively impacted.

For the project, a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities, programs, and services will reinforce and enhance positive writing attitudes and skills across campus. Among these activities are:

a. Establishing minimum writing requirements for core General Education courses.
b. Introducing and assessing the effectiveness of low-stakes writing.
c. Faculty and Staff Writing Seminars, Workshops, and Best Practices Symposia.
d. Annual conferences showcasing/honoring student writing in each college.
e. Community/alumni Brown Bag Luncheons emphasizing writing in "the real world."
f. Programs to establish both Student and Faculty Writing Fellows.
g. Community programs linking SSU students with K-12 students' writing initiatives.
h. Continuous advocacy and sponsorship for writing initiatives by the QEP Director.

While some curricular changes will be mandated, most will be generated through a participatory, collegial process. The project is designed to encourage faculty, programs, departments, and colleges to initiate curricular innovations focused on writing-intensive pedagogies and co-curricular activities to promote a positive regard for writing. The project is administered by a QEP Director, reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.