Quality Enhancement Plan

Jackson State Community College

Write Away!: The Jackson State Community College Initiative for Writing-Centered Learning

9 August 2005
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Executive Summary

Jackson State Community College’s QEP developed from a true campus-wide discussion. After careful deliberation, question and answer sessions, and campus-wide surveys conducted during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 in-service sessions, Jackson State decided to focus on enhancing student writing as its QEP focus.

Perhaps the topic choice is rooted as far back as a March 2003 memorandum drafted by Dr. Mack Perry, chair of the Department of English and Foreign Languages. The memo, addressed to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Services, discusses the need for a Writing Center that would offer assistance to Jackson State students as they prepare, draft, and revise their writing assignments. The memo recognizes students’ needs when “forming a thesis, organizing an essay, or avoiding plagiarism in a research paper.” The memo argues that a Writing Center would benefit students more than other forms of assistance already offered on campus because students could turn to the Writing Center “at the time that [they] are actively involved in producing a draft of an assignment” and that the Writing Center may encourage other non-English faculty on campus to require writing assignments in their courses while offering them assistance with designing and evaluating these assignments. The proposed Writing Center would “contain the tools needed to produce written documents and [would] be staffed by [those] who have the expertise to assist both students and colleagues.”

Less than a year later, the SACS Leadership Team began the process of formulating a focus for the QEP and targeted the following areas for QEP discussion in the Spring of 2004:

1. Mastery of educational foundation areas: reading, writing, mathematics and oral communication.
2. Mastery of relevant technology skills.
3. Qualities of an enlightened and engaged citizen—an appreciation of diversity and civic responsibility.

After consulting with Dr. Rudolph S. Jackson of SACS, these targeted areas were deemed too general for a QEP topic, and by the following fall in-service in August of 2004, the faculty and staff of the college were presented with three QEP focus areas: reading, writing, and math. Reflecting the institution’s mission to provide “accessible learning opportunities to a diverse student population and community,” the college as a whole felt that the topic should focus on some specific aspect of learning rather than an abstract concept so that the QEP would have a direct impact on student learning and success.
During that week of discussion, faculty and staff were broken into groups to discuss and vote on which of the three topics should become the focus of the QEP. Most groups reported that reading and writing showed the most need, and further discussion, with several questions about feasibility raised, led to a campus-wide choice: enhancing writing.

A QEP Committee was then formed to begin exploring the idea and producing a plan that would offer students an enhanced learning experience over the next five years. The 15-person committee was diverse, with faculty, staff, and student representation from every campus area. After extended study, discussion, and input from the entire institution, the committee had a plan in place during the Spring 2005 semester: To emphasize writing as a learning tool, engage institutional and community support for writing, and improve student learning as measured by QEP assessment tools.

The goals for the QEP are:

Goals for students:
- Raise CBASE scores in writing 1-2% per year, totaling 5-10% overall
- Raise scores of writing questions on graduate/alumni surveys as administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Raise the number of students seeking writing assistance, based on existing numbers provided by AAC
- Show increases in writing improvement and writing to learn demonstrated through ongoing study of student portfolios. The Writing Center Director will develop the methodology for this study
- Show visible improvement in writing by participating in a study examining pre-test/post-test writing samples. The Writing Center Director will develop the methodology for this study
- Improve the attitude toward writing as evidenced through Enrolled Student Surveys

Goals for faculty:
- Increase faculty’s perception of outgoing students’ writing ability by 1-2% per year
- Lower the percentage of faculty who have changed/eliminated assignments 1-2% per year
- Increase the number of instructors/courses who utilize writing assignments by 3-5% overall
- Increase the overall amount of writing per semester in each course by 3-5% overall
- Improve student writing in specified skill areas
- Show increase in faculty willingness to share best practices
• Show increase in faculty willing to participate in activities aimed toward improving student writing and using writing as a learning tool

Goals for the administration:
• Provide adequate professional development opportunities for faculty who are interested in integrating writing into their courses.

The committee determined that in order for these goals to be reached, Jackson State Community College must commit to the following:

1) Creating a Writing Center. The Writing Center will:
   a) give students a place that focuses on improving their writing through one-on-one consultations with trained personnel
   b) become a warehouse of the QEP and its related documents/research
   c) become the focal point of Writing Across the Curriculum endeavors
   d) provide Faculty Development opportunities focusing on writing
   e) serve as a resource to faculty who are interested in integrating writing into their course work
   f) serve as a resource to faculty who need assistance with creating and evaluating writing assignments
   g) serve in an outreach capacity to the community
   h) offer skills tests and exercises for students wishing to improve writing
   i) be an independent academic entity focusing on writing
   j) offer and promote several smaller programs for students and faculty that emphasize writing

2) Creating a Writing Across the Curriculum program that will emphasize the importance of writing in many courses on campus.

The two major concepts presented in this plan—creating a Writing Center and creating a Writing Across the Curriculum program—are naturally related and will enhance student writing at Jackson State Community College.

SACS-related Committees at Jackson State Community College

SACS Leadership Team:
   Dr. Bruce Blanding, President
   Beth Stewart, SACS Coordinator
   Dr. Judith Scherer, Vice President of Academic Affairs
   Dr. Judith Anderson, Institutional Effectiveness
Horace Chase, Vice President for Finance and Administration
Jennifer Cherry, Institutional Effectiveness
Frank Dodson, former Vice President of Academic Affairs
Debbie Dooley, SACS Coordination Office
Dr. Teri Maddox, Faculty, Director of the Developmental Studies Program
Linda Nickell, Vice President of Student Affairs
Patti Tanski-Mego, Office of Academic Affairs
Dr. Leslie West-Sands, Director of Nursing Program

QEP Team:

Representatives from the Department of English and Foreign Languages
Anna Harrington
Letitia Hudlow
James Mayo
Mark Walls

Representatives from the Division of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Gary Brummer
Beth Stewart

Representatives from the Division of Professional and Technical Studies
Donna Johnsey
Jayne Lowery

Representative from the Library staff:
Scott Cohen

Representatives from Classified Staff:
Janice Taylor
Tina Williamson

Representatives from Professional and Technical Staff:
Meda Falls
Dinah Reams

Representatives from the Student Body (rotating):
Brandi Staggs (Fall 2004)
Daniel Noel (Spring 2005)
Adrian Silva (Summer 2005-)
I. Institutional Profile

A. History of Jackson State Community College

Jackson State Community College was founded in the 1960s, beginning with the Tennessee General Assembly’s response to the Pierce-Albright Report, which recommended the creation of a group of community colleges spread throughout the state. Located in the western third of the state, Jackson State is located roughly mid-way between the major metropolises of Memphis and Nashville.

The Pierce-Albright report, which reported its recommendations to the Tennessee General Assembly in 1957, had two purposes: “(1) to point up possible improvements in current programs of public higher education in Tennessee with present resources, and (2) to provide a design for intelligent planning to meet future needs” (qtd. in Rhoda xviii).

The plan recommended that all persons who can profit from it should have the opportunity of receiving a college education; provisions should be made for a larger percentage of the bright and more able students to attend colleges and universities; the program of higher education should be of significant variety and comprehensiveness; the program of higher education should include extensive services to people who are not formally enrolled in courses offered on the campus; higher education opportunities should be readily accessible to the youth of the state. (xviii-xix)

A follow-up report responding to the Pierce-Albright suggested that Jackson was one of three areas in the state that was not within 50 miles of a major state university, so Jackson, along with Chattanooga and Columbia, was picked as a location for one of the new two-year institutions (xix).

The school’s first registration, held on September 27 and 28, 1967, saw 640 students enroll, 240 more students than projected. Classes began on October 2. Over the next few years, the physical campus began to grow, with new buildings and infrastructure completed, and in December 1969, Jackson State announced that it had been accepted for membership into the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Nelms). Dr. F. E. Wright served as the institution’s first president until his death on May 15, 1976. Dr. Walter Nelms was named as Dr. Wright’s successor in July 1976 and served until his retirement in 1997, when he was succeeded by Dr. Charlie Roberts. Jackson State’s fourth president, Dr. Bruce Blanding, began his tenure in February of 2004.
The college has continued to grow and degrees and areas of study added. The institution presently enrolls roughly 4,000 students, and on May 7, 2005, graduated its ten thousandth student. In the fall of 2004, Jackson State employed 123 full-time faculty and 100 adjunct faculty. In the 2003 fiscal year, the school operated on an annual budget of $18,328,100, 60% of which was classified as “unrestricted operating revenue from the state” (Benchmark 1).

B. Description of College Service Area

Jackson State Community College’s service area consists of fourteen mostly rural counties in western Tennessee, including Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Madison, McNairy, and Weakley. Jackson State’s 97-acre main campus is located in Jackson, Tennessee (Madison County). Students are also served through two satellite campuses, one located in Lexington (Henderson County) and one in Savannah (Hardin County). Students also have access to online, videotape, and Tennessee Board of Regents Online Degree Program courses. Classes are also offered at public schools and businesses in McKenzie, Milan, Bolivar, Paris, and other local cities. A program which offers JSCC courses taught in the local Tennessee Technology Centers was recently implemented as yet another effort to meet the needs of the service area.

According to data compiled for the National Community College Benchmark Project, Jackson State’s fourteen county service area has a population of 420,659. The average household income for the service area is $30,523 per year, while the area has a 6.2% unemployment rate. The service area has an 18% minority rate, which is closely reflected in the school’s minority enrollment of 21% (Benchmark 1).

C. Mission Statement, Core Values, and Beliefs

Mission

Jackson State Community College provides accessible learning opportunities and services to a diverse student population and community. The College enhances quality of life by offering associate degrees, certificates, and enrichment courses as preparation for further higher education and for career entry and advancement.

Core Values
Integrity
We value unconditional integrity based on fairness, honesty, and the pursuit of truth.

Service
We value service to the student in the areas of academic, personal, and professional development and leadership in the community through the stimulation of economic growth and quality of life.

Excellence
We strive for high quality and effectiveness in education, communication, and leadership while accepting responsibility and accountability in all our endeavors.

Education
We value higher education as the key to a better quality of life. Jackson State is the foundation. We value learning and the continuous pursuit of knowledge. To this end, we provide a learner-centered, affordable opportunity to our students and community.

Beliefs

We believe in people.
We are committed to building and maintaining quality relationships among our faculty, staff, students, and the communities we serve. Teamwork and mutual respect are powerful forces.

We believe in success.
We strive to provide the tools and the expertise to educate the whole student in order that each may reach his/her fullest potential.

We believe in innovation.
We are committed to positive change while continuing to honor and safeguard our institutional history.

We believe in leadership.
We are committed to assuming leadership roles in our greater community as well as on our campus, while accepting the responsibilities and accountability expected of leaders. We strive to enable our students to become the leaders of tomorrow.
D. Programs of Study

As a traditional community college, Jackson State serves a diverse range of student needs. Students may earn Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees designed for students who will eventually transfer to a four-year university. Currently, Jackson State offers 27 A. A. and A. S. degrees in traditional subject areas.

Students can also earn the Associate of Arts degree with a major in General Studies, the Associate of Science degree with a major in General Studies, or the Associate of Applied Science in Professional Studies/Information Technology through the Tennessee Board of Regents Online Degree Program (RODP).

A. A. and A. S. degrees are offered for the following majors: Accounting; Agriculture; Art; Biology; Business Administration; Chemistry; Communication; Criminal Justice; Education; English; General Studies; Health and Physical Education; History; Information Systems; Mathematics; Philosophy; Physical Science; Political Science; Pre-Engineering; Pre-Law; Pre-Medical Professions; Pre-Nursing; Psychology; Public Administration; Social Work; Sociology; and General Studies (RODP).

Jackson State also offers the Associate of Applied Science degree in 14 majors. Technical Certificates are also offered. A broad range of professional and technical programs in business, technology, and the health professions is available to students. Each professional and technical program is designed to meet the needs of those preparing for employment and those employed who need to retain or upgrade their skills.

A. A. S. degrees are offered for the following majors: Agriculture Technology; Business and Management Technology; Computer Information Systems; Early Childhood Education; General Technology; Graphic Design Technology; Industrial Technology; Medical Laboratory Technician; Nursing; Physical Therapist Assistant; Radiography; Respiratory Care Technology; Professional Studies; and Information Technology (RODP).

Jackson State offers certificates of credit for Emergency Medical Technology; Home Manager; and Manufacturing Technology. Students may also earn Career Advancement Certificates in the Manufacturing Technology and Electro-Mechanical Technology areas.

In May 2004, 10 students graduated with the Associate of Arts degree, 222 graduated with the Associate of Science degree, and 270 graduated with the Associate of Applied Science degree.
E. Students at Jackson State

According to a recent public relations pamphlet created and released by the institution, Jackson State currently enrolls approximately 4,000 students. 35% are male, 65% female. 53% of Jackson State students receive financial aid. The minority population among the student body is 21%, and the average age of a Jackson State student is 24.
II. Development of the QEP

A. Focusing on Need

1. Introduction
One of the college’s Core Values states that the institution values “higher education as the key to a better quality of life [....] We value learning and the continuous pursuit of knowledge. To this end, we provide a learner-centered, affordable opportunity to our students and community.” As a reflection of this core value, the institution decided that the QEP topic should focus directly on some specific aspect of student learning.

As part of the SACS reaffirmation process, the institution believes that a QEP topic area should be rooted in the idea that “student learning is at the heart of the mission of all institutions of higher learning” (“Handbook” 21). This is a further reflection of the institution’s mission to provide a learner-centered education to the community.

2. Finding and Narrowing a QEP Topic: Campus Engagement
The SACS Leadership Team began the process of formulating a focus for the QEP. In the Spring of 2004, the leadership team targeted the following areas for QEP discussion:

1. Mastery of educational foundation areas: reading, writing, mathematics and oral communication.
2. Mastery of relevant technology skills.
3. Qualities of an enlightened and engaged citizen—an appreciation of diversity and civic responsibility.

After consulting with Dr. Rudolph S. Jackson of SACS, these targeted areas were deemed too general for a QEP topic, and by the following fall in-service in August of 2004, the faculty and staff of the college were presented with three QEP focus areas: reading, writing, and math. Reflecting the institution’s mission to provide “accessible learning opportunities to a diverse student population and community,” the college as a whole felt that the topic should focus on some specific aspect of learning rather than an abstract concept so that the QEP would have a direct impact on student learning and success.

During that week of discussion, faculty and staff were broken into groups to discuss and vote on which of the three topics should become the focus of the QEP. Most groups reported that reading and writing showed the most need, and further discussion, with several questions about feasibility raised, led to a campus-wide choice: enhancing writing.
A QEP Committee was then formed to begin exploring the idea and producing a plan that would offer students an enhanced learning experience over the next five years. The 15-person committee was diverse, with faculty, staff, and student representation from every campus area. After extended study, discussion, and input from the entire institution, the committee had a plan in place during the Spring 2005 semester: To emphasize writing as a learning tool, engage institutional and community support for writing, and improve student learning as measured by QEP assessment tools.

3. Writing as a Tool of Learning
A common misconception about college-level writing is that it serves one purpose: a tool used by instructors to gauge students’ levels of knowledge about a subject. While this is at least partially true, this view of writing amounts to a low-order cognitive skill, one that requires students to merely relate to their instructors the same material they have heard during class lectures and discussions, read in their textbooks or other readings, or have garnered through research.

However, writing as a high-order cognitive skill requires that students use writing as more than a means of expressing memorized information. Student writers should also use writing as a learning tool—one that allows them to find and express meaning. Composition theorist Janet Emig writes that “If the most efficacious learning occurs when learning is reinforced, then writing through its inherent reinforcing cycle involving hand, eye, and brain marks a uniquely powerful multi-representational mode for learning” (Emig 10). Emig and a host of others argue that it is the actual process of writing that makes it a learning tool, as it affords students the opportunity to search for and find meaning as they compose a final product. Emig points out that “a unique form of feedback, as well as reinforcement, exists with writing, because information from the process is immediately and visibly available as that portion of the product already written” (Emig 11). In other words, as students use their process, which may vary depending on individual learning style, the product is created as they compose, thus giving them the opportunity to reflect and receive feedback as they search for meaning.

Thus, students and instructors alike should be encouraged to change the way they think about college writing. Good writing assignments should challenge students to learn something new about the topic they have chosen or have been assigned; good writing assignments should require students to learn to communicate the ideas they have already formulated; good writing assignments should encourage students to engage in high-order critical thinking; good
writing assignments, especially for this institution, should prepare students for the writing that they will do in the work force.

Naturally, there are other criteria to consider. College writing should be clear, well-composed, and free of serious errors. These are normal expectations for college writers and learning concepts that should be enhanced as well.

4. National Trends Toward Improving Student Writing

Patrick Sullivan in an article titled “What is ‘College-Level’ Writing?” points out what many college professors have already come to realize: “Many of our students simply do not have college-level reading, writing, and critical-thinking skills, and by any standard they come to us unable to produce college-level work” (Sullivan 378). He further points out that “[t]his large population of under prepared students has affected English teachers in perhaps more profound ways than it has any other single group of community college teachers, administrators, or staff” (378). This lack of preparedness, naturally, is the result of a variety of circumstances. A report recently summarized in the Chronicle of Higher Education claims that students are not being prepared at the high school level for the work they will do as college students. The report, prepared by ACT and titled “Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work,” states that “only 22 percent of the 1.2 million high-school students who took the ACT test in the 2003-2004 academic year were ready for college-level courses in English, mathematics, and science” (Jacobson). Looking to the future, ACT predicts that based on recent tests of 8th and 10th grade students “the high school graduates of 2006 and 2008 will not be any better prepared for college than were this year’s graduates” (Jacobson). ACT’s criteria for determining “readiness” is completing a for-credit course at a college or university with a grade of C or better and doing so without the need for remediation. Minority students, according to the report, are less likely to have taken four years of English in high school as their white and Asian-American counterparts (Jacobson). On the other hand, Stanley Ridgley, writing in the National Review, argues that colleges and universities are to blame for the weakness, citing trends in specialized study that diminish time spent on the “basics” (Ridgley).

Some also point to the current emphasis on standardized testing as another reason incoming college freshmen can’t write at the college level. Others point to the idea that people are reading less, and there’s a clear connection between reading and writing.

A recent article in the Detroit News suggests that many in the educational field and students themselves are concerned about new trends that are making writing assessment a part of many standardized placement tests. A sidebar to the article states that “Most fourth-grade students spend less than three hours a
week writing. Roughly half of 12th graders are assigned a paper of three or more pages once or twice a month in English class. Four in 10 of them write a paper ‘hardly’ or ‘never.’ Extensive research papers are a thing of the past” (Feighan). The article also cites national statistics concerning high enrollments in remedial writing classes, pointing to the National Center of Education Statistics’ claim that “approximately 23 percent of students at two-year public colleges had to take remedial writing courses in 2000, the last year for which figures were available” (Feighan).

Whatever the reason for the deficiencies, colleges and universities around the country are working to reverse the trend, while noting how difficult it is to expect students to emerge from Freshmen composition courses as polished academic writers. Many universities, such as Duke and Princeton, have reassessed and rebuilt their college writing programs. For many years, Princeton students were required to take “W” courses, so called because their catalog course descriptions included a notation (W) that signaled that the courses were “writing intensive.” Most of the courses were taught by graduate students who were “killing time and [their] students’ enthusiasm,” as one student put it. Eventually, “Princeton ditched the program last year and began afresh. It took writing courses away from inexperienced graduate students, hired a group of lecturers to take their places, and created a slew of new, required, topic-based courses” (Bartlett).

Duke University made a similar change in 2000. Now Duke students are required “to take a seminar in ‘Academic Writing’” (Van Hillard). Taught almost exclusively by “twenty-five postdoctoral fellows in the University Writing Program,” the program is designed to “prepare students to approach writing in a wide range of disciplinary contexts” (Van Hillard). The article points out that the program “has been a success by almost every measure imaginable. The Duke student newspaper has called the first-year writing course ‘the brightest quadrant’ of the new undergraduate curriculum, and, in their course evaluations, students consistently rank ‘Academic Writing’ as more intellectually stimulating and harder than most of the other classes they have taken in their first year at Duke” (Van Hillard).

However, at the two year college faculty are confronted with more immediate concerns. For whatever reason, students are entering their freshmen years without the skills they need. Nationwide, professors of all disciplines point to students’ inability to write focused sentences and paragraphs, to spell correctly, to know the differences between formal and informal diction, and countless other complaints. Professors at the two-year college are also preparing students to immediately enter the workforce without further study at a four-year
institution, and “writing skills can make or break their chances of finding employment” (Cardman).

Others have pointed out the connection between successful Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum programs. Since a Writing Center “typically serves the university student population as a whole […] Writing Center tutors have had to adapt their practices to accommodate students from across the disciplines” (Faulkner and Rohrbacher).

5. Focusing on Campus Need
National data concerning the need for improving student writing is readily available, yet the QEP Committee at Jackson State looked closely at the campus culture and attitudes about student performance to assess the need for writing improvement. Realizing that a QEP should reflect the institution’s culture and may also change that culture, campus-wide surveys were conducted so that attitudes, beliefs, and expectations could be considered. The faculty survey, discussed below, has been used as the baseline for a great deal of the QEP’s data. Essentially the backbone of the project, the survey will be conducted yearly in order to measure faculty attitudes and perceptions about student writing.

Surveying the Campus
In January of 2005 during the Spring in-service session, faculty engaged in a survey that was created to measure attitudes about the current state of student writing, potential problem areas, and ideas for enhancing student writing. The survey, included in its entirety in Appendix A, consisted of 100 questions broken into three sections: Part I: Needs Assessment; Part II: Practices; and Part III: QEP Writing Program.

105 surveys were returned, and a sampling of the questions reveal the following: 79% feel that the institution’s entering freshmen are “poorly prepared” for college writing.

42% feel that the institution’s outgoing transfer students are “adequately prepared” for college writing.

57% feel that the institution’s graduating sophomores are “adequately prepared” for writing on the job.

38% of respondents feel that 21-40% of their students demonstrate significant writing weaknesses.

A more telling response reveals that 28% of faculty have changed or eliminated writing assignments or essay questions on tests due to poor student writing.
Faculty also revealed that any number of challenges have “usually” affected their ability or willingness to integrate writing into their courses, including poor writing on essays (29%); poor writing on exams (24%); student resistance to writing (25%); student resistance to essay exams (24%); plagiarism (24%); and inability of students to understand or follow assignments (20%).

In terms of current practices, the survey revealed that 47% integrate writing assignments into every course; 43% integrate writing into some courses; and 11% do not use writing assignments at all. A variety of factors influenced the responses given above, including courses that do not lend themselves to writing; high course enrollment; poor quality of student writing; and instructors’ not feeling comfortable grading writing.

The types and numbers of writing assignments integrated into the institution’s courses also varied widely. 56% required only 1-3 writing assignments in their courses (excluding essay exams). 55% required students to write essays of 1-3 typed pages. 39% did not assign essay exams, while 52% assigned formal research papers or other formal essays.

In terms of general practices, the survey revealed that 53% never require multiple drafts on writing assignments; 38% never provide feedback on early drafts; 52% never have conferences on papers in progress; 64% never have students read/respond to other students’ writing; 18% never provide written descriptions for all writing assignments; 30% never provide a rubric/criteria for grades on writing assignments; 24% never discuss writing with their classes; 25% never hold one-on-one conferences with students concerning writing; and 36% never have students begin writing assignments in class. Current trends in Composition Theory stress the importance of requiring students to compose multiple drafts so that good revision can take place, giving feedback on early drafts, conferencing, and peer review.

When asked general questions of support for a QEP topic focusing on writing, 67% responded that they would be interested in attending future workshops on improving students’ writing skills; 63% supported the establishment of a Writing Center on campus; 67% supported the establishment of a Writing Across the Curriculum program on campus; and 77% would require students to use Writing Center facilities.

In break out sessions during the same in-service meeting, faculty were divided into disciplines and staff grouped together to discuss a short series of prompt questions aimed at gathering campus-wide input concerning the current state of student writing at Jackson State. Faculty were asked the following questions:
1. How do the students in our department need to improve their writing?
2. What is the best plan to improve the writing of the students in our department?
3. What difficulties does our department see in implementing a plan to improve student writing?

The first question speaks to need, and most responses from the academic programs suggest that faculty are concerned about poor grammar and spelling, poor ability to express meaning, and poor sense of structure and audience in student writing. Questions two and three reflect planning and implementation, and the responses from academic departments and programs were similar (see Appendix B).

Classified and professional/technical staff were asked a similar series of questions (see Appendix C):
   1. How do the students with whom I work need to improve their writing?
   2. What is the best plan to improve student writing?
   3. What difficulties do I foresee in implementing a plan to help students improve their writing?

Naturally, college staff deal with student writing in a more practical manner, and staff responses show the impact that weak writing skills have on students as they go about the business of being college students outside the classroom. The similarities between the responses that center on academic writing and those that are more “practical” should not be surprising.

Staff personnel at the institution reported that students have difficulty filling out forms, following instructions, using complete sentences and correct spelling, using formal language, and realizing the need for writing skills in the real world.

It should come as no surprise that both faculty and staff are aware of the weaknesses in student writing. Faculty face these problems every day in the classroom, with some even changing their course assignments in order to avoid poor student writing. Working within a context of true campus-wide involvement, weaknesses in student writing as perceived by both faculty and staff and their comments concerning enhancing and improving writing were important factors in choosing this QEP topic and creating the QEP goals.

Demand for Developmental Writing Courses
One of the strong services already in place for Jackson State students is the Developmental Studies Program. The relatively high demand for developmental writing courses suggests that many students who are enrolling at Jackson State need improvement in the area of writing.
Two levels of developmental writing courses are offered in the state college system—DSPW 0700 (Basic Writing) and DSPW 0800 (Developmental Writing). Placement in these courses is determined by test scores. Those students who score below 14 on the ACT or below a 37 on the COMPASS are placed into Basic Writing (0700). Students who score a 15-18 on the ACT or 38-74 on the COMPASS are placed into Developmental Writing (0800). Students scoring 19 and above on the ACT and 75 and above on the COMPASS are placed into college-level writing courses.

During each academic year, there is a clear need for a high number of developmental writing courses at Jackson State. In the 2001-2002 Academic Year, 710 students enrolled in 39 sections of Developmental Writing. In the 2002-2003 AY, 688 students enrolled in 45 sections. In the 2003-2004 AY, 736 students enrolled in 46 sections of Developmental Writing.

The following chart shows enrollment numbers in Developmental Writing courses with corresponding percentages of the total student population.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Semester/Year</th>
<th>Total in DSP Writing</th>
<th>Total Student Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2001</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>3933 (11%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2002</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>3593 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2002</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1724 (3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2002</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>3949 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2003</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>3675 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2003</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1694 (4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>4004 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3646 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers from the DSP program review suggest that there is an ongoing need for writing improvement at Jackson State. As an open-door institution, the college must do all that it can to make sure that all of its students get the help that they need.

Assistance Already Provided
Currently, the institution provides two options (other than working directly with their professors) for students who need writing help outside of class. The Academic Assistance Center, located on the second floor of the library building, has been serving students and faculty for more than twenty years. Many of the academic areas of the college have self-study and supplementary materials on file in the AAC. There is a large collection of multi-media instructional material. The AAC has an open computer lab for the entire college and also offers a free
tutoring service for most subject areas on campus, including writing. The AAC is staffed by support personnel and student workers dedicated to assisting students in their academic pursuits. While the AAC provides students with an excellent opportunity, studies suggest that many students feel that “academic assistance” is something only remedial or developmental students need. The AAC also offers services in a wide range of subject matters and does not concentrate solely on writing.

In the Fall 2003 semester, the AAC conducted a total of 169 thirty minute tutorial sessions for writing classes. In the Spring 2004 semester, the AAC conducted a total of 149 thirty minute tutorial sessions for writing classes.

Since 2003, Jackson State has subscribed to an online tutorial service called Smarthinking. This program is coordinated through the AAC and is offered as an alternative to traditional methods of academic assistance, one that offers more flexible scheduling options for students who are working full schedules or who otherwise can not schedule one-on-one sessions with the AAC. All students get up to ten hours of use free of charge and can seek assistance with a variety of subject areas, including writing.

Students may submit an essay to Smarthinking with specific requests for assistance and get a response within 48 hours. Students may also ask writing questions to a live tutor and get immediate feedback.

The following chart shows Smarthink.com usage by Jackson State students in 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hrs./Mins.</td>
<td>Hrs./Mins.</td>
<td>Hrs./Mins.</td>
<td>Hrs./Mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER WRITING</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>5:05</td>
<td>16:20</td>
<td>27:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSAY CENTER</td>
<td>334:30</td>
<td>197:20</td>
<td>649:50</td>
<td>1181:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING (ALL SUBJECTS)</td>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>5:57</td>
<td>18:33</td>
<td>32:13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Initiating a Plan

As stated earlier, the institution has been aware of faculty and employer concerns about poor student writing for some time, and in order to help correct this
problem, the QEP Team formulated the following plan to enhance student writing at Jackson State. Titled “Write Away!: The Jackson State Community College Initiative for Writing-Centered Learning,” the plan has two major components: 1) The establishment of a Writing Center and 2) the establishment of a Writing Across the Curriculum program. Studies show that the two concepts are related, as will be explained in the following pages. The QEP Team projects that various secondary programs focusing on student writing may eventually evolve, including the creation of writing-based scholarships, writing-based internships, and a long-range study of Jackson State students’ writing performance, among other programs.

Goals of the QEP
The institution believes that the following goals for students and faculty can and will be achieved:

Goals for students:
- Raise CBASE scores in writing 1-2% per year, totaling 5-10% overall
- Raise scores of writing questions on graduate/alumni surveys as administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Raise the number of students seeking writing assistance, based on existing numbers provided by AAC
- Show increases in writing improvement and writing to learn demonstrated through on going study of student portfolios. The Writing Center Director will develop the methodology for this study
- Show visible improvement in writing by participating in a study examining pre-test/post-test writing samples. The Writing Center Director will develop the methodology for this study
- Improve the attitude toward writing as evidenced through Enrolled Student Surveys

Goals for faculty:
- Increase faculty’s perception of incoming and outgoing students’ writing ability by 1-2% per year
- Lower the percentage of faculty who have changed/eliminated assignments 1-2% per year
- Increase the number of instructors/courses who utilize writing assignments by 3-5% overall
- Increase the overall amount of writing per semester in each course by 3-5% overall
- Improve student writing in specified skill areas
- Show increase in faculty willingness to share best practices
- Show increase in faculty willing to participate in activities aimed toward improving student writing and using writing as a learning tool
Goals for the administration:

- Provide adequate professional development opportunities for faculty who are interested in integrating writing into their courses

The institution believes that the following plan can and will be instrumental in achieving the goals listed above.

1) Creating a Jackson State Writing Center. The Writing Center will:
   a) give students a place that focuses on improving their writing through one-on-one consultations with trained personnel
   b) become a warehouse of the QEP and its related documents/research
   c) become the focal point of Writing Across the Curriculum endeavors
   d) provide Faculty Development opportunities focusing on writing
   e) serve as a resource to faculty who are interested in integrating writing into their course work
   f) serve as a resource to faculty who need assistance with creating and evaluating writing assignments
   g) serve in an outreach capacity to the community
   h) offer skills tests and exercises for students wishing to improve writing skills
   i) be an independent academic entity focusing on writing
   j) offer and promote several smaller programs for students and faculty that emphasize writing

2) Creating a Writing Across the Curriculum program that will emphasize the importance of writing in many courses on campus

The institution hopes to a) give students more opportunities for writing assistance; b) create more opportunities for students to write in class; and c) promote a faculty development approach to focusing on writing-centered learning.

C. Campus Engagement

On March 3, 2005, an open forum was held for the purpose of presenting the QEP initiative to the entire campus. Introduced by Dr. Bruce Blanding, President of Jackson State, the meeting consisted of a brief presentation of the goals and plan the QEP Team had created followed by a brief session in which faculty, staff, and administrators could ask questions, voice concerns, and offer suggestions to the QEP Team. 56 faculty and staff and the QEP team were present for the open forum.
After the presentation, those attending the session asked several questions about the QEP, including questions about how the Writing Center would be staffed, how information from former students would be gathered, if only essays and reports would be covered by the Writing Center or if all styles of writing would be covered, where the Writing Center would be, and many others (see Appendix D).

Attendees were also given one of two input/suggestion forms upon entering the session—one for faculty and one for staff.

The comment/suggestion sheet for faculty included four prompts (see Appendix E):

1. What does “improving student writing” mean to you as an instructor?
2. As an instructor, what services/faculty development would help you improve student writing (i.e., helping create or grade writing assignments)?
3. In your opinion, can the following goals of the QEP be achieved?
4. If you marked “no” for any items listed above, please offer suggestions for goals that are more realistic.

Staff and administrators were asked a similar set of questions which are listed in Appendix F.

Faculty were given yet another opportunity to respond to the QEP topic, plan, and goals. The basic outline was emailed to faculty who were asked to respond to a special email address created for that purpose. The responses voiced clear approval for the QEP, stressed strong outreach with the local public schools so that some of these issues can be solved before students enroll in college, and argued that strong writing skills will help our students in the workplace and in future academic endeavors (see Appendix G).

The QEP elicited faculty and staff input from all areas of the college throughout this process. Faculty and staff opinions on student weaknesses, suggestions for improvement, and input concerning the plan were gathered and considered.

D. Student Engagement

On March 23, 2005, an open forum was held to give students the opportunity to learn about the QEP topic and give their input and suggestions. A small group of students convened in the Science Auditorium. Mary Armstrong, Vice President
of the Student Government Association, discussed the QEP topic with students. Three members of the QEP team were also present to answer questions and discuss the topic.

Students voiced their opinions about the state of student writing as well as the kinds and amount of writing they do and have done as students at Jackson State. All present stated that the QEP topic was a good one, that a Writing Center would draw and help students, and that integrating more writing into courses across the curriculum would benefit students. All student responses from this meeting are available (see Appendix H).

**Student Surveys**

In the Spring 2005 semester, students were asked to fill out a survey concerning their attitudes and beliefs about their own writing ability as well as the writing they have done as students at Jackson State. A total of 278 responses were gathered for this limited survey, which is included as Appendix I of this document.

**E. Community Engagement**

On March 15, 2005, four members of the QEP Team attended a JSCC Foundation reception held at the Savannah/Hardin Center, one of the two satellite campuses. Information was distributed to those present. The board was very interested in and enthusiastic about the QEP topic as well as the progress made toward SACS reaffirmation.

On April 6, 2005, a breakfast was held on campus for the purpose of introducing the QEP topic to select members of the community. On a rainy morning, 12 people showed up on campus to hear the presentation and to offer their suggestions.

Attending the breakfast were:

- Shirley Jones, Manager of Public Affairs, Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce
- Jan Boud, Director of Public Relations, West Tennessee Healthcare
- Brad Baucom, Chief Executive Officer, West Tennessee Healthcare
- Joe Pentecost, retired faculty member and Foundation Board member
- D. N. English, local publisher/author
- Dr. Danny Winbush, local publisher
- Tom Bohs, Editorial Page Editor, *The Jackson Sun*
- Amanda Gargus, Graphic Artist/Marketing, *The Jackson Sun*
- Vickie Lake, Director of Marketing, Research and Community Development, West Tennessee Healthcare
Dr. Gina Heathcott, D. C., Heathcott Chiropractic
Jonas Kisber, member, Tennessee Board of Regents
Georgia Wright, Foundation Board Member

After a short presentation about the QEP topic, several present asked questions and offered their input. All attendees were given a questionnaire/suggestion form and were asked to fill those out before leaving. The results of this breakfast—displayed in the attendance, the support voiced during the presentation, and the support shown in the questionnaire—suggest that the QEP topic has strong support from the community. Many of the responses also show that community members are more than aware of the state of student writing and are hopeful that the QEP topic will help alleviate the problem.

Attendees of the community breakfast were asked the following questions:

1. What types of writing are done by the employees at your organization?
2. What do you think about the plan to create a Writing Center on the campus of JSCC?
3. Considering the types of writing your employees do in the workplace, how do you think the JSCC plan as presented would be beneficial?

The responses to the community survey (see Appendix J), like those given to faculty, staff, and students, show overwhelming approval of the QEP and its goals. Community members stress the importance of writing in the workplace, suggest that students should be shown the importance of writing before entering college, suggest community outreach, and congratulate the institution for developing the plan and goals.

Within a few days of the community meeting, an editorial appeared in The Jackson Sun that commending the institution’s efforts to improve student writing. Tom Bohs points out that “[t]he sad truth is that our children, on the whole, are not learning to be good writers” (Bohs). Bohs recognizes the need for writing, pointing out that “young people are at great risk of being poor communicators. In the real world of business, technology and education, that can be a seriously limiting fault” (Bohs). He closes the article by commending the institution for “identifying a serious deficiency in our education system and setting out to do something about it” (Bohs).
III. Implementation
In order to promote the idea of writing-centered learning on campus, to change student and faculty perceptions of writing, to directly improve student writing, to reach out to the community, to integrate writing into more courses, and to meet the goals of the QEP, the institution will
1) Create a Writing Center
2) Implement a Writing Across the Curriculum program.

A. Creating a Writing Center

The Need for a Writing Center

The establishment of the Writing Center will encourage and facilitate the inclusion of writing in all college disciplines and programs. It will be the centralized location to launch, coordinate, support, and evaluate writing programs such as Writing Across the Curriculum, service-learning projects, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or labs, community-focused classes, etc. Currently, no such place or programs exist on campus.

A Writing Center and its programs will help meet the increased call from community businesses and four-year schools for better writing skills among our students.

By offering individual, face-to-face writing consultations, students from all classes and levels will receive personal help and feedback from someone who is also a student. Currently, this need is only being fulfilled in the Academic Assistance Center (AAC). Unfortunately, the AAC has the reputation of serving only remedial students through tutoring. By contrast, a Writing Center serves students of all skills levels with any form of writing (even with such pieces as resumes and application essays to four-year schools) through writing consultations. Writing consultants will be trained to assist students in a consultative format, not a traditional tutoring session. Those students who prefer to work with full-time faculty rather than student consultants will be allowed to do so by appointment; this gives them the opportunity to work with a faculty member who is not their professor, thus giving them a different perspective on their writing. SmarThinking.com does not offer any form of face-to-face writing consultation. According to the International Writing Center Association, “Numerous studies indicate not only that tutorial instruction benefits writers but also that it enhances their motivation and attitudes. Anxieties about writing are reduced by helpful coaching, positive reinforcement, and the friendly listening ear of the tutor” (writingcenters.org).
Establishing a Writing Center makes a statement to the student body, the faculty, and the community that the institution recognizes the importance of and is striving to improve the development of writing skills in a college education.

A Writing Center will provide for group presentations and class sessions with topics to be determined by the professor and suggested by the Writing Center staff. This need is currently not being met by either the AAC or by SmarThinking. By allowing entire classes to come into the Writing Center for such presentations as MLA/APA documentation, writing refresher minicourses, and how to answer essay questions on tests, the Writing Center becomes a course tool and not just a tutoring tool.

The Writing Center will be an independent academic entity focusing only on writing. While it will offer help on any kind of writing from all disciplines, personal writing, and possibly community-based writing, it will focus solely on writing. Thus, it becomes the only academic service on campus geared specifically toward improving writing skills, both on individual assignments and on overall writing ability.

The Writing Center will serve as a focal point for research and data related to all campus writing programs. Measurements, such as surveys, tests, reports, etc., will be administered from the Writing Center on a regular schedule.

Purposes and Programs

1. Mission Statement

The Writing Center will create a mission statement which addresses the following issues:

1) Serving the entire campus -- Because writing is a skill used in all subjects and at all levels of the educational process, a Writing Center should be considered a support service for the entire institution rather than simply for a single department or program.
2) Informing students, faculty, and staff of how it can help with all types of writing for all skill levels and for all courses – It should be made clear that the Writing Center is not just for “tutoring” or for remedial students. Access to Writing Center resources should not be limited by a student’s skill level or academic status.
3) Stating its independence from other campus services, departments, and programs.
4) Defining degree of responsibilities to students, particularly to specific groups such as developmental and inadequately prepared students
5) Referencing its programs
6) Stating its instructional goals
7) Acknowledging the need and willingness to respond to new challenges by changing existing programs and creating new ones

2. Writing Consultant Guidelines

The Writing Center will create a set of written guidelines regarding writing consultants and consultations which will be available to the consultants, students, faculty, and administration. According to the International Writing Centers Association, consultants should be provided clear explanations of Writing Center policies and procedures; should neither directly nor indirectly offer criticism of a teacher's assignments, methods, or grading practices; should be given guidelines for defining acceptable and unacceptable intervention in a student's writing process; and should be trained before consulting with students and must participate in ongoing training sessions and evaluations on a regular basis (writingcenters.org).

3. Programs
Although the primary function of a Writing Center should be individualized instruction, several programs that address campus-wide needs will be offered.

Consultations. The Writing Center’s primary program will be one-on-one writing consultations with students from all skills levels and from all classes. Students will be able to walk-in any time the center is open and meet with consultants on a first-come, first-served basis. Those students desiring additional help or desiring to work with faculty members may make appointments to do so.

Course Supplementation. Basic Writing, Developmental Writing, English Composition I, and English Composition II students could be required to spend a specified number of hours in the center each week, similar to foreign language students who are required to log a certain amount of hours in a foreign language lab. During these sessions, the students could focus on either specific assignments for class or on one specified writing element per session, such as writing thesis statements, transitions, or topic sentences. This lab time will not take the place of any existing service, course, or program, but will serve as a supplement. While the students can get help with grammar, the focus in the lab sessions will be on developing overall writing skills and will not necessarily focus on grammar unless requested by the instructor. Likewise, the topic choice for each session will be determined by the instructor.

Instruction. Entire classes will be able to meet in the center for presentations on such topics as documentation, research papers, taking essay tests, writing
strategies, writing “refresher” mini-courses, and introduction to the Writing Center and the resources available to them.

**Writing Across the Curriculum.** The Writing Center will also serve as the focal point for the Writing Across the Curriculum program. The center will gather the data from individual professors and departments on the success of the integration of writing into their classes and programs; this becomes the hub for writing data and research. This program will function as a resource for professors and departments to learn how to integrate writing into their courses and how to more effectively utilize that writing. This includes working with professors to create appropriate paper assignments for their classes, to design essay exams, to create non-traditional forms of writing projects (such as creative assignments, community-based projects, class presentations, etc.) and to learn to grade papers and essay exams more effectively. The center will help design ways for the instructors to measure the effect of writing in their classes. By basing the program in the Writing Center, material can be presented to entire classes about their WAC assignments rather than individually. Working closely with instructors, projects can be coordinated collaboratively among several classes. The WAC program will help prevent deterioration of writing skills once students have left Comp I and/or Comp II.

**Community Outreach.** By focusing on the institution’s mission, the Writing Center will present lectures, workshops, tutoring, and other services as needed for members of the community, local businesses, and organizations. The Writing Center Director will establish and publish policies for community outreach programs.

**Online Programs.** In order to promote the idea of one-on-one consultations with students, the Writing Center will not have an OWL (online writing lab) component. Although a webpage will contain resources, such as files on organization, documentation, intro/conclusion, etc., all of the consultations will be made in person. Students will not be able to email their papers or use the center as a “drop off” editing service.

**Possible future programs.** These include such programs as service-learning programs, a grammar hotline, student teaching partnerships, ESL student services, writing contests, and credit courses based in the center. These programs will not be immediately implemented. However, as the needs of the student body and center change, these programs might be developed.
Resources

Location. Ideally, the Writing Center will be located in a classroom building. It must be separate from the AAC, the Developmental Program, and the Library, and the students must perceive it as different from typical tutoring services and services for remedial students.

Furnishings. The center will be in a classroom with enough computers and printers to accommodate visiting classes and faculty presentations. When the computers are not being used by classes, they can be used by individual students for word processing with the idea that they will ask for help with their writing once they are finished typing. The presence of computers that are open to all students will also counter the perception that the center is for remedial students. Writing consultants who are on duty can help with word processing questions and float throughout the room offering writing help. A minimum of two tables for individual consultations are needed. The room should have bookshelves, file cabinets, bulletin boards, dry erase boards, overhead/proxima and retractable screen. Typical office supplies are also needed.

Web page. To help students when the center isn’t open or when they are off-campus, a dedicated webpage attached to the JSCC homepage would be extremely beneficial. Information, such as forms, hours of operations, helpful hints for writing, etc., will be posted and regularly updated.

Funding/Budget. In order for the center to serve the students in the most effective manner, it needs its own budget, separate from other programs and services. The budget will be controlled by the director. The most important part of the budget is money for staffing, which should be based on a minimum of two people per hour at 56 hours per week, in addition to compensation for a director, assistant director/ coordinator and full time faculty who want to assist in the center. In addition to salaries, the budget must include money for duplicating—such as handouts and exercises—publicity, journal subscriptions, and association dues.

Books. The center needs a broad range of resource books, handbooks, and workbooks available for students, center staff, and campus faculty.

Handouts and Forms. Forms will be made available both on the Writing Center’s webpage and in the center’s files, and they will be created as necessary by the director and staff. These forms will be available for all students, faculty, staff, and members of the community.
**Hours of Operation**

In order to make a significant impact on students’ skills and allow the programs sufficient staffing, the center should be open for 56 contact hours per week, with a suggested schedule as follows:

Monday – Thursday, 7am – 6pm  
Friday, 7am – 1pm  
Saturday, 10am – 4pm

**Staffing**

Preferably, the center would be staffed each contact hour by a minimum of one full-time faculty member and two consultants. Adjunct instructors could also serve in place of full-time faculty. The staff would be comprised of properly trained individuals in the following positions.

1. Director  
The Writing Center Director is a professional position and should carry the same rights and responsibilities as other professional faculty positions regarding tenure, promotion, seniority, services, etc. This position should not be temporary; the position, along with the center as a whole, should be a long-term, fully budgeted commitment by the college.

The International Writing Centers Association recommends that institutions provide the following working conditions for directors:

1) Directorships should carry sufficient stability and continuity to provide for sound educational programs and planning.
2) Directorships should be considered faculty and administrative positions rather than staff positions.
3) Directorships should include access to promotion, salary, tenure, and travel funds equivalent to that provided for other faculty and administrators.
4) Requirements for retention, promotion, and tenure should be clearly defined and should take into consideration the particular demands of the position.
5) Directorships should be established with clear formulas for determining equivalencies, such as release time for administration and tutor training.
6) Directorships should be established within a clearly defined administrative structure so that directors know to whom they are responsible and whom they supervise.
7) Directorships should include access to administrative support--such as clerical help, computer time, and duplicating services--that is equal in quality to that available to other program directors.
8) Evaluation of Writing Center directors should be conducted through the same evaluation process used for other campus administrators.

The Director will have full accountability for the center. The director will coordinate and oversee the center’s schedules, staffing, budget, facilities, training, program development, etc. According to the International Writing Centers Association, the responsibilities of a Writing Center director should be the following:

1) To provide and preserve a sense of direction for the Writing Center
2) To shape the curriculum of the Writing Center
3) To teach in the Writing Center's programs
4) To prepare and/or purchase materials needed in the Writing Center
5) To consult with Writing Center staff and with faculty on writing instruction
6) To select and train tutors
7) To supervise tutors
8) To evaluate tutors regularly
9) To keep careful records that are made available as required to students, teachers, tutors, and administrators
10) To publicize the Writing Center
11) To work with faculty in Writing Across the Curriculum programs
12) To continue professional growth through appropriate reading, courses, studies, research, and participation in professional organizations and workshops
13) To organize all activities of the Writing Center
14) To provide for regular reports on the activities, progress, and problems of the Writing Center
15) To provide for regular and thorough evaluation of the Writing Center's programs.

Essential preparation for a Writing Center director should include experience in teaching composition and rhetoric; knowledge of learning theories, research methods, and evaluation methods; and experience in developing and evaluating materials. In addition, academic preparation or experience in the following areas should be considered beneficial: basic business administration and personnel management, information systems and computer technology, publicity/advertising, public relations, training, computerized instruction, records management, decision making, grant writing, curriculum design, and methods of teaching ESL students.
2. Assistant Director/Coordinator
The Writing Center should have an assistant director or coordinator to assist the director by handling some of the day-to-day duties, including supervision of consultants and staff, presentations, scheduling, etc. This position could be filled either full or part time, pending budget restrictions.

3. Faculty
Full time faculty who wish to work in the Writing Center should be allowed to work regularly scheduled hours each week. Commitment to the center should be considered on a semester to semester basis. These faculty members will give program presentations to faculty and classes, meet with students who have made appointments with the center for consultations, give consultations to walk-in students as needed, and complete other tasks as requested by the Director and Assistant Director. Adjuncts and part-time instructors can also work in the center as consultants and presenters, if desired. While adjuncts and part-time instructors would be paid hourly to work in the center, full-time faculty might receive release time or be compensated on an hourly basis.

Guidelines concerning required training or background in writing should be established so that non-English professors and instructors who want to work in the center can do so.

4. Student Writing Consultants
Student writing consultants will form the core of the Writing Center staff. They will be made up of exceptional JSCC students, former JSCC students, and qualified upper level students at other area colleges. Exceptional students who have passed English Composition I or English Composition II with As and are recommended by their instructors will be personally invited to join the center staff.

In exchange for work study or appropriate hourly pay, these student writing consultants will give one-on-one consultations to walk-in students and will help with minor day-to-day operations (such as copying, filing, webpage updates, etc.), and those with proven communications skills might have the opportunity to lead presentations and workshops.

Consultants will meet individually with students in the center on a first-come, first-served basis. In the case of an instructor referral, the instructor should give the student a copy of the assignment and/or any specific instructions, and the writing consultant will send a report of the session to the instructor. Instructors can also integrate the consultations into their syllabus as part of the required coursework. Although the consultants will offer suggestions, the final authority for the paper, its contents, and assignment requirements rests with the student.
Consultants will not write papers for students; instead, consultants will assist the writers in finding their own answers through discussion and examples. They will offer feedback on drafts, suggest writing strategies, diagnose writing problems, ask questions, review misunderstood or missed information, and listen to writers to help them improve their writing skills as a whole, not just improve the individual assignment.

Consultants will not evaluate the students, their writing, the assignment, or the professor in any way. The function of the consultant is to provide non-evaluative, immediate oral feedback, to attend only to that student's questions, and to engage with the student in active planning, drafting, or revising. The consultant’s goal in working on a specific paper with a student is to help that student develop general writing skills, not to be critical of the paper, the assignment, the professor, or the student’s writing abilities.

Consultants will actively encourage the students to participate in the consultation and take ownership of their papers. Although the consultants will work closely with the students to improve the paper and overall writing skills, their goal is to create better, more confident writers. These writers will develop critical thinking and evaluative skills that will allow for an honest look at the consultants’ suggestions and comments; thus, the writers are able to incorporate only those suggestions that they feel are beneficial. As in any consultation, the final authority and responsibility for the paper’s content and format belong to the student.

Consultants will actively encourage practice, experimentation, and application of new skills. The controlled environment of the center should foster experimentation in writing and practice of new skills. The consultants will help the students understand that writing is a learning process.

Consultants will assist students, staff, and faculty with all types of writing and with writing from all disciplines. Although the center will naturally complement writing courses, it will serve the entire campus by working with writers from all classes and on all skill levels. They provide the primary resource for the WAC program, and they might also have the opportunity to work in community outreach programs.

Consultants will participate in ongoing, regularly scheduled training sessions. Before consultants can work with students, they must participate in and successfully complete training sessions given by the director or full time faculty. Training will be given each semester and individually on an as-needed basis. These sessions consist of methods for collaborative learning, composition
instruction skills, diagnosing writing needs, and strategies. It will also include grammar reviews, record keeping, and communication between the center and faculty.

Consultants will participate in evaluations, both of themselves and of the center and its programs. These evaluations will be used both for SACS QEP data and for Writing Center reports.

Consultants will keep appropriate records as determined by the director and staff. As with the evaluations, these records will be used both for SACS QEP data and for Writing Center reports.

**Measuring Success**

In addition to being an academic resource, the Writing Center will also function as a research hub for gathering data about the WAC and other campus programs. Appropriate forms will be developed by the director and staff to track the center’s success, as well as success within each program. These statistics will be compiled in yearly reports and dispersed to appropriate campus administrators and staff.

1. Measuring the Center’s Success & Efficiency
Forms and resources used to measure the center’s success may include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Sign-in sheets for students seeking assistance with writing consultants which indicate services used
b. Professor referral forms
c. Reports to professors who have made referrals about the recommendations made to the student during the consultation
d. Student and faculty surveys
e. Volume statistics based on student and faculty usage
f. Surveys/short reports from the individual tutors in the center about their inside perceptions of the center and its effect on the students
g. Reports from the faculty about perceived improvements in classes and student writing due to the Writing Center
h. Evaluations of full-time faculty members by the Center Director
i. Evaluations of writing consultants by the Center Director
B. Creating a Writing Across the Curriculum Program

Linked closely to the Writing Center, a Writing Across the Curriculum program would enhance student writing by showing a strong institutional emphasis on writing, requiring students to confront writing in a number of different modes, and by helping students develop critical thinking and communication skills in different subject areas.

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at Jackson State will have two primary areas of focus. First and most obvious, it should expose students to a variety of writing approaches in a variety of subject matters. College writing, especially in a two-year college where many degree and certificate programs place students in professional positions without going on to a four year school, should also include writing germane to the professions and disciplines.

Secondly, and arguably most importantly, the WAC program at Jackson State will focus on faculty development. A WAC program is, at its heart, a faculty initiative, as mentioned above. An institution which is serious about its commitment to improving student writing and using writing as a learning tool should approach a WAC initiative with this attitude.

What is a Writing Across the Curriculum Program?

Writing Across the Curriculum is a focus on faculty attitude toward using writing in their classrooms as well as an examination of best practices. Such a program calls for writing throughout the disciplines; stresses using writing effectively as a learning tool and as a self-assessment tool and not necessarily as an assessment tool of student performance; requires evaluating existing writing assignments and changing those assignments to meet the needs of the students and the goals of the class; promotes self-evaluation of skills and exploration of knowledge by students; creates a team environment on campus to address writing issues and uses; offers models of effective writing for students; offers a variety of formal and informal writing within a class environment; and draws a distinction between writing to learn and writing to communicate.

It is difficult to arrive at a set definition of Writing Across the Curriculum, as WAC programs vary in scale and complexity nationwide. In its most basic form, WAC means writing as a learning tool within the disciplines and is a faculty development program. As such, WAC is an organized program to promote and effectively use writing as a learning tool in the disciplines. The components, resources, and approaches of programs may vary.
Writing Across the Curriculum does not require all professors to incorporate writing into their classes; does not mean simply assigning more writing to students; does not mean requiring longer assignments; does not require more grading by instructors; does not require more formal writing by the students for evaluation; and does not mean that grammar, documentation, and other specific writing errors will be fixed.

Location
The WAC will be based in the Writing Center (WC). Because of the advertisement and promotional activities completed by the WC, the faculty will be familiar with the location, know where to go for assistance and advice, and know what resources are available to them in the office. In practical terms, having a Writing Center established early in the QEP process will make much of the start-up for a WAC program less complicated.

Equipment
The WAC program will use the same equipment as the WC, including a computer lab. There would be no need to purchase separate equipment or supplies for the WAC program.

Staffing
The staff of the Writing Center and the WAC program will be the same.

Director: The WC director will serve as the WAC director and will be responsible for organizing all activities associated with the WAC, including workshops, classroom visits, consultations with faculty, peer tutoring sessions related to specific classes, etc.

Assistant Director or Coordinator: The coordinator will assist the director as requested.

Course Consultants: The faculty and students who staff the WC will also serve as WAC consultants, working with specific faculty members, academic departments, or degree programs and their classes. These hours would count as part of their regularly scheduled Writing Center hours unless otherwise noted. The faculty working in the WC would be asked to give workshops and presentations (as well as faculty one-on-one consultations) for faculty and staff campus-wide as part of their WC hours, if agreed.

Presentations and Workshops: A series of presentations and workshops on WAC and what it means for JSCC faculty and students, writing as a learning tool, creating effective writing assignments, grading writing
assignments, preventing plagiarism, writing intensive courses, etc., will be held during in-service weeks and regularly throughout the year.

**Documentation:** The WAC documentation will be included with the rest of the measurable outcomes for the entire QEP initiative and not reported separately, as there will be no constructive and conclusive way to separate the effects of the WAC, WC, and other ancillary initiatives from each other. This documentation will be collected, documented, and stored in the center as part of the entire QEP data collection process to satisfy SACS five-year requirements.

In an ideal situation, the efforts of the WC and the WAC program blend together and complement each other to focus on the two areas of writing improvement that need to be addressed: improving the students’ writing abilities and working with the faculty to effectively use writing as a learning tool, not just as an assessment vehicle. To be successful in improving student writing and in using writing as a learning tool—as well as meet the QEP guidelines as set forth by SACS—the initiative must commit to both the Writing Center and the Writing Across the Curriculum program.

**Key Considerations**

Without a Writing Center, there is no place for students to go for specific help with grammar documentation, and other specific writing problems.

Writing cannot be forced onto faculty by declaring that all classes and instructors must use writing; likewise, it is not enough to simply increase the required amount of writing per course. This would result in a backlash and failure of the program at the onset.

Developing and operating a WAC program takes “buy in.” The faculty survey conducted during the January in-service shows that 90% of faculty “make writing assignments” in their courses (47% in every course; 43% in some courses). The survey also shows that 36% of faculty are interested in “learning more about […] teaching a writing-intense course” in their department. These numbers suggest that the QEP initiative has a great deal of “buy in.” The quickest way to lose that support is to put in place a series of requirements without giving faculty any incentive to participate.

Since WAC is, on its most basic level, a faculty development program, the institution must consider funding for faculty development as it projects a budget for a WAC program. Funds must be available for development opportunities for
faculty members who are interested in integrating writing into their courses. This should include sending faculty to conferences, giving them course release, and providing them with other incentives. Recognizing that 32% of the institution’s faculty do not require writing assignments because course enrollments are too high, the administration should keep enrollments in writing intensive courses equal to or below those recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

IV. Long-Range Planning, Measurements, and Assessments

A. Budget and Resources

Jackson State Community College is fully committed to providing all necessary resources for the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan. A combination of external funds, internal funds, and grants have been identified as possible means of funding for components of Write Away!: The Jackson State Community College Initiative for Writing-Centered Learning.

External Funds
As mentioned before, members of the community including the Jackson State Community College Foundation Board attended presentations outlining the QEP. Those community members as well as members of the Jackson State Foundation have been identified as potential donors. Approximately one fourth of the QEP will be funded through external funds.

Internal Funds
Technology Access Fees (TAF) are state mandated fee assessed to students each semester and are used specifically to improve technology. Annually, JSCC collects approximately $700,000 in TAF funds. A portion of TAF funds can be used to purchase equipment for the Writing Center. To cover ongoing expenses associated with operating the Writing Center, an account will be established for the QEP in the Jackson State budget in the next fiscal year following SACS notification of approval of the QEP. This account will cover ongoing expenses not covered by external funds, TAF, or grants.

Grants
Members of the Jackson State QEP Team are currently investigating potential grants. Application for grants will begin upon approval of the QEP by SACS.

Expected One-Time Costs of the QEP and Expected Funding Method

Equipping the Jackson State Writing Center - external funds or TAF funds
Expected Recurring Costs of the QEP and Expected Funding Methods

- Writing Center Director – grant and/or budget
- Student Writing Consultants – grant, budget, and/or work study funds
- Faculty Writing Consultants – grant and/or budget
- Operating Budget – budget
- Faculty Development in Support of the Writing Across the Curriculum Program – external funding, grants, and/or budget

Initial estimates of the cost of the QEP as currently planned are approximately $400,000 over five years.

B. Hiring a Director

During the early stages of QEP operation, the institution must advertise for and hire a Writing Center Director. This position is key to successful implementation of the QEP, as the Writing Center Director must have experience with both Writing Center operations and Writing Across the Curriculum programs and must be capable of compiling and processing QEP data over the next five years. Another key element to consider is that the director must have credibility with the faculty if “buy in” is to be preserved.

C. Timeline

The following timeline presents a tentative schedule of QEP implementation.

1. Academic Year 2006-2007:
   The main focus for the first academic year is setting up the Writing Center and putting its programs into place. By the end of this academic year, the Writing Center should be operating with student consultations, faculty presentations, and data gathering.

   The foundations for WAC should be established, although this program is secondary to establishing the Writing Center.

AY 2006-7:
- Choose volunteer Writing Specialists and organize the QEP Steering Committee
- Create a QEP Community Advisory Board
- Advertise for and hire Writing Center/Writing Across the Curriculum Director
- Investigate grant opportunities for QEP funding (Fall 06)
- Set up, organize, and decorate Writing Center facility
• Hire faculty and peer consultants
• Establish consultant training schedule and methodology
• Create Writing Center PR/Advertising
• Host campus-wide presentations/workshops on WC services
• Schedule in-class presentations/visits on WC services
• Create in-class presentations on various topics
• Create a webpage on the JSCC server for the WC
• Start gathering portfolio documentation from 20 random JSCC students
• Start compiling measurable data and documentation
• Begin peer consultations
• Limited WAC development, including:
  1) Identifying those individuals from each department interested in participating in WAC as department writing specialists (10 needed)
  2) Sending department writing specialists to workshops or conferences
  3) Identifying upcoming conferences and workshops for departmental writing specialists to attend in the future
  4) Establishing a dialogue of WAC best practices between WAC department specialists and their respective departments
• Limited community services will begin but must not interfere with the WC’s programs and peer consulting
• Host youth writing camp in the summer of 2006

   This year’s focus will be establishing the WAC program while continuing to develop and practice Writing Center activities.

   AY 2007-8:
   • Create a WAC by establishing a series of campus-wide workshops and presentations
   • Identify/create writing intensive or WAC-focused courses within the disciplines
   • Identify WAC conferences, workshops, and speakers for the upcoming year(s)
   • Send departmental Writing Specialists to conferences and coordinate their presentations and best practices back to their departments
   • Establish in-class WAC visits, as requested by faculty
   • Assign WAC consultants to participating faculty
   • Choose new departmental WAC specialists (10)
   • The Writing Center will continues with its programs expanding:
1. Hire and train WC peer consultants for Lexington and Savannah Centers
2. Focus on developing the webpage more to meet students’ needs
3. Continue to gather data and collect writing portfolios, including adding 20 new students to the portfolio project
   • Community programs should slowly expand to address need of the community
   • Host second youth writing camp in the summer of 2007
   • Other secondary programs are not yet a focus

3. Academic Year 2008-2009
Operations in the Writing Center and data gathering will have stabilized by this point. Programs and presentations will continue, although new topics should be added as needed. The Writing Center will also focus on developing a webpage to meet the needs of distance learners.

WAC should be an established presence on campus at this point, and the program will:
   1) Continue with the campus-wide presentations and in-class visits
   2) Continue with WAC consultants teamed with faculty for specific classes
   3) Identify ten new departmental writing specialists to participate in WAC and attend selected conferences and workshops

Secondary programs will become the focus for the year, including:
   1) Public readings by local authors
   2) Public readings by students
   3) Creating a student portion of the website dedicated to showcasing student writing
   4) Creating writing competitions, awards, and scholarships
   5) Creating writing internships with local businesses/industry
   6) Continue youth writing camp

Community programs will be evaluated and adjusted accordingly, keeping our students’ needs the primary focus.

4. Academic Years 2009-10 and 2010-11
Years 4 and 5 of the QEP will offer a continuation of the previous programs, and evaluation of effectiveness of the QEP, changes and enhancements in the programs, and re-evaluation. Additional programs and services are added as time and resources allow, with special emphasis on secondary programs.
D. QEP Steering Committee
A QEP Steering committee will be created to oversee the operation of the QEP over the next five years. The Steering Committee will work closely with the director of the Writing Center to ensure that QEP goals and plans are being met and measured.

The Steering Committee will be made up of faculty who have been selected to represent their academic department or program as “Writing Specialists” as well as representatives from the college’s staff. These representatives will be provided with professional development opportunities related to writing in their specific academic area and will share their experiences directly with their department or with the faculty as a whole. The Writing Specialists will be relied upon to promote and emphasize writing in their particular discipline and department/program.

The QEP Committee recommends that 12 Writing Specialists from diverse areas on campus be chosen to serve one-year terms on the QEP Steering Committee.

E. Community Advisory Board
A Community Advisory Board will be created to offer suggestions and input to the institution and the QEP Steering Committee.

F. Measurement of QEP Goals
Naturally, the efficacy of the institution’s QEP must be measured, and as writing improvement can sometimes be subjective, much of Jackson State’s QEP measurement and assessment data may differ somewhat from the norm. In other words, empirical measurements may be somewhat limited, as this QEP depends so much on perception and attitude about student writing, both on the part of faculty and students.

In fact, caution must be used to distinguish the difference between the ideas of “improving” writing and “enhancing” writing. This QEP will actually strive to enhance student writing—through increased emphasis on student writing, offering students additional assistance with writing, integrating writing into more courses, and providing faculty with professional development opportunities. It is the belief of the institution that writing improvement will be a natural effect of the college’s emphasis on writing.

The institution would also like to realize a visible improvement in the actual writing that students do on campus, and this will be measured by ongoing study using pre-test and post-test writing samples and by measuring faculty and staff attitudes about student writing.
Measuring Goals for Students

The following goals for students have been laid out for the QEP:

1. Raise graduate exit exam scores in writing to national averages for community colleges by 1-2% per year, or 5-10% over five years. This goal will be measured by simple comparison. The presence of a Writing Center to help students combined with a change in perception and attitude on the part of the institution and students will help achieve this goal.

2. Raise scores of writing questions on graduate/alumni surveys as administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. These surveys are conducted every 2-3 years.

3. Raise the number of students seeking writing assistance based on existing data. Currently, few of the institution’s students are seeking writing assistance at the Academic Assistance Center and on SmarThinking.com. National trends suggest that students see traditional forms of tutoring as only necessary for weak or remedial students. The Writing Center and the institutional emphasis on writing will change this attitude. This goal will be measured by data provided by the Writing Center.

4. Demonstrate writing improvement by evaluating student portfolios from a sampling of incoming freshmen throughout their time at Jackson State. Faculty are aware of their students’ writing weaknesses, and careful study of the writing portfolios from the sample of students will show visible improvement.

5. Demonstrate writing improvement by evaluating pre-test and post-test writing samples from a group of students. The Director of the Writing Center will develop the study, with pre-test writing samples creating a baseline by which improvement can be measured.

6. Improve student attitudes/beliefs/knowledge about writing as documented by a survey yet to be developed.

Measuring Goals for Faculty

The following goals for faculty have been set forth by the QEP:

1. Increase by 1-2% per year the number of faculty who perceive that outgoing students are prepared for upper level college or workplace writing. According to data gathered by the QEP Team, 25% of faculty believe that our outgoing students are poorly prepared for upper level college writing. Only 23% believe the
institution’s students are well prepared. 23% believe graduating sophomores are prepared for effective workplace writing, with only 11% believing the students are well prepared. These goals will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty perceptions about student writing.

2. Lower by 1-2% per year the number of faculty members who have reduced or eliminated writing assignments in their courses due to frustrations over poor student writing. According to the survey, 28% of faculty have eliminated or reduced writing assignments for this reason. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty practices.

3. Increase by 3-5% overall the number of faculty who utilize writing assignments in the classroom. According to the survey, 47% make writing assignments in every course they teach. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty practices.

4. Increase by 3-5% overall the amount of writing per semester in each course. Currently, the majority of faculty (56%) assign only 1-3 assignments per semester, with the vast majority of these assignments (55%) only requiring 1-2 pages. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty practices.

5. Improve faculty perception of student writing ability in specific skill areas listed in questions 7-22 of the faculty survey. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty attitudes and perceptions concerning student writing.

6. Show a 3-5% increase overall in faculty willing to share best writing instruction practices. The faculty survey shows that only 33% are willing to share their best practices. The Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center workshops will stress the importance of sharing best practices. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty attitudes, perceptions, and practices.

7. Show 3-5% increase overall in faculty willing to participate in activities aimed toward improving student writing and using writing as a learning tool. Currently, only 67% of faculty indicated a willingness to participate. This goal will be measured by future surveys concerning faculty attitudes, perceptions, and practices.
Measuring Goals for the Administration

The institution will be devoted to providing ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty willing to integrate writing into their courses. The institution’s commitment will be measured by its funding and promotion of professional development.

Works Cited


Appendix A: Faculty Survey Results

[105 completed surveys were returned; N/A = not answered]

JSCC QEP Faculty Survey
January 12, 2005

Part I – Needs Assessment. Please check the response that most nearly represents your opinion or practice. If you believe that a statement doesn’t apply to you at all, then leave it blank.

1. How well prepared do you think entering freshmen are for college writing?
   a. Poorly prepared  b. Adequately prepared  c. Well prepared  d. Don’t know
   a. 79%  b. 12%  c. 0%  d. 9%  N/A

2. How well prepared do you think our transfer students are for college writing?
   a. Poorly prepared  b. Adequately prepared  c. Well prepared  d. Don’t know
   a. 25%  b. 42%  c. 10%  d. 23%  N/A

3. How well prepared do you think your department’s graduating sophomores are for writing on the job?
   a. Poorly prepared  b. Adequately prepared  c. Well prepared  d. Don’t know
   a. 23%  b. 57%  c. 9%  d. 11%  N/A

4. In your opinion, what percentage of your students demonstrates significant writing weaknesses?
   a. 1-20%  b. 21-40%  c. 41-60%  d. 61-80%  e. 81-100%
   a. 9%  b. 38%  c. 24%  d. 16%  e. 13%  N/A

5. Over the years you have taught at JSCC, the quality of students writing has:
   a. Improved  b. Stayed about the same  c. Gotten worse  d. Don’t know
   a. 5%  b. 41%  c. 34%  d. 20%  N/A

6. Have you changed or eliminated writing assignments or test questions because of poor student writing?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Not applicable
   a. 28%  b. 67%  c. 5%  N/A

Using the scale below, indicate how satisfied you are with your students’ ability to do the following:  a = Very dissatisfied  b = Somewhat dissatisfied  c = Somewhat satisfied  d = Very satisfied; if you don’t know or don’t use writing in your classes, please leave the answer blank.

Understand different audiences and purposes:
7. Write appropriately for different audiences
   a. 22%   b. 52%   c. 25%   d. 1%   N/A16%

8. Write appropriately for different purposes
   a. 22%   b. 51%   c. 27%   d. 0%   N/A13%

9. Employ appropriate voice/tone/level of formality for purpose
   a. 24%   b. 47%   c. 28%   d. 1%   N/A15%

Organize a paper:
10. Identify a main idea (thesis)
    a. 16%   b. 50%   c. 34%   d. 0%   N/A14%

11. Develop sub-points to support thesis
    a. 20%   b. 55%   c. 24%   d. 1%   N/A16%

12. Use paragraphs appropriately
    a. 24%   b. 44%   c. 30%   d. 2%   N/A17%

Use supporting evidence:
13. Analyze data/ideas/arguments
    a. 30%   b. 45%   c. 23%   d. 2%   N/A11%

14. Synthesize information from multiple sources
    a. 37%   b. 43%   c. 20%   d. 0%   N/A13%

15. Integrate ideas from diverse perspectives
    a. 36%   b. 46%   c. 18%   d. 0%   N/A15%

16. Separate fact from interpretation and/or opinion
    a. 34%   b. 35%   c. 30%   d. 1%   N/A13%

 Appropriately use sources:
17. Accurately cite and document sources
    a. 30%   b. 37%   c. 30%   d. 3%   N/A13%

18. Paraphrase appropriately
    a. 24%   b. 43%   c. 32%   d. 1%   N/A13%

19. Quote appropriately
    a. 21%   b. 43%   c. 33%   d. 3%   N/A13%

20. Record data and/or use appropriate level of detail
    a. 27%   b. 41%   c. 30%   d. 2%   N/A10%

Mechanics:
21. Use correct sentence grammar and syntax
    a. 33%   b. 44%   c. 23%   d. 0%   N/A9%

22. Employ correct mechanics (spelling, punctuation)
    a. 35%   b. 43%   c. 21%   d. 1%   0%   N/A7%
Using the scale below, indicate to what degree the following challenges affect your ability to incorporate writing assignments in your classes:  

\( a = \text{Always} \)  
\( b = \text{Usually} \)  
\( c = \text{Sometimes} \)  
\( d = \text{Rarely} \)  
\( e = \text{Never} \); if you don’t know or don’t assign writing in your classes, please leave the answer blank.

23. Poor quality of student writing on research papers/essays  
\( a. \ 9\% \)  \( b. \ 29\% \)  \( c. \ 26\% \)  \( d. \ 21\% \)  \( e. \ 15\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 17\% \)

24. Poor quality of student writing on exams  
\( a. \ 13\% \)  \( b. \ 24\% \)  \( c. \ 28\% \)  \( d. \ 22\% \)  \( e. \ 14\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 17\% \)

25. Poor quality of student writing on other forms of assignments  
\( a. \ 9\% \)  \( b. \ 28\% \)  \( c. \ 28\% \)  \( d. \ 22\% \)  \( e. \ 14\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 11\% \)

26. Student resistance to formal writing assignments  
\( a. \ 10\% \)  \( b. \ 25\% \)  \( c. \ 18\% \)  \( d. \ 21\% \)  \( e. \ 26\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 13\% \)

27. Student resistance to informal writing assignments  
\( a. \ 10\% \)  \( b. \ 22\% \)  \( c. \ 21\% \)  \( d. \ 20\% \)  \( e. \ 27\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 13\% \)

28. Student resistance to essay exams  
\( a. \ 10\% \)  \( b. \ 24\% \)  \( c. \ 23\% \)  \( d. \ 19\% \)  \( e. \ 24\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 21\% \)

29. Plagiarism  
\( a. \ 6\% \)  \( b. \ 24\% \)  \( c. \ 24\% \)  \( d. \ 27\% \)  \( e. \ 19\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 16\% \)

30. Inability of students to understand or follow assignments  
\( a. \ 5\% \)  \( b. \ 20\% \)  \( c. \ 34\% \)  \( d. \ 23\% \)  \( e. \ 17\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 11\% \)

Part II. Practices. Please check the response that most nearly represents your current teaching practices and opinions. If you believe that a statement doesn’t apply to you at all, then leave it blank.

ASSIGNMENTS:

31. Do you make writing assignments in your course?  
\( a. \text{Yes, in every course} \)  \( b. \text{Yes, in some courses} \)  \( c. \text{Not at all} \)  \( \text{N/A} \)
\( a. \ 47\% \)  \( b. \ 43\% \)  \( c. \ 11\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 2\% \)

32. If you answered “not at all” to question 31, can you answer why? Then skip to Part III.  
\( a. \text{Courses do not lend themselves to writing} \)  \( b. \text{Course enrollment is too high} \)  \( c. \text{Quality of student writing is too poor} \)  \( d. \text{Do not feel comfortable grading writing} \)  \( e. \text{Other} \)
\( a. \ 32\% \)  \( b. \ 32\% \)  \( c. \ 8\% \)  \( d. \ 0\% \)  \( e. \ 29\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 64\% \)

33. Excluding essay exams, on average, how many writing assignments do you give per course?  
\( a. \text{None} \)  \( b. \text{1 – 3} \)  \( c. \text{4 – 6} \)  \( d. \text{7 – 9} \)  \( e. \text{10 or more} \)
\( a. \ 5\% \)  \( b. \ 56\% \)  \( c. \ 16\% \)  \( d. \ 4\% \)  \( e. \ 19\% \)  \( \text{N/A} \ 10\% \)
34. Excluding essay exams, what is the average page length (type-written or word-processed) of those assignments?
   a. Less than 1  b. 1 - 2  c. 3 - 4  d. 5 - 6  e. 6 or more
   a. 11%  b. 55%  c. 24%  d. 6%  e. 4%  N/A 10%

35. Do you give essay exams (or exams in which students write a minimum of 1 paragraph to answer questions) in your course?
   a. Yes, in every course  b. Yes, in some courses  c. Not at all
   a. 21%  b. 39%  c. 39%  N/A 11%

36. Do you assign research papers or other formal essays?
   a. Yes, in every course  b. Yes, in some courses  c. Not at all
   a. 17%  b. 52%  c. 32%  N/A 10%

37. Do you use informal writing (such as opinions, journals, etc.) in your classes?
   a. Yes, in every course  b. Yes, in some courses  c. Not at all
   a. 24%  b. 59%  c. 16%  11%

38. Do you assign self-assessments?
   a. Yes, in every course  b. Yes, in some courses  c. Not at all
   a. 18%  b. 35%  c. 45%  N/A 12%

PURPOSES:

39. The purpose of the written work assigned in my classes is to help students learn the course content.
   a. Strongly disagree  b. Disagree  c. Agree  d. Strongly agree
   a. 11%  b. 12%  c. 36%  d. 40%  N/A 8%

40. The purpose of the written work assigned in my classes is to help measure how much of the course content the students have learned.
   a. Strongly disagree  b. Disagree  c. Agree  d. Strongly agree
   a. 9%  b. 20%  c. 40%  d. 31%  N/A 10%

GRADING:

41. What percentage of a student's grade is based on writing assignments in your course? If you have more than one class with writing required, please give an average.
   a. 0 - 20%  b. 21 - 40%  c. 41 - 60%  d. 61 - 80%  e. 81-100%
   a. 57%  b. 27%  c. 4%  d. 4%  e. 7%  N/A 10%

42. How are grades assigned on the papers?
   a. a grade (letter or number) appears on the paper with no evaluative comments
   b. a grade (letter or number) appears on the paper together with evaluative comments
   c. evaluative comments appear on the paper with no grade assigned
   d. papers are returned with comments to be revised before final grades are assigned
   a. 12%  b. 70%  c. 10%  d. 8%  N/A 14%
43. Do you score papers with two separate grades for content and mechanics? (If you answer a, please skip to question 48.)
   a. Yes       b. No
   a. 12%   b. 88%  N/A13%

44. What is the basis for your evaluation of the assignments?
   a. evaluation based on content only
   b. evaluation based on form/mechanics only
   c. evaluation based on a combination of form/mechanics and content
      a. 27%   b. 2%   c. 71%  19%

45. If you marked “c” in the previous question, which of the following do you emphasize? (If you marked any other answer, please skip this question.)
   a. equal emphasis on form/mechanics and content
   b. more emphasis on form/mechanics than on content
   c. more emphasis on content than on form/mechanics
      a. 25%   b. 7%   c. 61%  41%

46. What percentage of the overall assignment grade comes from content?
   a. 0 – 20%  b. 21 – 40%  c. 41 – 60%  d. 61 – 80%  e. 81-100%
      a. 6%   b. 2%   c. 27%   d. 32%  e. 32%  N/A23%

47. What percentage of the overall assignment grade comes from form/mechanics?
   a. 0 – 20%  b. 21 – 40%  c. 41 – 60%  d. 61 – 80%  e. 81-100%
      a. 51%   b. 26%   c. 20%  d. 0%   e. 3%  N/A24%

48. Do you feel confident grading student papers for grammar and mechanics?
   a. Yes       b. No
   a. 73%   b. 27%  N/A11%

49. On the final drafts of papers, do you write comments that are designed to help students become better writers?
   a. 38%   b. 25%   c. 19%   d. 11%  e. 7%  N/A16%

50. Do you make comments or suggestions when grading papers even when the students will not have the opportunity to revise?
   a. Yes, always    b. Yes, sometimes    c. No
   a. 47%   b. 42%  c. 11%  N/A14%

GENERAL PRACTICES:

Identified below are a number of strategies for enhancing student writing. To what extent do you use these strategies?
 a = Never use  b = Rarely or Sometimes use  c = Usually use  d = Always use  e = Don’t know

51. Require multiple drafts on writing assignments
   a. 53%   b. 26%   c. 9%   d. 11%  e. 1%  N/A12%
52. Provide written feedback on early drafts
   a. 38%  b. 19%  c. 15%  d. 26%  e. 2%  N/A 18%

53. Have student conferences on papers in progress
   a. 52%  b. 24%  c. 16%  d. 6%  e. 3%  N/A 15%

54. Have students read/respond in writing to other students’ writing
   a. 64%  b. 22%  c. 7%  d. 4%  e. 2%  N/A 14%

55. Provide written descriptions for writing assignments
   a. 18%  b. 14%  c. 23%  d. 44%  e. 1%  N/A 13%

56. Provide criteria/rubric for grades on writing assignments
   a. 30%  b. 17%  c. 24%  d. 27%  e. 2%  N/A 14%

57. Provide opportunities for informal, exploratory writing
   a. 35%  b. 21%  c. 24%  d. 19%  e. 1%  N/A 15%

58. Discuss writing with your class
   a. 24%  b. 30%  c. 23%  d. 23%  e. 0%  N/A 13%

59. Provide handouts/checklists/examples
   a. 15%  b. 19%  c. 30%  d. 36%  e. 0%  N/A 13%

60. Provide students with writing references/handbooks/websites
   a. 24%  b. 20%  c. 22%  d. 34%  e. 0%  N/A 15%

61. Have students reflect on and evaluate their own writing
   a. 43%  b. 25%  c. 21%  d. 10%  e. 1%  N/A 17%

62. Direct students to college support services for writing
   a. 31%  b. 28%  c. 16%  d. 24%  e. 1%  N/A 15%

63. Discuss sample student papers or professional writing
   a. 36%  b. 18%  c. 21%  d. 25%  e. 0%  N/A 15%

64. Small group discussion of student writing
   a. 56%  b. 24%  c. 11%  d. 8%  e. 1%  N/A 13%

65. Written comments on final papers
   a. 10%  b. 13%  c. 27%  d. 50%  e. 0%  N/A 14%

66. Hold one-on-one conferences with the students
   a. 25%  b. 34%  c. 31%  d. 9%  e. 1%  N/A 13%

67. Have students begin assignments in class
   a. 36%  b. 30%  c. 22%  d. 11%  e. 1%  N/A 13%

68. Break assignments into steps and teach each step separately
   a. 45%  b. 19%  c. 23%  d. 12%  e. 1%  N/A 13%
69. Do you take class time to teach any writing skills pertinent to your discipline? For example: lab reports, case studies, critiques, etc.
   a. 29%            b. 19%            c. 17%            d. 16%            e. 18%          N/A 11%

70. What is your rationale for assigning writing?
   a. A measurement of knowledge of what has been covered in class
   b. An extension and/or expansion of what has been covered in class
   c. A substitute for what cannot be covered in class
   d. A tool to learn concepts that will be discussed in class
   a. 15%  b. 66%  c. 5%  d. 13%   19%

71. I allow students, but do not require then, to show me drafts of their writing assignments before the final draft is due.
   a. 32%            b. 17%            c. 11%            d. 20%            e. 19%          N/A 16%

72. I spend time outside class helping students who have trouble doing the writing that I assign.
   a. 19%            b. 18%            c. 36%            d. 19%            e. 9%           N/A 14%

73. If my students need help with their writing, I tell my them to go to the Academic Assistance Center or use SmarThinking.
   a. 16%            b. 20%            c. 28%            d. 20%            e. 17%          N/A 14%

Part III: QEP Writing Program

74. I would be willing to attend a discussion session or workshop on issues related to improving students' writing skills.
   a. Yes         b. No         c. At some future time
   a. 67%            b. 14%            c. 19%            N/A 2%

75. I would be interested in sharing some approaches I use to help students with their writing assignments.
   a. Yes         b. No         c. At some future time
   a. 33%            b. 47%            c. 19%            N/A 6%

Identified below are a number of teaching strategies for improving student writing. Please indicate which of the following practices you would like to learn more about.
   a = yes         b = no

76. Working with multiple drafts
   a. 32%            b. 68%            N/A 9%

77. Providing feedback on early drafts
   a. 44%            b. 56%            N/A 9%
78. Holding one-on-one student consultations  N/A  
   a. 51%  b. 49%  

79. Having students read/respond in writing to other students’ writing  N/A 10%  
   a. 54%  b. 46%  

80. Providing written descriptions for writing assignments  N/A 9%  
   a. 56%  b. 44%  

81. Creating checklists and/or rubrics  N/A 10%  
   a. 60%  b. 40%  

82. Assigning informal or exploratory writing  N/A 10%  
   a. 51%  b. 49%  

83. Discussing writing with your class  N/A 10%  
   a. 58%  b. 42%  

84. Finding writing references/handbooks/websites for students  N/A 11%  
   a. 58%  b. 42%  

85. Having students reflect on and evaluate their own writing  N/A 9%  
   a. 64%  b. 36%  

86. Learning more about college support services for writing  N/A 10%  
   a. 66%  b. 34%  

87. Discussing sample student papers or professional writing  N/A 10%  
   a. 54%  b. 46%  

88. Directing peer/small group discussion of early drafts  N/A 11%  
   a. 43%  b. 57%  

89. Writing comments on final papers  N/A 10%  
   a. 57%  b. 43%  

90. Creating and grading essay exams  N/A 10%  
   a. 55%  b. 45%  

91. Consulting one-on-one with students  N/A 10%  
   a. 51%  b. 49%  

92. Creating, enhancing and evaluating writing assignments  N/A 9%  
   a. 67%  b. 33%  

93. Sharing your writing practices with other faculty members  N/A 9%  
   a. 42%  b. 58%
94. Teaching a writing-intense course in your department
   a. 36%   b. 64%
   N/A
   8%

95. Establishing a campus Writing Center
   a. 63%   b. 37%
   N/A
   8%

96. Establishing a Writing Across the Curriculum program
   a. 67%   b. 33%
   N/A
   7%

97. Working with writing consultants to increase writing effectiveness
   a. 58%   b. 42%
   N/A
   9%

98. I am familiar with Writing Centers and the services they provide. (If you answer “No” to this question, please skip questions 99 and 100.)
   a. Yes   b. No
   N/A
   4%

99. I would consider requiring my students to visit the Writing Center, if established on campus, for help with writing assignments.
   a. Yes   b. No
   N/A
   42%

100. I would consider inviting a writing consultant or staff member from the Writing Center into my classroom to help my students with writing assignments.
    a. Yes   b. No
    N/A
    42%

Appendix B: Faculty Responses to Three Questions during the January 2005 In-Service Breakout Sessions

Faculty were asked the following three questions:
1. How do the students in our department need to improve their writing?
2. What is the best plan to improve the writing of the students in our department?
3. What difficulties does our department see in implementing a plan to improve student writing?

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.
Appendix C: Classified Staff Responses to Three Questions during the January 2005 In-Service Breakout Session

1. How do the students with whom I work need to improve their writing?
2. What is the best plan to improve student writing?
3. What difficulties do I foresee in implementing a plan to help students improve their writing?

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

Appendix D: Faculty/staff Questions and Comments Made during Open Meeting, March 2005

During the QEP Open meeting, several members of the audience asked questions or made comments concerning the QEP. Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

Appendix E: Faculty Input and Suggestions from March 2005 Open Meeting

The comment/suggestion sheet for faculty included four prompts:

1. What does “improving student writing” mean to you as an instructor?
2. As an instructor, what services/faculty development would help you improve student writing (i.e., helping create or grade writing assignments)?
3. In your opinion, can the following goals of the QEP be achieved? (the list of goals above followed)
4. If you marked “no” for any items listed above, please offer suggestions for goals that are more realistic.

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.
Appendix F: Staff Input and Suggestions from March 2005 Open Meeting

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

Appendix G: Faculty Responses to QEP via Email

Faculty were asked to preview the QEP outline and submit their comments, suggestions, and questions to a special email address established for the QEP. Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

Appendix H: Responses and Suggestions from Open Meeting for Students

In an open forum, students were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What does “improving your writing” mean to you as a student?
2. As a student, what would you like to see offered that would help improve your writing?

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

Appendix I: Student Survey Results

Student Writing Survey -- March, 2005

Total: 278 responses

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<th>Answers (1-5)</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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**Question #1:** Overall, I often write for my college classes.

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**Question #2:** I often write “informally” for college classes
### Journals

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### Class emails

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### Notes

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### Homework Responses

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### In-class

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### Other

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### Other Comments:

- Creating my own study guides
- For everything
- Response essays
- Aren’t properly prompted with material for test
- Responses to other people’s remarks
- Nursing clinical documentation
- My own notes
- Definitions

### Question #3: I often write “formally” for college classes

#### Lab reports

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#### Reports

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#### Research papers

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#### Analyses/critical essays

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#### Creative Writing

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#### Essay Exams

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### Other
"Other" Comments:
- Speeches
- Class essays
- In class papers
- Book review papers

**Question #4: For me, writing is great “learning” tool.**

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**Comments:**
- Continue to improve writing styles
- Helps me organize
- Helps me express my opinion
- Helps me to comprehend better
- Helps me reflect and work out problems
- Biology
- Provides a more in-depth understanding
- I just enjoy it

**Question #5: My college professors improve my writing**

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### Appendix J: Community Questionnaire Responses

During the QEP Community Breakfast, community members responded to a series of questions concerning the QEP. They were asked the following questions:

1. What types of writing are done by the employees at your organization?

2. What do you think about the plan to create a Writing Center on the campus of JSCC?

3. Considering the types of writing your employees do in the workplace, how do you think the JSCC plan as presented would be beneficial?

Responses (both primary and summarized documents) are available for inspection in the SACS Document Room.

"Other" Comments:

- Help me to outline before I write
- Are very encouraging to do things right
- Give ideas on how to get started
- Providing a brief description of the paper overall