

I. Executive Summary

Through the activities in this Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), undergraduate students at University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) will improve their ability to write. Senior students from diverse academic programs will demonstrate that they have mastered writing skills that are essential for their learning and for their careers after graduation.

The focus to improve undergraduate student writing was selected after an extensive review of several sources: multiple years of rubric-scored student writing, over ten years of benchmarked survey data, internal UIW faculty surveys, and broad-based community recommendations for QEP priorities.

QEP activities focus on development workshops for full-time and part-time faculty. The primary activity is the year-long Writing Academy (WA) designed for 15 faculty members each year. Each cohort will include teams of faculty members representing different majors and selected Core courses (general education). Most of the WA participants will be teams of three full-time faculty members from each of five programs; each team will develop a “writing ladder” – a sequence of three writing-intensive courses in their program designed to improve student writing in the context of that major. Teams representing key Core courses will design a similar revision for their course. Faculty participants will come from a variety of majors, will include UIW Core courses that reach all undergraduate majors, and will include programs that span UIW’s main campus, adult education, and distance education programs. As these academies run across four years of the QEP, a total of 60 faculty participants from 15 programs and 5 Core areas will improve courses that will ultimately impact every entering first-year student.

The second QEP activity provides short workshops from the existing Center for Teaching and Learning, together with the Writing and Learning Center. In order to bring lessons learned from WA to more faculty, workshops will be offered that will impact over 100 full-time and part-time faculty.

The third QEP activity adds resources for the English faculty teaching composition courses, in order to reinforce this foundational Core course that prepares entering first-year students for their undergraduate learning experience. Targeted workshops will prepare full-time and part-time faculty to take advantage of technology-enhanced instruction in updated computer lab classrooms.

The primary assessment of QEP success will be the direct measure of senior student writing; this will demonstrate achievement of the general education outcome that UIW graduates will be able to communicate effectively in writing. Students in senior-level “writing ladder” courses will complete written work that faculty will grade with common rubric instruments. The rubric scoring will provide direct measures of student learning to assess fundamental writing competency, with data that can be aggregated at the university level.

Overall, through this QEP, UIW faculty will require more writing throughout the academic programs, and undergraduate students will be better prepared to learn and will graduate as effective writers in their fields.