# Table of Contents

List of Tables 4  
List of Figures 5

Overview:  
A: *iCommunicate*: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-media Platforms 6  
B: The University of West Alabama Mission 8  
C: UWA Demographics 9

Section 1: QEP Development Process  
A: Evidence of Broad-based University Involvement 10  
B: Employee Survey used to Develop QEP Topic 15  
C: QEP White Paper Proposals 16

Section 2: *iCommunicate*: The UWA QEP  
A: QEP Development 22  
B: QEP Key Terms 23  
C: Integrating *iCommunicate* ideas into UWA Courses 24  
C: Naming the UWA QEP 26  
D: *iCommunicate* Principles 28  
E: Introducing Campus to the *iCommunicate* QEP 29

Section 3: Literature Review and Best Practices  
A: Reflection on a Societal Level 31  
B: Reflection on the UWA Campus 32  
C: Traditional Concepts of Communication as a Core Value 34  
D: Multiple Media Modes as a Core Value 35  
E: Media Literacy as a Core Value 36  
F: Interactive Audience as a Core Value 37  
G: Application to the Real World 38

Section 4: Implementation Plan  
A: The Problem to Address 42  
B: The UWA *iCommunicate* Solution 43  
C: *iCommunicate* Pilot Program 46  
D: Sustainability of *iCommunicate* 50
Section 5: Assessment Plan
A: Overview 53
B: Goals and Student Learning Outcomes 54
C: Procedures 57
D: Planning and Assessment Cycle 58
E: Pilot Results from Fall 2012 59

Section 6: iCommunicate Timeline 62

Section 7: Responsibility and Organizational Structure 63

Section 8: Budget and Narrative 66

Section 9: Conclusion 69

Works Cited: 70

Appendices:
A: What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA 8-5-10 76
B: What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA 10-18-10 77
C: What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA 6-28-11 79
D: QEP Planning Committee Minutes 82
E: Faculty/Staff Survey 84
F: Faculty/Staff Survey Results 86
G: QEP White Paper Stipends and Research Grants Application 95
H: iCommunicate Two-Page Abstract 97
I: Model Questions for the EH101 QEP Assessment 99
J: Model Questions for the BY101 QEP Assessment 104
K: QEP Rubric: Writing Assignment 109
L: QEP Rubric: Message Critique Assignment 110
M: EH101 Writing Assignment 111
N: BY101 Writing Assignment 112
O: EH101 Critique Assignment 113
P: BY101 Critique Assignment 114
List of Tables

Table 1: Faculty/Staff Representation at the SACSCOC Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation 10
Table 2: Faculty/Staff Representation on the SACS Leadership Team 12
Table 3: Faculty/Staff Representation on the QEP Advisory Committee 15
Table 4: Faculty/Staff Representation on the QEP White Paper Committee 17
Table 5: Faculty/Staff Members Involved in Writing QEP Proposals 18
Table 6: Representation on the QEP Development Committee 21
Table 7: Implementation Plans Across the Colleges 45
Table 8: Faculty/Staff Representation on the QEP Implementation Team 47
Table 9: Five-Year Implementation Plan Timeline 62
Table 10: QEP Organizational Structure Responsibilities 64
Table 11: QEP Budget: New Funding 68
## List of Figures

| Figure 1: | Effective Communications Model                      | 33 |
|Figure 2: | QEP Core Values and Student Learning Outcomes       | 40 |
|Figure 3: | QEP Implementation Plan within Academic Programs    | 44 |
|Figure 4: | QEP Organizational Structure                        | 65 |
iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-Media Platforms

The existing body of literature and the results from faculty/staff and student surveys reveal that a focus on effective communication strategies at the University of West Alabama would greatly benefit UWA students in their personal and professional lives. The survey results and the literature recognize that the field of communication is rapidly changing. Digital technologies allow individuals to communicate with one another almost instantaneously, enable interactive feedback from a large audience, and continue to expand methods through which individuals communicate. While advantages to these advances exist, these changes have also negatively influenced the communication skills of many students at UWA. The boundaries and “rules” that define appropriate communication have become blurred by text-speak and social media, the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively using all media modes is quickly becoming more challenging, and the skills of media literacy have become more essential, especially when critiquing existing media messages.

As a result of the lengthy QEP development process, UWA faculty and staff decided to turn to tried-and-true communication strategies to guide the quality enhancement plan. The concepts of persona, audience, tone, style and occasion are all key elements in appropriate and effective communication, but are noticeably ignored in many communication attempts by students. From e-mail correspondence to essay writing, UWA students frequently struggle with these concepts. Therefore, UWA anticipates that the iCommunicate QEP will help students more effectively translate traditional communication concepts across academic disciplines and across multiple media modes, helping them become stronger communicators.

Communication and message analysis are key elements in life, both personally and professionally; therefore, UWA believes it is important that iCommunicate be successfully implemented in a variety of academic disciplines. The iCommunicate QEP will also benefit students in their personal and professional communication decisions.
UWA students will benefit from the knowledge of how to adapt effective communication strategies to all forms of communication; they will be trained and prepared to communicate effectively within a vast majority of professions; they will gain skills in media literacy and message analysis, thus enabling them to be more informed and responsible citizens; and they will be prepared to communicate in the future, regardless of the evolution of communication.

Assessment data will be collected and measured in two stages. First, data from a QEP group and a control group will be collected for the two courses included in the two-year pilot program, English Composition I and Biology I, which are both freshman-level courses in the UWA core curriculum. Data collected from these courses will serve as baseline assessment data for additional assessments in the third through fifth year of the implementation process, when higher-level courses will be used to assess students.

In summary, sound plans for implementation, sustainability, organizational structure, and assessment have been made for the iCommunicate QEP. During the next several years, UWA hopes to help students achieve greater academic and personal success through the benefits gained from the proposed quality enhancement plan and create an environment where a robust dialogue about the role that effective communication plays in our lives is ongoing between faculty, staff, and students.
The University of West Alabama is a state-supported, coeducational institution of higher learning governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor. As a regional institution, the University's foremost commitment is to meeting the educational needs of the State and particularly of the West Alabama area. Valuing a diverse student enrollment, though, it also welcomes students from throughout the United States and from other countries.

The primary purpose of the University is to provide opportunities for students to pursue a quality education through associate, baccalaureate, master's, and education specialist degrees in liberal arts, natural sciences and mathematics, pre-professional programs, nursing, technology, business, and education. Importance is placed on providing opportunities within the curricula for the development of enhanced skills in critical thinking, communication, leadership, and computer literacy. The University also seeks to provide students opportunities for growth beyond the classroom through a wide range of extracurricular activities, programs, and services and through the maintenance of an environment of cultural and intellectual diversity. Through the total educational experience that it provides and through its encouragement of the free exchange of ideas among faculty, administration, and students, the University attempts to assist its students in developing the important qualities of independent thinking and respect for the ideas of others and in building firm foundations of personal integrity and character in order to realize their quests for a philosophy of life and for self-fulfillment.

At the University of West Alabama, the emphasis is upon the traditional learner, but the institution is also committed to furthering the concept of lifelong learning and to serving the non-traditional student. It considers among its clientele are high schools, businesses and industries, governmental agencies, and professional workers. In serving these diverse publics, the institution employs not only traditional means of delivery, but it also seeks to expand its use of innovative technologies, including distance learning, and to
networking with other educational institutions and agencies in order to more comprehensively address the needs of its region.

In fulfilling its mission, the University seeks to employ a vibrant, talented, and diverse faculty. In the recruitment and retention of this faculty, as with all members of the University community, the institution, consistent with its academic heritage, maintains an openness to all qualified persons.

Excellence in teaching and advising is paramount to the faculty, but the members are also committed to providing leadership and fostering positive growth throughout West Alabama through research and public service, with primary emphasis on that which meets the educational, social, cultural, and economic needs of the region.

**UWA Demographics**

Of the 5,258 students enrolled at UWA during the 2011-2012 academic year, more than 55% were enrolled online. The UWA student body is also diverse in student race and sex. Nearly 55% of the student body identifies themselves as African American, 40% identifies as White, and the additional 5% identifies as Hispanic, Asian, or other. A little more than 75% of the overall student body is female, eighty-six percent of the online students are female. The majority (69%) of undergraduate students at UWA range in age from 18-24, while 56% of graduate students range in age from 22-34. Therefore, the UWA student body consists of a diverse group of online and on-campus students.
QEP Development Process

The process used to develop the *iCommunicate* QEP began with discussions, data collection, and soul-searching with the goal of enhancing student learning at UWA. This section will highlight the numerous committees and individuals involved in selecting a topic, the data collection process that suggested areas of potential improvement, and the steps that ultimately led to the development of the QEP topic and plan.

Evidence of Broad-based University Involvement

In early August, 2008, Dr. Tina Jones, Professor of English and Dean of the Division of Educational Outreach, and Ms. Patricia Pratt, then Director of Institutional Effectiveness, attended the SACSCOC Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation. Information gained from this Institute was used to develop the QEP process at UWA. Since 2008, thirteen members of the UWA faculty and staff representing each academic college (see Table 1) have attended the Institute for the purpose of understanding the role of the QEP and accreditation. Many of these members have played pivotal roles in assisting with the development of the UWA QEP.

Table 1: Faculty/Staff Representation at the SACSCOC Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff Member</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Dr. Tina Jones</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Educational Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Ms. Patricia Pratt</td>
<td>Retired Director</td>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Ms. Angel Jowers</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Dr. Tim Edwards</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>College of Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Dr. Dana Harwell</td>
<td>Director of Assessment for College of Education</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Ms. Valerie Burnes</td>
<td>Assistant Professor/ Director</td>
<td>History &amp; Social Sciences/ Center for the Study of the Black Belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Dr. Venkat Sharma</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>College of Natural Sciences &amp; Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Dr. Mark Davis</td>
<td>Assistant Professor / Chair</td>
<td>Behavioral Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Dr. Denise Knight</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On May 26, 2010, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, in conjunction with the SACS Leadership Team, sent an electronic newsletter to all faculty and staff on campus to bring attention to the QEP and its role in the University of West Alabama’s reaccreditation process. The newsletter included articles that explained the QEP, gave the background on the development of the QEP as part of the reaccreditation process, and explained each person’s role in the development and implementation of the QEP by noting:

“Since it is an institution-wide project, all of us must work together to complete the QEP successfully. We need each person connected to the University to become actively involved in helping to decide the issue or issues on which UWA should focus to enhance student learning and overall quality and effectiveness. Each person should (1) let his or her voice be heard across campus through participation in surveys and polls, (2) attend rallies and QEP activities that will be used to spread the word, and (3) get excited about the opportunity to enhance UWA and the experience students, faculty, and staff enjoy here. Through teamwork, we can make a great institution even better.”

Later that August, Dr. Tina Jones made a presentation about the QEP at the general Faculty/Staff meeting in August. She distributed a handout (see Appendix A) and discussed the general purpose of a Quality Enhancement Plan, the need for broad-based planning in the development of the topic and plan, and the timeline for the upcoming SACS visit. This handout evolved over time and was updated to include links to sample QEP documents (see Appendix B) and UWA’s mission and goals (see Appendix C). This evolving handout was presented to UWA students, alumni, and employees at numerous meetings across campus.
The SACS Leadership Team (see Table 2) was first convened on October 18, 2010. Dr. Tina Jones used this meeting to introduce the members of the team to one another and distribute materials regarding the accreditation process.

Table 2: Faculty/Staff Representation on the SACS Leadership Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>SACS Leadership Team Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tina Jones</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Educational Outreach</td>
<td>SACS Leadership Team - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Valerie Burns</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>History &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>QEP Advisory Committee - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kathy Chandler</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>College of Education/Graduate Studies</td>
<td>Educational Programs - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Denise Knight</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>Graduate Programs Subcommitte - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Carey Moore</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>General Education Subcommittee - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lesa Shaul</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
<td>Undergraduate Programs Subcommitte - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tim Edwards</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>College of Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Faculty - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mitzi Green</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Financial Resources - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Dana Harwell</td>
<td>Director of Assessment/Assistant Professor</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>Online Programs - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Martha Hocutt</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Division of Online Programs</td>
<td>Substantive Change - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. B.J. Kimbrough</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td>College of Education/Graduate Studies</td>
<td>Student Support Services - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Richard Schellhammer</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>History &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>Library Resources - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mark Davis</td>
<td>Assistant Professor/Chair</td>
<td>Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Stephen Slimp</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
<td>Editorial Committee - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Tom Tartt</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Institutional Advancement</td>
<td>Physical Resources - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Rebecca Harvard</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Sponsored Programs</td>
<td>International Programs - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ken Walker</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Community Outreach Services</td>
<td>Governance and Administrative Affairs - Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Angel Jowers</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>Resource Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lisa Rhodes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Planning and Assessment</td>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>Resource Member/Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Susan Sparkman</td>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>Registrar’s Office</td>
<td>Resource Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Vicki Spruiell</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Resource Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. TyAnne Stone</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Alumni Affairs</td>
<td>Resource Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the initial meeting with the SACS Leadership Team, Dr. Tina Jones attended numerous meetings on campus to share the necessary steps of the accreditation process and QEP development with members of the Deans’ Council, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, Staff Senate, UWA Alumni, UWA Board of Trustees, and President’s Council. Dr. David Taylor, Provost, also shared the QEP process with the Board of Trustees, the full Board, and the Faculty Senate. The SACS Leadership team held standing meetings on the first Wednesday of each month. Subcommittee meetings were held on various dates between these meetings, and committee reports were due the Friday before each leadership team meeting.

Prior to the next SACS Leadership Team meeting in January 2011, all team members received an email from Dr. Tina Jones, reiterating to them the importance of developing a strong QEP for UWA. In her email, Dr. Jones noted:

“I want to remind each of you that although you have a role on the SACS Leadership Team, we all need to be involved in the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as part of our reaccreditation process. The first step in this process is simply to ask how we can improve student learning on our campus. As you ponder this question, think about how many times you have said to yourself, I think my students could succeed more if only they could ________? Or, you have thought, I really wish our students learned how to ______________ during their degree program? Our student workers need to be able to ______________ in our office? I truly want to hear your responses to these questions.”

Through the efforts of Dr. Jones and others, the QEP has taken center stage in all of the SACS Leadership Team planning meetings and has been discussed at each monthly meeting.
Dr. Jones began to include the UWA students in the QEP development in February 2011. She spoke to the Student Government Association at the February meeting and then sent an email to the UWA student body via the SGA. An email to all UWA Faculty/Staff also requested QEP topic ideas. As a result of this activity, student learning needs were discussed and QEP topics were suggested by members of the Deans’ Council, President’s Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, UWA Alumni, UWA Board of Trustees, UWA Faculty/Staff, and members of the UWA student body at each of these meetings. These topics were compiled and presented to the QEP Advisory Committee.

The QEP Advisory Committee, tasked with assisting with the development of a faculty/staff survey and narrowing/focusing the QEP topic (see Table 3), convened on Friday, March 18, 2011 (see Appendix D). At that meeting, the committee was tasked with developing a list of ten topics that they thought the final QEP topic should address. These ten topics were writing, critical thinking, service learning, communication, reading, study skills, student development, cultural awareness, engaged citizenship, and study abroad programs. The committee also nominated two student members and one community member to serve on the committee. The group was given the task of developing ideas to promote the QEP to the campus community. Finally, they were asked to submit at least two questions to be included in a QEP survey.
Table 3: Faculty/Staff Representation on the QEP Advisory Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Advisory Committee</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Valerie Burnes, Chair</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>History/Center for the Study of the Black Belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ketia Shumaker</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Biological &amp; Environmental Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Heather McDonald</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amy Jones, Secretary</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Adam Wear</td>
<td>Online Support Technician</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Zach Riley</td>
<td>Student Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Dondraius Mayhew</td>
<td>Student Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Judy Massey</td>
<td>Community Representative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Betsy Compton</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the committee chair, Dr. Valerie Burnes, attended the SACS meeting in Tampa, Florida, in July 2011, the QEP Advisory Committee decided that the question format of the questionnaire was not the best approach. The committee then decided to look at the list of the ten topics they had developed. In June 2011, the committee was asked to rank the ten topics. In preparation for the development of the QEP website, the QEP Advisory Committee developed the theme “The QEP We Will Be” to potentially use as a website title, which was eventually replaced when a clear topic emerged. Finally, the committee was asked to look at several QEP websites to make suggestions about what they did and did not like about the websites.

**Employee Survey used to Develop QEP Topic**

At the August 13, 2011, campus-wide faculty/staff meeting, the group was asked to complete a survey compiled and distributed by the QEP advisory committee, the chair of the SACS Leadership Team, and the Provost (see Appendix E). The responses from the survey (see Appendix F) were used to further narrow the topic of the QEP. The responses were very informative and included feedback regarding the ten topics previously discussed. The QEP Advisory Committee determined that the topics suggested most frequently from the faculty/staff survey fit into five categories.
1. Writing across multiple platforms and for different audiences
2. Presenting a professional image
3. Media literacy
4. Service learning requirement
5. Globalization and cultural exchange/literacy

From these categories, the committee then created a QEP White Paper Stipends and Research Grants Application, which was approved by the Provost, to allow faculty and professional staff members the opportunity to advocate for a QEP topic that would fit into one or more of the five categories (see Appendix G).

**QEP White Paper Proposals**

On October 6, 2011, Provost David Taylor sent a campus-wide email to let all faculty and professional staff know that they were invited to submit a one- to two-page proposal for a QEP, drawn from one or more of the short list topics. He continued by noting:

“Up to five of these proposals will be chosen for further development into eight- to ten-page white papers, and the authors of the white papers will each receive a $500 stipend. One of the white papers will then be chosen for development into UWA’s QEP. The deadline for the short proposals is October 28, 2011.”

The University sought proposals to develop white papers that use the latest research to guide the QEP Advisory Committee toward final topic selection. Members of the UWA faculty/staff were invited to submit a QEP proposal to the QEP White Paper Committee (see Table 4). The QEP Advisory Committee stressed that at this step, individuals interested in submitting a written proposal would not necessarily be making a commitment to write UWA’s final QEP document.
Table 4: Faculty/Staff Representation on the QEP White Paper Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP White Paper Committee</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Valerie Burnes</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>History &amp; Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Center for the Study of the Black Belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ketia Shumaker</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Biological &amp; Environmental Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Heather McDonald</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amy Jones</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Adam Wear</td>
<td>Online Support Technician</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Dondraius Mayhew</td>
<td>Student Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Judy Massey</td>
<td>Community Representative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tina Jones</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. David Taylor</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Division of Educational Outreach</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The QEP white paper proposal was a one- to-two page summary of the QEP White Paper the author wished to promote. In the summary, the author was to include the significance of the topic to student learning, its relevance to UWA students in particular, and a brief review of how the topic might be addressed on the UWA campus. The proposed QEP topic had to follow SACS guidelines and be tied to UWA’s mission. In particular, according to the UWA mission statement, “Importance is placed on providing opportunities within the curricula for the development of enhanced skills in critical thinking, communication, leadership, and computer literacy.”

Any full-time faculty or staff member at the University of West Alabama was eligible to write a QEP proposal on one of the designated categories. In all, six proposals were received, written in part by a total of ten members of the UWA Faculty/Staff (See Table 5). Three out four of the University’s colleges were represented in the group.
Table 5: Faculty/Staff Members involved in Writing QEP Proposals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Proposal Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Aliquippa Allen</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Janie Gregg</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Russ Henley</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Mary Pagliero</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amy Jones</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mark Davis</td>
<td>Assistant Professor and Chair</td>
<td>Behavioral Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Jan Miller</td>
<td>Assistant Professor and Chair</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lee Thomas</td>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>Online Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Janice Greenwood</td>
<td>Service Learning Coordinator</td>
<td>Division of Educational Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Denise Knight</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the five categories provided, the following excerpts represent the six QEP white paper proposals that were received.

1: Travel Abroad

Ms. Aliquippa Allen, Assistant Professor of Business Administration
Dr. Janie Gregg, Associate Professor of Business Administration
Dr. Russ Henley, Associate Professor of Marketing
Ms. Mary Pagliero, Associate Professor of Languages and Literature

The purpose of this plan is to promote the development of cultural exchange between UWA faculty, staff and students with other universities abroad to provide a greater understanding and appreciation of the world around us.
“…Development of culturally aware students in our diverse global society is paramount in enriching lives and reflects a primary purpose of UWA’s mission.”

2: E-Writing for the Interactive Audience

Dr. Amy Jones, Assistant Professor of Journalism and speech

A quality enhancement plan that involves e-writing for an actual and interactive audience would be an effective way to engage students in the writing process and improve student writing. It would explore how to write across multiple
platforms, target messages for different audiences, and present a professional image. This plan could be implemented on the UWA campus across multiple subjects, but would certainly be an effective addition to introductory writing courses (Such as EH101 or EH102).

3: Project ‘Tiger Ink...’
   Dr. Denise Knight, Assistant Professor of Instructional Leadership

Project “Tiger Ink” is a proposal designed to improve the writing skills of faculty and students at the University of West Alabama (UWA). UWA’s mission, in part, seeks to provide opportunities within the curricula for the development of enhanced skills in critical thinking, communication, leadership, and computer literacy. Therefore, UWA must augment the writing skills of its instructors and students, and it must provide support which ensure the continuous development of writing achievement.

4: UWA Tiger PAWS – Program Assisted Writing Skills
   Dr. Mark Davis, Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences

The central component to the Tiger PAWS QEP proposal is a single course in each major that emphasizes improvement in discipline specific research, writing, and presentation. Its primary function should be to take the skills learned in EH 101/102 (in-house or transfer credit) and build an understanding of what is expected when researching, writing, and communicating within a specific field or major.

5: A University-wide Graduate-level Writing Initiative
   Dr. Jan Miller, Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Instructional Leadership
   Dr. Lee Thomas, Adjunct for Division of Online Programs

The authors propose a two-fold initiative to address the issues surrounding
graduate student writing abilities at U.W.A. First, a research investigation, beyond anecdotal data, should be conducted into the graduate-level writing abilities of UWA graduate students using both valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative research measures. Secondly, the authors propose to use these data to develop strategic and targeted initiatives to address the deficiencies revealed by the data.

**6: Service Learning**

Ms. Janice Greenwood, Service Learning Coordinator/VISTA Volunteer for the Division of Educational Outreach

College students who participate in civic engagement learning activities not only earn higher grade point averages but also have higher retention rates and are more likely to complete their college degree. They also demonstrate improved academic content knowledge, critical thinking skills, written and verbal communication, and leadership skills. Moreover, these students show increased interest in becoming personally and professionally involved in future community enhancement projects. This QEP proposal suggests that an emphasis on service learning should be considered as the QEP topic to enhance the experience of students at UWA.

After reviewing the submissions, a common pattern surfaced. Clearly from the abstracts, a QEP that focused on communication and writing had begun to emerge. As a result, the Provost met with the QEP Advisory Committee/White Paper Committee and suggested that the faculty and staff who had written the original QEP proposals meet to see if instead of working on separate white papers, they could join together to construct a common document. An agreement to this plan was made, and a representative for each of the writing-focused proposals committed to serving on the QEP Development Committee. The committee selected Dr. Amy Jones, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Speech, as chair. Just as they would have been compensated for white papers, members of this committee received stipends for their work in developing the QEP.
Table 6: Representation on the QEP Development Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Proposal Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amy Jones, Chair</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Journalism and Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Aliquippa Allen</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Nicholas Davis</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tim Edwards</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>College of Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. John McCall</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Jan Miller</td>
<td>Assistant Professor and Chair</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hannah Riley</td>
<td>Student Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tina Jones</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Educational Outreach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the lengthy process of selecting a QEP topic, a QEP Development Committee was tasked with developing and writing a QEP that focused on effective and appropriate communication using traditional communication concepts (persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion), media literacy, multiple media modes, and interactive audiences. This section highlights the tasks given and decisions made by the QEP Development Committee, the *iCommunicate* plan, the strategies planned to implement the QEP to the UWA campus, and the process used to select the QEP Director.

**QEP Development**

The QEP Development Committee met for the first time on February 22, 2012, to discuss the overall QEP writing timeline and the QEP topic. The committee’s goal was to complete a rough draft of the QEP by May 11, 2012. The committee’s discussion of the topic was centered around an email from Dr. David Taylor, Provost, which summarized key elements of the QEP proposals and outlined key terms that would become core elements of the plan.

“As in the past, it is imperative that students today be able to define a specific audience (whether it be professor, peer, parent, etc.) as well as audience image (those characteristics of the intended audience that may impact the communication) in order to adopt the appropriate persona and tone and style (colloquial, formal, informal, etc.) for the occasion. Unlike in the past, though, technology today has provided students with a wider range of styles (email, text, Twitter, etc.) and has added the deliciously complex element of interactive written communication at a distance. At no other time have the connections between writer (sender) and audience (receiver) been blurred more and filtered less. Those of you who have cringed at the email from a student written in “text style” (will u have office hrs today?) will understand the need to teach our students that while no language is inherently wrong or bad, effective communication requires the appropriate persona, tone and style for the given audience and occasion.”
QEP Key Terms

To address the societal and UWA campus issues previously identified, the following traditional terms used to teach and critique rhetoric and public speaking will serve as the backbone of the QEP. These terms apply to the development and critique of all types of messages.

**Persona:** Derived from the Latin word “mask” and represents the “public self,” or the voice of the sender of the message. Individuals have a different persona for every role they play in society (i.e. student, son/daughter, church member, employee, friend).

**Audience:** The intended receiver of the message. To effectively analyze an audience, the sender of the message should discover as much about the audience as possible to improve communication with them and predict their probable response to the message. Elements of audience include demographics and psychographics.

**Tone:** The “attitude,” “color,” “spirit,” or “accent” within the message, directed toward the audience and/or toward the subject; when directed toward the audience and/or the subject, tone can be quite different. Tone can reveal attitudes, beliefs, wishes, and feelings of the sender of the message. Both the author and the author’s persona can have a tone, such as informal, formal, intimate, solemn, somber, playful, serious, ironic, genial, objective, condescending, and other types of attitudes.

**Style:** The choices made by the sender of the message in the explicit meaning of words, the richness of the words chosen, the association of the words together, and the repetition and variation of selected words. Style includes a number of qualities, such as diction, sentence structure and variety, imagery, rhythm, repetition, coherence, emphasis, and arrangement of ideas. Styles vary and can include slang, colloquial, informal, formal, and even text-speak.
Occasion: Fitting a communication message to the appropriate persona, audience, and time and place of the event. Specific occasions can call for a specific style and tone. For example, the style and tone used for a victory speech would be quite different from those of a eulogy.

Media Literacy: The use of critical-thinking skills such as description, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and engagement to identify preceding items in order to judge a message. A person who is media literate is capable of being engaged as a citizen and more perceptive as a consumer of media messages.

Interactive Audience: A two-way system of communication between two or more individuals, often in a conversational way, to provide feedback, updated information, and/or commands in reference to a spoken or written message.

Multiple Media Modes: The use of two or more mediums, or modes of communication, to share or analyze a message. Examples of various media modes include essays, letters, microblogs, blogs, lyrics, spoken word, newspaper articles, journal articles, etc.

Integrating *iCommunicate* ideas into UWA Courses

After agreeing on key terms, committee members were asked to meet with their colleagues in their representative colleges and prepare sample activities that might be used as part of the QEP and present that plan at the next meeting, scheduled for March 7. At that meeting, the following activities and courses were discussed:

- Multiple learning activities in SH100 (Principles of Public Speaking) with a focus on elements of persona, audience, tone, style, presentational skills, media literacy, and occasion.
- Multiple learning activities in PY100 (General Psychology) with a focus on PATS and media literacy using journal articles and online writing activities.
- A semester-long writing-based learning activity in BY101 (Introduction to Biology) using blogs to encourage student participation about course material and personal interests in Biology and a single media critique of an existing journal article.
- In English Composition (EH101) involve multiple writing-intensive learning activities that combine the elements of PATS and media literacy using multiple media modes.

After discussing the activities and courses, the committee voted unanimously to select one section of EH101 and one section of BY101 as the courses that would serve as pilots for first two years of the UWA implementation plan. The committee also made suggestions for QEP budget items. The QEP Development Committee met on three additional dates, March 22, April 18, and May 1, 2012 as portions of the QEP were developed by individual committee members and circulated to colleagues and edited by the committee chair, Dr. Amy Jones. In these meetings, the committee developed the benefits, goals, and student learning outcomes of the plan. Furthermore, the five-year plan was developed, and the committee made suggestions for the elements that must be included in every course section involved in the QEP implementation at UWA. Eventually, five elements were selected.

Each course section involved in the QEP must include all of the following elements:

1. One or more PATS-based writing assignments
2. One or more PATS-based critique assignments of an existing message
3. One or more class lectures about PATS, media literacy, presentational skills, occasion, and the elements of writing within a given academic area
4. The use of two or more different modes of communication (texting, email, letter, blog, Facebook post, twitter feed, essay, etc.)
5. The use of an interactive audience, consisting of one or more individuals.

Finally, Dr. Amy Jones made a presentation on the QEP to the UWA Faculty Senate on April 17, 2012, to solicit suggestions, questions, and concerns regarding the QEP. The Faculty Senate consists of at least one faculty representative from every academic department. During the presentation, Dr. Jones presented the implementation plan recommended by the QEP Development Committee. From this presentation, potential courses were identified as possible sites for QEP implementation. The Faculty Senate agreed that EH101 and BY101 would serve as ideal courses for QEP implementation, and also suggested additional courses. These included BA320 (Business Communications), ED405 (Technology and Education), ED505 (Technology and Education), and NS101 (Introduction to Nursing). After reviewing the courses suggested, the QEP Development Committee mapped a potential implementation plan that included a staggered timeline. The first courses to be explored were BY101 and EH101. These were selected primarily because of the number of students enrolled, along with the regularity of course offerings in the school calendar.

**Naming the UWA QEP**

UWA’s QEP and the ideas it represented had begun to take shape, but the QEP Development Committee realized the need for a title that represented the ideals of the subject while simultaneously catching the attention of students. Collaboration with members of the UWA faculty, staff, and students resulted in several proposed titles for the UWA QEP. Members of the QEP Development Committee carefully weighed the symbolism, appeal, and significance of the titles proposed. Titles like “Message Me,” “ruConnected,” and “Spread the Word” were all considered. In a lengthy discussion with the student members on the committee, it was decided that *iCommunicate* would most likely appeal to the UWA student body. However, the committee discovered that *iCommunicate* was the official title of an app used to assist autistic children. Therefore,
Dr. Amy Jones contacted the creators of the “iCommunicate” app and received written permission by the owners to use the name as the official title for the UWA QEP.

The symbolism behind the iCommunicate title is multi-layered. The lower-case “i” is meant to remind students that considering the audience is more important in effective and appropriate communication, than the “I” or oneself. Next, the UWA QEP is not focused solely on writing, but on effective communication using any media mode or channel as well. Therefore, the word “communicate” is used to encompass all forms and modes of communication. By having participated in QEP course sections, brown-bag lectures, and other campus activities, UWA students will know how to communicate more effectively and appropriately. The title is designed to show confidence in one’s ability to communicate.

The committee was then assigned the task of developing a memorable and recognizable logo for the QEP. The blue marks above the second “i” in the logo are used to symbolize a strong connection because effective and appropriate communication between a sender and a receiver involves a strong connection. Also, an existing UWA mark was incorporated at the bottom of the logo to remind students that the iCommunicate plan is related to the mission of the University. The current logo for the iCommunicate QEP was then approved.
**iCommunicate Principles**

The *iCommunicate* QEP was designed using the principle that no language is inherently bad; rather an appropriate persona, tone, and style must be used for a specific audience, occasion, and media mode in order for communication to be effective. The elements to be included in every QEP course section include a lecture on persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion, a PATS-based media literacy assignment, a PATS-based writing assignment, and an interactive audience element. The simplicity and flexibility of these elements enable the *iCommunicate* plan to apply to courses at multiple levels and in multiple academic disciplines.

*iCommunicate* will involve two freshman-level courses (EH101 and BY101) during the first two years of implementation. Years three through five will introduce the *iCommunicate* principles to every UWA College/Division, including an additional freshman-level nursing course (NS101), a junior-level business course (BA320), and a senior-level (ED405) and graduate-level (ED505) education course. This process will provide opportunities across academic disciplines to expose students to the idea that effective and appropriate communication is essential to success in their professional and personal lives.

Ideally, the *iCommunicate* plan will help students to apply the concepts of persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion to any message, using any media mode. UWA students will also gain media literacy skills as they become more effective at critiquing media messages, which will enable them to be more responsible citizens. Most importantly, the *iCommunicate* plan will help students produce and identify appropriate and effective communication messages across multiple media modes.
Introducing Campus to the *iCommunicate* QEP

As previously demonstrated, the involvement of UWA faculty and staff in selecting a QEP topic and developing the QEP has been broad-based. However, a University-wide introduction of *iCommunicate* is needed to educate UWA faculty, staff, and students about the upcoming five-year plan to enhance student learning. To achieve this goal, UWA plans to provide the financial and technological support necessary to properly promote, publicize, and share important information regarding the QEP using multiple media modes, including the following:

- **UWA social media sites**: The University of West Alabama currently maintains 19 Facebook pages to sustain social media connections with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

- **E-mail**: UWA will regularly communicate to the necessary groups via email about upcoming *iCommunicate* special events and promotions.

- **YouTube**: The UWA television studio, Studio 96, will involve students in preparing informative clips and podcasts to promote the QEP. These videos will be shared on the UWA web-page, social media sites, campus e-mails, and campus YouTube accounts.

- **Website**: The UWA webpage will link to the QEP website to provide an informative tool for individuals inquiring about the QEP.

- **Television and Radio**: The UWA commercials will be used as a tool to share stories of student success following participation in the *iCommunicate* plan.

UWA announced the *iCommunicate* plan in detail to the faculty and staff at the General Faculty/Staff Meeting in August 2012. At this time, a two-page QEP abstract was distributed in the faculty and staff handouts (See Appendix H). This General Meeting will be used as an annual means to announce updates regarding the QEP to all faculty/staff using face-to-face communication.
An additional one-time-only staff event will be held during the second pilot year to educate faculty and staff about the elements involved in the QEP, the importance of the QEP to student success, and the importance of QEP participation by employees. Furthermore, faculty and staff will have the opportunity to participate in bi-annual professional development opportunities related to effective communication, multiple media modes, and media literacy. Through programs such as the University Research Grants, the Teaching Excellence Grants, and the Service Learning Grants, faculty exploration of QEP-related concepts will be encouraged. Individual grant awards range up to $1500 and are awarded during the Fall Semester.

Educational opportunities will also be available to students, including those not enrolled in QEP implementation courses. UWA will host bi-annual *iCommunicate* brown-bag-lectures with professionals and experts in the areas of communication, media literacy, interactive audiences, and PATS. Furthermore, students will be invited to attend an annual educational function that will provide updated information about the QEP. UWA will distribute prizes and other QEP-branded materials to student participants.

Finally, UWA will inform parents, alumni, and the surrounding communities about the updates and successes of the QEP throughout the five-year process. Established meetings, such as alumni meetings, student orientations, and banquets, will serve as opportune times to promote and publicize the QEP to these cohorts.
Literature Review and Best Practices

The *iCommunicate* QEP was developed to enhance the communication skills of UWA students. UWA hopes that exposure to this plan will encourage them to use a more effective and appropriate persona, tone, and style for a given audience and occasion, train them to adapt their manner, dress, and decorum for the appropriate occasion, teach them to translate these effective communication strategies across a variety of media modes, encourage them to write for and serve as an interactive audience, and teach them to be media literate - to be savvy consumers of existing messages. The following review of the literature will demonstrate the benefits of each core value on student learning, personal growth, and professional communication. Furthermore, the literature indicates that the skills gained from the proposed QEP are applicable to the professional world.

**Reflection on a Societal-Level**

Within the last decade alone, changes in technology have influenced the way society communicates. High-speed Internet, smart phones, Twitter, Facebook, texting, email, blogs, Skype, and interactive websites have all introduced new elements to effective and appropriate communication (“Digital Nation”). Texting is now the most popular mode of communication among people under the age of 25 (Harley, Winn, Pimberton, and Wilcox 239; “LMK, IDK”); the average teenager sends 2900 texts per month (Miners). Furthermore, anyone in society with a smart phone or Internet connection is capable of communicating to a mass audience at very little cost (“Digital Nation”). These changes have not only influenced how people write, but also how information is consumed. Young people over the age of eight spend an average of fifty hours per week using some form of media (Kinzer 59). The rapid advances in technology and the media have revolutionized the way individuals in society write, communicate, receive information, and learn.

Text-speak (writing for text or social media site) and time spent with Internet-related mediums have introduced challenges to the traditional education system. A negative
relationship exists between the time spent using social media in college and student grade point averages (Jacobsen and Forste 277). Writing styles among young people have become less formal, and brevity is the expected norm when writing via new media platforms. Therefore, some believe today’s young people will lack the patience to fully digest information (Anderson and Rainie). Even students themselves admit that they believe text-speak has harmed their use of standard English (Drouin and Davis 65).

The problem on a societal level is that new modes of communication have so rapidly changed the communication process that the use of standard English and appropriate communications has been harmed. Students often do not know how to use traditional concepts in rhetoric (such as persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion) in order to communicate effectively and appropriately. This has negatively impacted writing, speaking, reading, and critical thinking skills.

**Reflection on the UWA Campus**

Several times during the QEP development process, concerns were introduced about student communication. During the General Faculty/Staff Meeting in August, UWA faculty and staff members were asked to complete a survey identifying topics that, if focused on, would enhance student learning and success. The comments received repeatedly mentioned communication skills, teaching writing across multiple media platforms, exploring professional communication, and critical thinking skills in analyzing existing messages. The following suggested QEP topics are just a sampling of those submitted by UWA faculty and staff.

The QEP at UWA should focus on improving student learning in the area of…

-“writing skills.”
-“awareness of audience and occasion, and appropriate tone and style.”
-“professionalism in communication.”
-“written communication and critical thinking skills.”
-“effective communication across a variety of platforms.”
These specific comments were repeatedly mentioned in the faculty and staff survey as issues faced by UWA students, both personally and professionally. In other words, faculty and staff members recognize that advances in communication have had a negative impact on UWA students in the areas of writing, reading, public speaking, critical thinking, and professionalism. The core values of *iCommunicate* were eventually identified from this information and other proposals requested from faculty. The *iCommunicate* core values include communication and presentational skills, writing across multiple media platforms, critical thinking and analysis of existing messages, and a focus on persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion. Each element has been identified as a key component in teaching communication and has also been identified as a clear need on the University and societal levels for student enhancement. Without all of the components illustrated in Figure 1, communication is likely to be ineffective.

Figure 1: Effective Communications Model
Traditional Concepts of Communication as a Core Value

The time-proven pedagogical communication concepts of persona, audience, tone, style, (PATS) and occasion are not limited to literature, writing, and speech classrooms; these concepts can be taught in multiple disciplines to enhance student learning (Colombo and Colombo 61; Gabriele A1). After all, individuals in society who spend time using Facebook, Twitter, blogs, websites, e-mail, books, and other forms of traditional and digital-age communication modes essentially engage in an analysis and creation of personae on a daily basis. These concepts have been transferred to the classroom to teach PATS and occasion in the digital age.

Classroom activities have encouraged students to “create” online personae (either of themselves or others) as a means of teaching persona and audience (Doerr-Stevens, Beach, and Boeser 37; Luce-Kappler, Sumara, and Iftody 539; Shaffer 115; Smith, Smith, and Bobbitt 25). College students have been taught to effectively analyze persona, audience, and tone through a rhetorical analysis of recorded music (Dechert 57). Twitter has been used as an effective means of teaching the concept of audience, as users must imagine a target audience and use that audience to guide their tweets (Marwick and Boyd 131). Assignments that focus on specific real-life audiences in college writing courses improved student writing by having students focus on using the appropriate PATS and occasion for the assignment (McMillan and Huerta 243).

Finally, analyzing or writing messages for multiple modes of communication (text, social media, email, letter, etc) can be an effective means of teaching students about formal and informal styles (Tomita 14). Specifically, there are occasions and audiences where standard written English is more appropriate and effective than text-speak and vice versa. Students must learn to analyze every communication event using these concepts. Williams summarizes it when he argues that students must especially learn how to translate these traditional concepts in order to effectively communicate in a world with multiple media literacies. Essentially, educating students in these traditional concepts will help them navigate any mode of communication to produce and critique appropriate and effective messages.
Multiple Media Modes as a Core Value

While there are numerous educational challenges introduced by new forms of media and technology, there are just as many (if not more) advantages to embracing multiple media modes as a core value in a university quality enhancement plan. Since advances in technology will most certainly continue in the future, UWA students and graduates will need to be able to adapt communication to any media mode in order to be effective communicators, personally and professionally. This section will explore the advantages to teaching students about multiple media modes and how these modes can be used to enhance student learning and communication.

A vast body of literature exists to suggest that multiple media modes can be used in the classroom to enhance student learning. Allison Sawmiller points out that technology is changing effective education as well. She argues that using multiple media modes in the classroom improves student learning (47). Numerous researchers from a variety of education fields agree. Multiple media modes have been used in the classroom to more effectively teach literacy and writing (Burn 58). Other researchers suggest that a focus on communication can enhance student learning in many academic areas, including science, business, literature, and mathematics, to name a few. By using a variety of media modes, students benefited by gaining active participation in class lectures, increased interest in course material from collaboration and reflection, and a more hands-on approach to learning. Furthermore, the variety of media modes used ranged from traditional literature and journal articles to digital micro-blogs and podcasts (Colombo and Colombo 62; Gabriele A1; MacBride 181; and Perschbach 76).

New forms of communication have increased students’ expectations for interaction. They eagerly anticipate a “like” or comment on a Facebook status or interactive feedback from a tweet; anticipated interactions encourage the student to consider audience when creating a message (Burn 125; Jabr 100; Kinzer 59). New media have altered expectations for immediacy and interactive communication; therefore, the concept of audience is more important now than ever before (Al-Obaidi, Lamb-Williams, and Mordas 254). The use of traditional media modes in the classroom can be just as
effective in enhancing student learning. Television, film, music lyrics, poetry, fiction, and other traditional media modes have been used to improve student knowledge about persona, audience, tone, and style (Bird 37; Taylor 58). The importance of these elements on interpreting exiting messages and creating effective messages is immense.

Regardless of the type of technology used or the media mode used as the channel of a message, the tried and true communication strategies of PATS and occasion still apply to communicating effectively. For example, students can create a “personal voice” and develop a persona via writing Facebook posts or poetry. Similarly, writing for an audience is just as important when drafting a journal article as it is when writing a blog. In both of these instances, the student is serving as a sender of a message to an interactive and existing audience; therefore the traditional strategies of effective communication need consideration. Using multiple media modes in the classroom has shown to be an effective means of demonstrating these concepts to students and their application to all forms of communication.

**Media Literacy as a Core Value**

Educating students about PATS is not only important for the purpose of writing and creating messages; it is also vital to learning how to critique media messages. Teachers can help students construct meaning from media messages by teaching them to be more literate about and critical of the messages (Considine, Horton, and Moorman 479; Kinzer 59) – From whom is the message coming? For whom is the message written? What is the purpose of the message?

Baker reminds us that media literacy encourages individuals to think critically about all media messages. Media literacy requires active examination, develops responsible and engaged participants in society, and encourages individuals to critique and interpret media messages. These changes in the media have enabled individuals to educate themselves about a variety of subjects (10). Bubela and colleagues show concern for how media consumers trust what they are learning online. They argue that students must learn how to critique and analyze multiple media messages (516) in order to be
able to critique these messages for themselves. Luce-Kappler and colleagues refer to critiquing communication using digital and social media as “new literacy” (539). These digital media outlets allow everyone to work as an investigative journalist, to some degree. Therefore, media literacy is very important in learning to critique media messages (“Digital Nation”). Teachers have used music lyrics, television commercials, and billboards to effectively teach media literacy by encouraging students to identify the intended target audience and reason for the message (Hobbs 106). This research indicates that regardless of the media outlet used, individuals must learn to skillfully interpret media messages to gain media literacy.

Learning to critique media messages is important in teaching students to be responsible citizens. Students must know how to think for themselves and analyze the vast amount of information presented to them via multiple media modes. Katie Gibson and Amy Heyse use Sarah Palin’s speech at the 2008 Republican National Convention as a means of teaching persona and media literacy to students (254). They argue that Palin juggled the personae of “hockey mom” and “pit bull” in an attempt to show a feminine and masculine side. Students who are media literate and educated in the areas of PATS and occasion would be able to analyze the same message, with political opinions aside, to come to their own conclusions.

Interactive Audience as a Core Value

In addition to students’ learning to think for themselves, it is also important to engage students in the classroom with interactive collaboration. Digital technologies, such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, have introduced an expectation for an interactive audience with communication (Hodkinson 648). Because of the Internet, interactive communication is a valuable part of daily life for many. Interactive web communication enables learners and colleagues to bounce ideas off of one another to enhance education (Butler 550). It is essentially easier to teach students about reaching the right audience with the right message when they have experience writing for an interactive audience (Zailskaitė-Jakste, and Kuvykaite 854). Specifically, teaching students to write for a real audience teaches them to become better writers and communicators and
enables them to critique writing more easily (Diogenes, Roen, and Moneyhun 68; “LMK, IDK”). Furthermore, students who write for an interactive audience produce higher quality writing – they conduct more research for their writing, take ownership of their writing, and tend to write more frequently (Warschauer, Arada, and Zheng 222).

Numerous examples exist to suggest that using interactive audiences in the classroom enhances student learning. Research involving interactive projects for an English curriculum shows that students who had a greater understanding of PATS became better writers and were more literate of media messages (Curwood and Cowell 118). A similar project used classroom blogs to teach students about PATS. Their work was published immediately and was available for feedback from a real audience (Sawmiller 46). A business professor used Facebook to teach students about authorship and social media skills in business communication (Decarie 450). Another study found that students who were able to share course work with an interactive audience became more engaged learners and better writers (Franklin 82). Furthermore, interactive audience activities in the classroom have been found to increase student participation in college courses (Uhari, Renko, and Soini 22).

Because of changes in technology, the addition of new media modes, and the frequency of interactive communication online, many of today’s students are writing more online than in the classroom. To better educate them as responsible citizens, future professionals, critical readers, and effective communicators, it is vital that UWA students learn about PATS, media literacy, and communicating via multiple media modes.

**Application to the Real-World**

Teaching students to communicate effectively and appropriately across multi-media platforms will better prepare them for their professional lives. Research suggests that college graduates are typically deficient in their business writing skills, skills that are required for employment (Betts and McCarthy 4). These business writing skills are no longer limited to the traditional letter, but extend to multiple forms of digital
communication. Therefore, researchers argue that universities must embrace these communication technologies to better meet the needs of future generations as they enter the work force (Manlow, Friedman, and Friedman 62). Businesses and organizations expect young graduates to know how to communicate effectively using multiple media modes, especially social media (Wankel 60).

Businesses and organizations are already using these technologies. Electronic and social media are used to build business relationships (Benson, Fillippaios, and Morgan 31). Professional scientists use blogs and journals to communicate and collaborate with one another (Butler 547). Furthermore, science blogs, rather than more traditional scientific journals, are a more effective means of communicating with a general audience about recent scientific contributions (Wilkins 411). Businesses have to regularly monitor multiple media outlets because they no longer have sole control over the creation of their brand persona; customers are capable of sharing their experiences with companies online in chat rooms and discussion boards (Herskovits and Malcolm 26). Therefore, businesses have had to take on a new persona in order to effectively communicate with the public (Ihator 202). Critical readers are also valuable in analyzing media messages and helping businesses identify and follow changes in the industry. Clearly, a better understanding of PATS and media literacy is essential to success in multiple disciplines.

**Summary**

The QEP development committee has considered these best practices and core values as discussed in the literature and demonstrated at a number of university campuses world-wide while developing and planning the communication-based quality enhancement plan at the University of West Alabama. Most importantly, these core values and best practices have been examined to identify the most effective means of enhancing student learning at UWA (See Figure 2). Thus, the actions to be implemented include elements from each core value. These best practices and core values have been used to design the *iCommunicate* approach to improving effective
and appropriate student communication at the University and the specific plan of action, as outlined in the following chapter.

Figure 2: QEP Core Values and Student Learning Outcomes
Implementation Plan

The University of West Alabama (UWA) has developed an Implementation Plan that “includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development of the QEP” (SACSCOC, 2012, p. 8). The strength of UWA’s QEP Implementation Plan is the phasing of the implementation process. *iCommunicate* proposes selecting two courses (one section each of EH101 and BY101) to implement the components of the *iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-Media Platforms* in the pilot phase of implementation. Additional courses (NS101, BA320, ED405, and ED505) and course sections will be added as the five-year implementation plan progresses. Eventually, the implementation plan will involve every college/division in UWA’s QEP by integrating student learning outcomes through various assignments and assessments. To support the successful implementation of *iCommunicate* and the integration of effective communication strategies across multi-media platforms into a variety of academic programs, the University of West Alabama will provide:

- A two-year pilot project to test and refine the framework and assessment process
- An organizational structure that includes sufficient leadership and financial resources to ensure faculty and student success
- Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- Support for faculty to implement related projects and assignments into the curriculum in a manner that is discipline-appropriate and will be sustainable through time
- An assessment system that is transparent and beneficial for the academic programs in their process for continuous program improvement.
The Problem to Address

Digital technology is changing the way individuals in society communicate with one another. Text-speak, microblogging, e-mail, and other digital technologies have had an impact on writing styles, the use of standard English, reading skills, and presentational skills. Digital communication methods have also led to an increased desire for feedback from an interactive audience, such as “likes” or audience feedback on a Facebook post (Sutter, 2010). This digital culture is reality to traditional college students, making appropriate and effective communication strategies difficult to navigate when using multiple media modes.

The frequent use of digital media is negatively influencing student learning in a variety of ways:

1) Many students are lacking the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively communicate across multiple media modes.
2) Student communication, both personally and professionally, frequently lacks consideration of appropriate persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion.
3) Due to the influx of new media modes, media literacy skills are more difficult to apply when consuming media messages critically.
4) Many students are not very familiar with the risks and rewards of multi-media in regards to post-graduation.
5) The problems with student communication are not specific to a particular college or course of instruction.
The UWA *iCommunicate* Solution:

Incorporating *iCommunicate* into the existing academic programs allows academic departments and faculty members to teach effective communication strategies across multi-media platforms and academic disciplines. To better prepare students for post-graduation, both professionally and personally, UWA has elected to implement *iCommunicate*. The strategy is designed to enhance the communication and media literacy skills of UWA students and better prepare them for their chosen professions.

The goal of the QEP is to extend effective communication strategies into a variety of academic programs, across academic disciplines. Courses selected for the inclusion of the *iCommunicate* strategies will cover the entire University. By the third year, at least one course from each college or division will have a course implemented in the QEP plan. These courses represent the College of Liberal Arts, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, College of Business, College of Education, Division of Nursing, and School of Graduate Studies (see Table 7). The five-year, phased-in approach will allow time and opportunities to amend the model with each new implementation year (See Figure 3). The QEP student learning outcomes will be integrated into the academic programs using the following phases:

- Phase I: EH 101 and BY 101 (one section of each) (Pilot Years)
- Phase II: EH 101 and BY 101 (50% of the sections)
- Phase III: EH 101 and BY 101 (all sections), and one section of a single course from the College of Business (COB), BA320-Business Communications; College of Education (COE), ED405-Technology and Education; Division of Nursing, NS101- Introduction to Nursing; and School of Graduate Studies, ED 505*, Technology and Education
- Phase IV: EH 101 and BY 101 (all sections), and 50% of the following sections: BA320, ED405, NS101, and ED505
- Phase V: Every section of a single course from each college (EH101, BY101, BA320, ED405, NS101, and ED505)
*Note: Much of the enrollment in the UWA School of Graduate Studies consists of online students enrolled in graduate programs housed within the College of Education. Therefore, the QEP implementation course for the School of Graduate Studies (ED505 – Technology and Education) will be taught both on-campus and online during phases three through five. Specifically, there will be one section of ED505 on-campus and online during phase 3, half of the sections on-campus and on-line during phase 4, and all sections on-campus and on-line during phase 5.

Figure 3: QEP Implementation Plan within Academic Programs:
Table 7: Implementation Plans across the Colleges/Division:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Business</td>
<td>BA 320</td>
<td>The assessment tools used will vary for each course. Rubrics will be used to measure QEP assignments. Also, a quiz will be used to assess proper knowledge and use of the identified QEP key terms and effective communication strategies particular to the academic field. See appendix J for a sample BY101 quiz and appendix I for a sample EH101 quiz that may be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>ED 405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Liberal Arts</td>
<td>EH 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics</td>
<td>BY 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Nursing</td>
<td>NS 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Studies</td>
<td>ED 505</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selected courses will ensure that students University-wide will be exposed to **effective communication strategies across multi-media platforms** by identifying a variety of courses across all disciplines. Each “QEP Course” will have two or more assignments that directly incorporate the QEP student learning outcomes and will be used for the QEP assessment by faculty members and departments. Furthermore, each course will include one or more lectures about how to translate PATS across multiple media modes, specific to the chosen academic area. All students in these courses (both QEP and traditional sections) will then complete a quiz to specifically measure knowledge of PATS, occasion, media literacy, and elements of effective communication in the particular field of study. On these assessments, ten questions measuring knowledge of PATS, occasion, and media literacy will remain consistent across all QEP courses, while an additional eight to ten questions will assess knowledge of effective communication specific to the particular field (see appendix J for an example of the BY101 assessment, and appendix I for an example of the EH101 assessment). The assessment tools to be used for BA320, ED405, ED505 and NS101 will be designed at a later date, once the effectiveness of the first two phases of **iCommunicate** has been evaluated.
Elements of a QEP Course:

- One or more lectures on persona, audience, tone, style and occasion
- One or more PATS-based writing assignments, appropriate to the academic discipline
- One or more PATS-based critiques of an existing media message, appropriate to the academic discipline.
- The use of two or more media modes throughout the semester
- The use of an interactive audience
- The completion of an *iCommunicate* quiz tailored to the particular course.

Faculty who teach the QEP courses will also be responsible for attending related professional development opportunities, developing QEP-related learning activities, and assessing students' achievement of the student learning outcomes. To make the overall QEP assessment of the student learning outcomes more comparable and consistent, faculty members will be required to include student learning outcome rubrics in their existing grading process.

QEP student learning outcome assessments may overlap pre-existing assessment requirements in order to minimize the need for new assignments and assessments. These may take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, exams/quizzes, laboratory reports, writing assignments, presentations, projects, and/or message critiques. Assessments of *iCommunicate* student learning outcome(s) will be compiled by departments and submitted to the QEP Director and QEP Implementation Team no later than May 31 for the spring semester and December 31 for the fall semester.

**iCommunicate Pilot Program**

Once the proposal was developed, members of the development team were charged with creating a pilot program. Dr. Amy Jones, who had chaired the development team, coordinated the effort and made recommendations for faculty participation in the pilot program. The following faculty members comprised the pilot implementation team, with Dr. Amy Jones serving in the role of Faculty
Facilitator. The *iCommunicate* Pilot Implementation Team met every four to six weeks starting in fall 2012, with each team member directly involved in the test and validation process.

**Table 7: Faculty Representation on the QEP Pilot Implementation Team**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amy Jones, Faculty Facilitator</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tina Jones</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Timothy Edwards</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kendrick Prewitt</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lesa Shaul</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. John McCall</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kevin Morse</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kim Shelton</td>
<td>Adjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Outreach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
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<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
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<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
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<td>Biological Sciences</td>
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<td>Biological Sciences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Languages &amp; Literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *iCommunicate* pilot began in the fall of 2012 and is expected to continue through the spring semester of 2014. The pilot involves one or more sections (depending on class size) of EH101 and BY101 for the fall and spring semesters. Every effort in consistency of the class time and faculty within academic disciplines has been made to minimize the influence of outlier variables. In the fall of 2012, one section of BY101 and two sections of EH101 were used. The BY101 course section was divided in half. One half served as the control group, while the other served as the experimental group. Likewise, one section of EH101 was used as a control group, and one section was used as an experimental group. Students selected for the experimental groups were exposed to course material and lectures about effective communication strategies, while the control group was only exposed to traditional course content. All course sections then completed the following steps:

1. Faculty members teaching QEP experimental course sections were invited to participate in a training session on effective communication
strategies. The training session took place on October 4, 2012, and was led by Drs. Amy Jones and Tina Jones, both of whom teach Principles of Public Speaking and serve as faculty in the Department of Languages and Literature. Participating faculty members were then asked to teach these strategies to students involved in their respective experimental groups.

2: All students (experimental and control) completed an iCommunicate quiz. The quiz grade was used for assessment.

3: All students completed an iCommunicate writing assignment and an iCommunicate critique assignment of an existing message (see Appendices M, N, O, and P for the assignments used in the Fall 2012).

4: Members of the QEP pilot implementation team individually graded the writing and critique assignments using iCommunicate rubrics (see Appendices K and L). The team met on December 18, 2012, to discuss and share scores. For each student, two outlier scores (the highest and lowest) were thrown out. The mean of the remaining scores was used for assessment.

5: Results from the pilot will be compiled each semester. Recommendations for changes and improvement of the iCommunicate QEP will be made in the summer, following analysis of the results from the previous fall and spring semesters. The implementation of these changes will be made in the following fall semester.

Once the UWA QEP is approved and moves out of the pilot stages, the Pilot Implementation Team will eventually become the iCommunicate Implementation Team. The Implementation Team will be led by the QEP Director, who will be selected from existing faculty and will be given course release time. In addition to the QEP
Director, department chairs and at least one faculty member from all represented departments in the QEP in a given semester will serve on the implementation team. Therefore, membership on the implementation team will vary depending on the current phase of the QEP.

Just like the QEP Pilot Implementation Team, the Implementation Team will assist with the development of QEP learning activities and the analysis of QEP assessment results, make suggestions for necessary adjustments to sequential phases of the QEP, communicate with students and faculty throughout the University, and assist the QEP Director in the promotion and publicity of the QEP (see Figure 5).

The *iCommunicate* Implementation Team Responsibilities:

- Design a rubric to evaluate each of the student learning outcomes
- Teach and collect data from the selected courses
- Apply, edit, and validate rubrics (while teaching the courses) that will be used by all faculty in all academic programs to assess the student learning outcomes
- Determine through testing and validation a quantification of success and mastery of the student learning outcomes
- Test and evaluate the process for application and assessment of student learning outcomes while teaching the courses
- Establish a step-by-step process for implementing the assessment process in a course
- Demonstrate the data collection methods to faculty members within the departments assigned to them for mentoring
- Serve as mentors to other faculty as they implement *iCommunicate* in other disciplines
- Support the Faculty Facilitator in designing and offering professional development opportunities for faculty
members

• Continue in an advisory role through membership in the QEP Advisory Committee through the five-year assessment period.

Sustainability of *iCommunicate*

Ultimately, UWA’s *iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-Media Platforms* will impact students enrolled in every college and division throughout the University. To review, research exists to suggest the need for teaching students to apply persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion when writing and analyzing messages. First, the use of multiple media modes in the learning process has been linked to improvements in student writing (Sutherland, et. al. 2004; Sylvester, 2009). Retention of knowledge has also been linked to the use of these pedagogical techniques (Krentler & Willis-Flurry, 2005). They engage students in the learning process and enable them to retain more information for longer periods of time.

Secondly, writing across multiple media modes introduces a purpose and an interactive audience to the writing process. Most of the time, a student’s writing is intended for a one-person audience – the professor. Therefore, students are not concerned about writing across multiple platforms or writing for different audiences. Research indicates that the presence of an interactive audience (either through blogs, a pen-pal program, e-mail, journals, or social media sites) improves student writing (Copeland, 1993; Holum & Gahala, 2001; Lapp, Shea, & Wolsey, 2010/2011). Furthermore, publishing student work traditionally or online has also been linked to a greater understanding of audience (De Moll, 1998).

A quality enhancement plan that involves a variety of multi-media platforms for an actual and interactive audience is an effective way to engage students in the writing process and improve student writing. An additional focus on message analysis also reinforces the necessity of critical thinking skills and media literacy. *iCommunicate* equips
students with the skills necessary to write across multiple media platforms and to critique existing messages across platforms. *iCommunicate* provides opportunities to demonstrate the necessity to target messages for different audiences, to educate students on the process of manipulating persona, tone, and style, and to teach students to present a professional image through communication. The Quality Enhancement Plan can be implemented through several student learning assignments across every academic discipline.

Each QEP course section will include a writing assignment focused on PATS, a critique of an existing message of a PATS-based assignment, an interactive audience element, one or more PATS-based lectures, and the use of two or more media modes. These guidelines allow for freedom within the various academic areas represented within the QEP implementation plan, while also stressing to students the importance of the QEP goals and student learning outcomes. UWA believes that the simplicity and importance of this QEP make the plan sustainable. Examples of PATS-based writing assignments that can be used include a class website that anonymously publishes students’ work, written classroom discussions about course-related content, a Facebook contest for the original poem that receives the most “likes,” and professional written dialog with business professionals via e-mail or letter. The list of possibilities, audiences, and digital outlets is plentiful.

Examples of learning assignments that could be used to critique existing messages are just as plentiful. Students can write a critique of a journal article, blog, or social media site; they can explore how persona, audience, tone, and style are manipulated using various media modes; they can analyze political debates or commercials to identify how PATS changes with each candidate. Ultimately, the decision of how to apply the required QEP assignments will be up to the individual faculty members, with guidance from the QEP Director.

The sustainability of the QEP will obviously involve the efforts of numerous faculty and staff members University-wide. However, specific planned efforts in addition to the
implementation plan previously presented will ensure its success. The University will support the innovative strategies of the QEP, not only financially, but with classroom activities and traditional University programs as well. The implementation plan and other efforts will lead to efficient and effective sustainability by:

- Supporting faculty members in their efforts to develop effective communication learning activities using multi-media platforms
- Providing faculty and staff with bi-annual, ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their ability to expose students to a variety of effective communication strategies and to effectively teach students about PATS, presentational skills, media literacy, and occasion
- Allowing departments to assess the progress of their students in a structured manner, determine strengths and weaknesses, and to implement changes that will increase the effectiveness of the QEP
- Providing publication and presentation outlets for students and faculty
- Providing all individuals University-wide with opportunities to attend lectures by professionals and experts in the areas of PATS, media literacy, and the importance of effective communication
- Promoting the QEP, QEP courses, and related professional development and lecture opportunities using the very core elements of the QEP (multiple media modes and a focus on PATS)
- Reinforcing the core elements of the QEP in pre-existing, traditional University activities and events such as faculty colloquia, general faculty/staff meetings, campus media publications, and banquets.
Assessment

Overview
Assessment is an essential component of the academic culture at the University of West Alabama, and the institution recognizes the need to assess and evaluate any new academic program or curricular change in order to ensure a quality educational experience for its students. Each department engages in a form of assessment within its major programs, and the resulting data is reported annually to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness through WEAVE as part of the yearly cycle of planning and assessment. The proposed Quality Enhancement Plan, *iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-Media Platforms*, will also be subject to a rigorous assessment program intended to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the QEP, identify areas where improvement or emendation are needed, and, of course, discover how the QEP is enhancing the quality of education experienced by UWA students (SACS *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* 1.2 Quality Enhancement).

The chief goal in designing the UWA Quality Enhancement Plan, *iCommunicate*, is strengthening student awareness and use of traditional rhetorical skill sets involving audience awareness, a sense of appropriate tone, style, occasion, and persona, and the ability to decipher incoming messages—all in the context of the 21st-century environment of multi-media modes. A campus-wide call for possible QEP topics yielded a surprisingly similar set of responses. A vast majority of responses focused on the need for improved communications skills among UWA students. These skills, however, were identified as falling into a variety of categories, not just the tradition writing and speaking. Concerns were voiced concerning students’ inability to express themselves professionally via email or voicemail, their lack of awareness of appropriate tone and audience awareness when contacting professors or potential employers, and their inattentiveness to image and persona as it may be expressed not only in their written and oral communications but also in the persona they create via social media outlets.
Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

The University of West Alabama QEP is designed to help students translate traditional communication strategies (including persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion) across a variety of media platforms. In today’s media savvy world, students must navigate a wide variety of media modes and have an understanding of how each of these modes functions in society. As media modes continue to multiply and evolve, it is important that educators teach students to apply traditional rhetorical techniques to all interactions, whether personal or professional. The focus is on creating and interpreting messages appropriate for all occasions.

The University of West Alabama QEP is based on four defined goals with three projected Student Learning Outcomes. Descriptions of measureable objectives and assessment instruments for each student learning outcome are provided.

Goals:
- Prepare students for effective communication in their personal and professional lives
- Change the culture of communication on the UWA campus
- Expose students to a wide array of media messages in order to improve critical and analytical skills
- Prepare students to present an ethical and responsible persona, tone, and style in all communications.

Student Learning Outcomes:
UWA students will
- demonstrate a greater understanding of the traditional strategies of effective communication, including persona, audience, tone, style, (PATS), occasion, and media literacy,
- demonstrate improved writing skills across multiple media platforms, and
- demonstrate an improved ability to critique existing messages.
Measureable Objectives and Instruments:

1: UWA students exposed to the experimental *iCommunicate* condition in QEP course sections will score a C (70%) or higher overall and at least 5% higher on their understanding of PATS, occasion, and media literacy than students in the control group.

   Measurement: Students enrolled in *iCommunicate* course sections will complete a quiz to assess their understanding of effective communication strategies, including persona, audience, tone, style, occasion, and media literacy. Scores on the 18-20 item quiz will be used as the measurement tool for the first student learning outcome. The first eight to ten questions of the quiz will vary by academic discipline, while the remaining ten questions will remain consistent across disciplines. Appendix I contains the quiz used for the EH101 pilot and Appendix J contains the quiz used for the BY101 pilot.

2: Using a writing rubric designed for the *iCommunicate* pilot courses, UWA students exposed to the experimental *iCommunicate* condition in QEP course sections will score a 4/8 overall or higher and at least 5% higher on *iCommunicate* writing assignment(s) than students in the control group. Furthermore using the same rubric, at least 70% of the students in the experimental group will score a 1 or 2 in the following categories: audience, style, and tone.

   Measurement: Students enrolled in *iCommunicate* course sections will complete a writing assignment approved by the QEP implementation team. A rubric (see Appendix K for the rubric used in the EH101 and BY101 pilot) will be used to grade the writing assignments for the student’s ability to demonstrate use of audience, style, and tone. The writing assignments will be graded by the QEP implementation team. Outliers (the highest and lowest scores) will be discarded. The mean of the remaining scores will be used as the measurement tool for the second student learning outcome. The same rubric will be used across academic disciplines.
3: Using a critique rubric designed for the *iCommunicate* pilot courses, UWA students exposed to the experimental *iCommunicate* condition in QEP course sections will score a 3/8 or higher overall and at least 5% higher on *iCommunicate* critique assignment(s) than students in the control group. Furthermore using the same rubric, at least 70% of the students in the experimental group will score a 1 or 2 in the following categories: multiple media modes/media literacy, persona, and occasion.

Measurement: Students enrolled in *iCommunicate* course sections will complete a critique assignment of an existing message. The assignment must be approved by the QEP implementation team. A rubric (see Appendix L for the rubric used in the EH101 and BY101 pilot) will be used to grade the critique assignments for the student’s ability to demonstrate use of persona, multiple media modes, occasion, and media literacy. The critique assignments will be graded by the QEP implementation team. Outliers will be discarded and the mean of the remaining scores will be used as the measurement tool for the third student learning outcome. The same rubric will be used across academic disciplines.

The University of West Alabama QEP will benefit students in all facets of their lives, both personally and professionally. Throughout history, humans have had an innate need to form connections and to communicate with one another. The QEP will provide students the skills they need to communicate more effectively and confidently across various platforms. This will benefit them during their time at the University by giving them the necessary tools to be more interested and involved in class discussions and assignments. With an increased understanding of media platforms, they will also benefit in their ability to critique messages across various media modes. Each anticipated benefit resulting from the goals and student learning outcomes of the UWA QEP will optimistically have a lasting effect on student’s communication decisions, regardless of the communication challenges and technology they will face in the future. The knowledge of persona, audience, tone, style, occasion, and media literacy will give
them the skills necessary to communicate appropriately, regardless of the mode of communication, thereby benefiting them in their personal and professional lives.

**Procedures**

In order to ensure that the redesigned courses achieve the above outlined goals, student learning outcomes, and objectives, student progress in both QEP-enhanced pilot courses and traditional courses must be measured. The QEP will be piloted by running parallel sections of the pilot (QEP) and control group (traditional) course formats: one of each in Written English I (EH 101) and Principles of Biology (BY 101) during the year-long pilot phase of the project. Data will be collected by comparing student progress in the courses involved in the QEP-enhanced course sections to the progress in the traditional course, using a control group/experimental group measure. During the piloting process, common assignments scored with tested rubrics will be used as further outcome indicators. Faculty involved in the process will be able to draw upon sample student work in the form of writing (blogs, e-mail assignments, essays) and message critique (journal articles, blogs, social media feeds) assignments.

A team of faculty members teaching in the pilot course sections and in traditional control group courses within particular disciplines will agree upon a common set of assignments and topics. Faculty teaching the QEP courses will align the QEP SLO’s with their own current evaluation methods. A team of English faculty who typically teach EH 101 will be charged with developing discipline-specific assignments to measure, teach, and reinforce the rhetorical strategies needed to help students better understand persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion; to improve writing skills across multiple media platforms; to improve media literacy and communications skills; and to better understand the need for responsible citizenship in the arena of public communications. Similarly, a team of biology faculty will be charged with creating a common set of assignments that measure, teach, and reinforce these skills with the context of the introductory biology classroom. Each assessment tool will include common elements of PATS and additional elements specific to the academic discipline. The assignments will be blind scored by the QEP Pilot Implementation/Implementation Team, using
rubrics/answer keys, to ensure an objective assessment of student progress in both the pilot and control sections. To ensure that variables are kept to a minimum, any differences in student populations between the courses under examination will be carefully documented. Indeed, the enrollment levels and days/times of the courses will be as similar as possible in order to ensure that student populations are as comparable as possible. Finally, outside evaluators will be consulted to provide objective feedback free of any in-house agendas or prejudices.

The assessment plan for *iCommunicate* is designed to:

- Determine the extent to which students are achieving the student learning outcomes targeted by the QEP
- Identify areas/strategies within the QEP that require revision
- Identify areas/strategies within the QEP that are clearly successful
- Ensure the QEP’s long-term sustainability based on the data collected.

**Planning and Assessment Cycle**

Programmatic Assessment: The QEP *iCommunicate* will be assessed on two levels. First, the program will be assessed on the departmental level. All degree granting programs at the University of West Alabama maintain a system of assessment and gather assessment data on an annual basis in order to ensure a consistent level of quality instruction within a given program. How the QEP enhances, weakens, or otherwise affects the programs in which it is being implemented (initially the freshman writing program and the introductory biology program) will be evaluated within the larger context of that program’s assessment process. In compliance with SACS *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* 2.12 (*The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process*), assessment data will be gathered during the summer of each academic year and reported to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness during the early fall semester of each academic year. The data will be stored and reported via the WEAVE system.
QEP Directorial Assessment: The campus QEP Director will be responsible for gathering and centralizing all assessment data related to the QEP. This data will include both program-level assessment data and campus-wide assessment data (SACS 2.12). The QEP Director, working in conjunction with the wider departmental and college-level assessment teams, will evaluate the success of the Quality Enhancement Plan on both micro and macro levels. The QEP Director will report these findings to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness in alignment with the regular annual assessment calendar. The success of the plan will be judged according to the following general criteria: achievement of SLO's (based in part on departmental assessments), adherence to the implementation calendar, value of marketing campaign, faculty and student buy in, and effective budget administration and use. Naturally, as the QEP implementation expands to include departments and programs other than English and biology, the scope of assessment activities will be extended to encompass the growing enhancement plan.

Pilot Results from Fall 2012:

To demonstrate the assessment plan of iCommunicate, the Pilot results from Fall 2012 are as follows:

Student Learning Outcome 1: UWA students will demonstrate a greater understanding of the traditional strategies of effective communication, including persona, audience, tone, style, (PATS), occasion, and media literacy.

Measurement tool: iCommunicate Quiz

1: Students in the Experimental Group will score a C (70%) or higher overall.
   Achievement target met. Students scored a 71%.
2: Students in the Experimental Group will score at least 5% higher overall than students in the control group.
   Achievement target met. Students in the experimental group scored 7% higher than students in the control group.

Student Learning Outcome 2: UWA Students will demonstrate improved writing skills across multiple media platforms.
Measurement tool: *iCommunicate* Writing Assignment and Rubric

1: Students in the experimental group will score higher than a 4/8 overall.

   Achievement target partially met. Students in the BY101 experimental group scored an average of 4.7 overall. Students in the EH101 experimental group scored an average of a 3.91.

2: Students in the experimental group will score at least 5% higher overall than students in the control group.

   Achievement target partially met. Students in the BY101 experimental group scored 8% higher and students in the EH101 experimental group scored the same as students in the control.

3: At least 70% of the experimental group will score a 1 or 2 in the following categories: audience, style, and tone.

   Achievement target met. Audience (82%), Style (85%), Tone (92%)

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**Student Learning Outcome 3:** UWA students will demonstrate an improved ability to critique existing messages.

Measurement tool: *iCommunicate* Critique Assignment and Rubric

1: Students in the experimental group will score higher than a 3/8 overall.

   Achievement target met. Students in the BY101 experimental group scored a 4.75 overall, and students in the EH101 experimental group scored a 3.25 overall.

2: Students in the experimental group will score at least 10% higher than students in the control group.

   Achievement target met. Students in the BY101 experimental group scored 19% higher and students in the EH101 experimental group scored 31% higher.

3: At least 70% of the experimental group will score a 1 or 2 in the following categories: multiple media modes/media literacy, persona, and occasion.

   Achievement target met. Media mode (75%), Persona (76%), occasion (82%).
Results from the fall 2012 pilot will be combined to the results from the current spring 2013 pilot to make final conclusions of the achievement targets for the first year. At that time, the data will be used to make recommendations for improvement for the second year of the pilot, beginning in fall 2013. However, the pilot implementation committee may have already identified areas for improvement in terms of class instruction of the QEP core values and the wording of class assignments.
Timeline for *iCommunicate*

The timeline presented in Table 9 represents the progression of events of UWA’s QEP. The events cover the development of the QEP and the implementation pilot study in fall 2013 through the completion of the QEP in Spring 2018. The development and the management of UWA’s QEP timeline “demonstrate institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP” (SACSCOC, 2012, p. 27).

Table 9: Five-year Implementation Plan Timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Pre-QEP 2012-13</th>
<th>Year 1 2013-14</th>
<th>Year 2 2014-15</th>
<th>Year 3 2015-16</th>
<th>Year 4 2016-17</th>
<th>Year 5 2017-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QEP Advisory Group introduces <em>iCommunicate</em> to the faculty</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University hires <em>iCommunicate</em> QEP Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and Departments develop and submit implementation plans</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Facilitator works with the Dean’s Council and Provost in developing promotions and meetings</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA appoints <em>iCommunicate</em> Pilot Implementation Team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA appoints <em>iCommunicate</em> Implementation Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Director meets with each academic department regarding QEP implementation plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EH 101 &amp; BY 101 works with Faculty Facilitator and Pilot Implementation Team on baseline assessment data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA offers professional development seminars for faculty, staff, and/or students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Facilitator collects and evaluates findings from the pilot study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Courses are assessed and evaluated</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Director releases <em>iCommunicate</em> findings to the campus (Fall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments discuss and implement actions and changes based on assessment data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Director develops the impact report to SACSCOC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsibility and Organizational Structure

The University of West Alabama has designed the organizational structure necessary to successfully plan, implement, assess, and complete the *iCommunicate* QEP, as required (SACSCOC, 2010, p.25). As shown in Figure 6, the Provost will have the final word in decisions regarding the QEP. The QEP Director will report to both the Provost and the Deans’ Council, who will also assist the QEP Director with encouraging participation from Department Chairs and faculty in QEP-related learning activities, brown-bag lectures, professional development opportunities, and publicity and promotion. The QEP Director will then guide the QEP Implementation Team, the QEP Department Chairs and faculty engaged in a QEP course, and necessary Support Individuals (Table 10).

Figure 4 shows the various tiers in the *iCommunicate* organizational structure, and the job titles included within each tier. The lines in this figure demonstrate how the chain of communication will work from the Provost through Support Individuals to complete the *iCommunicate* QEP. An additional tier in the organizational structure includes the numerous campus offices and organizations that will also assist with the implementation, support, necessary improvements, and sustainability of the QEP. These include the offices of Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement, Institutional Effectiveness, Career Services, Student Support Services, Sponsored Programs, Library Services, Printing Services, Public Relations, and Student Life.
### Table 10: QEP Organizational Structure Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provost</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate with the QEP Director and the Deans’ Council to implement the QEP. Manage QEP budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requests; promote faculty support of the QEP, share quality enhancement successes in official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports and with UWA faculty and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deans’ Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage participation from faculty members and Department Chairs regarding the development of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP learning activities. Assist the QEP Director in publicizing and promoting the QEP. Encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in University-wide professional development and brown-bag lecture opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the QEP director with advice for the implementation, planning, and assessment of the QEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QEP Director</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement the QEP. Report to the Provost and Deans’ Council regarding issues, successes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment, and promotion of the QEP. Facilitate the publicity and promotion of the QEP. Organize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional development opportunities for faculty members and brown bag lectures for the campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community. Create the annual report and prepare the fifth-year document. Work closely with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department chairs and faculty members engaged in a QEP course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QEP Implementation Team</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with the QEP Director to guide the development of the QEP. Assist faculty members with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development of QEP learning activities that align with student learning outcomes. Assist with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysis of QEP results. Make suggestions for necessary adjustments to the QEP. Communicate with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students and faculty to collect opinions about the QEP. Assist the QEP Director in the promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and publicity of the QEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Individuals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the QEP director, faculty members, and department chairs in the planning, implementation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and assessment of the QEP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: QEP Organizational Structure

Deans’ Council

Deans of the College of Business, Julia Tutwiler College of Education, College of Liberal Arts, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Division of Educational Outreach, and Division of Online Programs, Chair of the Ira D. Pruitt Division of Nursing, Director of the Julia S. Tutwiler Library, Director of International Programs, Director of Enrollment Management, Director of Information Technology, Director of Student Success, Director of Sponsored Programs, Dean of Educational Outreach, President of the Faculty Senate, and Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Faculty Facilitator/ QEP Director

QEP Implementation Team

Members from the QEP Development Committee and QEP Planning Committee

QEP Department Chairs and Faculty

Only faculty members and Department Chairs of an existing QEP course
Budget and Narrative

The University of West Alabama proposes a budget that supports the development, implementation, and sustainability of *iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies across Multi-Media Platforms* as required by SACSCOC in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 (SACSCOC, 2010, p. 25). The QEP budget includes new funds as well as in-kind funds related to facilities and support.

New funding includes (see Table 10)

- **QEP personnel:**
  1. The QEP Director stipend awarded every fall, spring, and summer semester
  2. QEP faculty stipends of $1,000 annually will be awarded to faculty members in the first two stages of the implementation process who teach a QEP course for the first time

- **Professional development**
  1. Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff members
  2. Brown-bag lectures, one each fall and one each spring semester

- **Supporting activities**
  1. The one-time cost of creating an *iCommunicate* smart phone app

- **Promotion**
  1. Prizes awarded to participants of QEP-related special events
  2. A one-time special event for faculty and staff
  3. Annual special event for UWA students
  4. Traditional promotional materials: banners, signage, t-shirts, posters, pens, post-it-notes, etc.
In-kind funding ($49,097 total per year) includes

- **Facilities:** $14,321
  1. Classroom space
  2. Meeting/office space
  3. Computer labs

- **Operation and administration:** $26,488
  1. Existing staff salaries of support individuals
  2. Existing salaries of Department Chairs and members of the QEP Implementation Team

- **Web design and management:** $8,288

The value of the new funds totals $151,800, and the value of in-kind funds totals $245,485. Thus, the five-year total cost of *iCommunicate* is $397,285 or an average of $79,457 per year. New costs average $30,360 per year; however, the implementation costs of the QEP will vary from year to year, as projections for faculty stipends and some promotions vary.
Table 11: QEP Budget – New Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>One-Time</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QEP Director Stipend</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Stipends</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD Speakers and Conference Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown-bag Lecture Series</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raffle Prizes</td>
<td></td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative Faculty Special Event</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative Student Special Event</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,660</td>
<td>$1,660</td>
<td>$1,660</td>
<td>$1,660</td>
<td>$1,660</td>
<td>$8,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$32,460</td>
<td>$31,460</td>
<td>$28,460</td>
<td>$32,460</td>
<td>$151,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion:

In conclusion, the broad-based involvement of the UWA campus in evaluating student needs, selecting a topic, developing the QEP, and implementing the *iCommunicate* pilot has led to excitement on campus about the possibilities of the proposed plan. The pilot program has been used to establish benchmarks, and the data collected during the pilot and other implementation phases will be assessed for the opportunity to make improvements on an annual basis. *iCommunicate* is closely related to the UWA mission and looks to address a student learning need that will ultimately influence UWA students in their personal and professional lives.
Works Cited


Appendix A:

What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA? 8-5-10

The QEP according to SACS:

The Quality Enhancement Plan is part of the new process of accreditation used by SACS.

While the compliance sections look at what we have done in the past and what we are doing, the QEP looks to the future at where we want to be and how we plan on getting there. The focus of the QEP is ours to decide; however, the focus must be tied to improving student learning and key student learning outcomes ALWAYS.

Our next visit is 2013. We were able to complete our last accreditation study under the old system in 2002. Under the new system, a five-year report also has to be completed, and many of our sister institutions are in the process of either having to complete their 5-year report at this time or they are about to launch their QEP. For us, this means that we have the opportunity to learn from these other institutions.

Think of two components of QEP as bookends (Institutional Effectiveness – Student Learning)

The process of developing our QEP should not be isolated but part of our overall planning process. THINK INTEGRATION! The QEP should be part of the very fabric of institution.

The mission and strategic plan of the institution should guide the QEP. With that said, the institution should not overlook to ideas generated by others.

Place QEP in context: You must understand what is being done as it relates to us and how it best suits us and our situation. A question we must be able to answer is do we support that there is a need for our QEP at our institution?

Broad-based planning is important on the front-end. Key stakeholders who will need to be involved in this process are students, faculty, staff, board of trustees, alumni, employers of our students, community. In 2009, as we go through our 5-year strategic plan, we will want to keep this in mind.

The QEP is a PLANNING document that is evolving. It should not be completed at the time of the site visit. In fact, we will have to submit six weeks before the site visit in 2013. There should be research to establish the basis for the QEP (identifying the need), research to establish benchmarks and establish foundational work, and developing matrix for assessment and funding resources. (one evaluator’s recommendation –is to do the 5th year report and QEP at the same time to help establish timelines, goals, and resources, and assessments)

The focus piece of our final document should be thought of as the scholarly piece of QEP. (Review of literature) (RICE UNIVERSITY – good example). The evaluator will be looking for citations to demonstrate why this is a meaningful issue relevant to who we are as an institution and geared to improving student learning at our institution. Consider both internal and external benefits at this point too.
Appendix B:

What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA? 10-18-10

The QEP according to SACS:

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Broad-based planning is important on the front-end. Key stakeholders who will need to be involved in this process are students, faculty, staff, board of trustees, alumni, employers of our students, community. In 2009, we developed a new 5-year strategic plan, we will want to keep this in mind.

Vision- To be recognized nationally and internationally for providing quality education programs via traditional and alternative means and to be acknowledged as the primary agent of positive change in Alabama's Black Belt.

Mission- To provide opportunities for students to pursue a quality education and assist in developing the important qualities of independent thinking, respect for the ideas of others, personal integrity and character in order to realize their quests for a philosophy of life and self-fulfillment.

The QEP is a PLANNING document that is evolving. It should not be completed at the time of the site visit. In fact, we will have to submit six weeks before the site visit in 2013. There should be research to establish the basis for the QEP (identifying the need), research to establish benchmarks and establish foundational work, and developing matrix for assessment and
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Listed below are some of the institutions with graduate programs that submitted Quality Enhancement Plans (QEP) reviewed by the Commission for reaffirmation in December 2009. The list does not reflect the quality of the QEP as reviewed by the Commission. For more information got to the Commission’s Web site: www.sacscoc.org.

Austin College, Sherman, Texas
The GLOBE Program: International Cultural Awareness For All Students

Florida A & M University, Tallahassee, Florida
Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking

Kentucky State University, Frankfort, Kentucky
Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success

King College, Bristol, Tennessee
Communication Skills

Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee
LINC-on: Learning is Now Connected (Information Literacy)

Methodist University, Fayetteville, North Carolina
Get Between the Covers!: Developing a Culture of Reading

Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky
Student Engagement in Active Learning (SEAL)

Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia
Fostering a Culture of Engaged Learning for First Year Students

Our Lady of the Lake College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Engaged Learning through Writing

Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee
Rhodes Fellowships: Linking Education and Practice

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas
Foundations of Science: Improving Scientific Reasoning Among Non-Science Majors

Southern Polytechnic State University, Marietta, Georgia
Engaged Communities: Engaging Entering Students through Learning Communities

Troy University, Troy, Alabama
Creating a Culture of Reading
Appendix C:

**What is the QEP and how does it relate to UWA?** 6-28-11

The QEP according to SACS:

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OUR INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

- Intellect     Free exchange of ideas
- Community service and civic involvement    Global Awareness
- Appreciation of the arts and humanities    Diversity
- Collegiality
- Character

As with most institutions we have a longer mission that consumes an entire page, but our 2009-2013 strategic plan mission and vision statement are our primary guides in assessment and planning.

The QEP is a PLANNING document that is evolving. It should not be completed at the time of the site visit. In fact, we will have to submit six weeks before the site visit in 2013. There should be research to establish the basis for the QEP (identifying the need), research to establish benchmarks and establish foundational work, and developing matrix for assessment and funding resources. (one evaluator’s recommendation –is to do the 5th year report and QEP at the same time to help establish timelines, goals, and resources, and assessments)

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   *The GLOBE Program: International Cultural Awareness For All Students*

**Florida A & M University, Tallahassee, Florida**

   *Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking*

**Kentucky State University, Frankfort, Kentucky**

   *Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success*

**King College, Bristol, Tennessee**

   *Communication Skills*

**Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee**

   *LINC-on: Learning is Now Connected (Information Literacy)*
Methodist University, Fayetteville, North Carolina

Get Between the Covers!: Developing a Culture of Reading

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Student Engagement in Active Learning (SEAL)

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Southern Polytechnic State University, Marietta, Georgia

Engaged Communities: Engaging Entering Students through Learning Communities

Troy University, Troy, Alabama

Creating a Culture of Reading
Appendix D:

QEP Planning Committee
Minutes

3-18-11
11:00 AM
Land Hall Conference Room

I. Call to Order

Meeting called by: Valerie Burnes

Members in Attendance: Valerie Burnes, Amy Jones, Carling Stepniak, Heather McDonald, Adam Wear; Tina Jones also attended the meeting, but is not an official member

Members Absent: Ketia Shumaker

Called to order by: Valerie Burnes

Time began: 11:07 AM

Time ended: 12:22 PM

II. Old Business

N/A, this was the first meeting for the QEP planning committee

III. New Business

A: Introduction to QEP and SACS

Discussion: Valerie Burnes explained the SACS accreditation process. UWA’s next accreditation will be in 2013.

- Tina Jones explained the QEP. It will be a 5-year plan to improve student learning at UWA in the future. The QEP Committee will develop that plan. There were examples referenced from Bethune-Cookman University and the University of Mississippi.
- Adam Wear mentioned that he edited the QEP for Stillman College, who developed a writing center.
- Valerie Burnes explained that many of the QEPs focus on writing and communication. The QEP must be something UWA can develop, with clear student learning outcomes.
- Tina Jones clarified that the implementation of the QEP is not required to be broad. The broad involvement must be in the planning. Better examples of QEPs are those which are more controlled and narrow in focus. The QEP at UWA will need to show that it fits within our mission and that desired outcomes can be achieved.
B. QEP and UWA Mission Statement
Discussion: Valerie Burnes referenced the written UWA mission on the meeting agenda. It read: “The primary purpose of the University is to provide opportunities for students to pursue associate, baccalaureate, and master’s degrees in liberal arts, natural sciences and mathematics, pre-professional programs, nursing, technology, business, and education. Additionally, the University will assist its students in developing the important qualities of independent thinking and respect for the ideas of others and in building firm foundations of personal integrity and character in order to realize their quests for a philosophy of life and for self-fulfillment. Importance is placed on providing opportunities within the curricula for the development of enhanced skills in critical thinking, communication, leadership, and computer literacy.”

C. Initial Appeal to Faculty and Staff for Ideas
Discussion:
- Valerie Burnes referenced an email written by Tina Jones that was sent to the UWA faculty. She grouped the responses into categories which included the following: Writing/communication (7 responses), critical reading/problem solving (4 responses), study skills, mentor program, student involvement plan, personal involvement, student success plan, living learning communities, study abroad requirement, and service learning/exposure.
- The committee discussed two of the categories in greater detail. First, Tina Jones and Carling Stepniak discussed the popularity of living learning communities. Tina Jones suggested that a similar idea was used for the QEP at the University of Texas. Carling Stepniak explained that they are popular because they increase student success, faculty interaction and student retention.
- Next, the committee discussed service learning. Valerie Burnes, Carling Stepniak, Tina Jones, Adam Wear and Amy Jones discussed working with groups outside of campus and the need for leaving the classroom. Heather McDonald described her success with service learning in the classroom. Valerie Burnes concluded that students who are involved in service learning projects are more likely to be connected to the local community and the University after graduation.

D. Purpose of the QEP Planning Committee
Discussion: Valerie Burnes and Tina Jones highlighted the purpose of the QEP Planning Committee. The committee will review submissions, create a survey, think of ways to get faculty involved (similar to a public relations campaign), and ultimately decide on the QEP. The committee will also appoint additional members from the UWA student body, and possibly the community (alumni or hosts to UWA interns).
- Tina Jones explained the timeline for the QEP: UWA will have to submit the QEP plan 6 weeks prior to the SACS visit. Therefore, the committee would like to narrow down ideas by the end of the Spring 2011 semester, and ideally ask faculty members for submissions of white papers during the summer 2011 semester.
- Heather McDonald asked if we would have funding to implement the QEP. Tina Jones said the University will need to implement a budget to carry out the QEP.
- Heather McDonald asked if we could implement multiple projects to help every college. Tina Jones answered that it is best to pick just one project to implement. She clarified that we must find something UWA can do, and do well.
- Tina Jones said that the QEP Planning Committee will basically look at all of the information, and decide which QEP to implement.

Action: Committee members were asked to email Valerie Burnes by April 4, 2011 with the following information: Names of potential student/community members for the committee; PR suggestions to get faculty involved in the QEP; and 2 sample survey questions used in forming QEPs at other universities. Valerie Burnes said she would contact Angel Jowers for existing survey data from UWA students and faculty. Amy Jones said she would use the Tiger Pause, muse, and Channel 23 to spread word about the QEP to the UWA campus and Livingston community when needed.
Appendix E: Faculty/Staff Survey

1. General Faculty and Staff Meeting

In April 2013, the University of West Alabama will have its SACS onsite visit for reaccreditation. As part of the current reaccreditation process, UWA must create a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). While the compliance sections of our reaccreditation report look at what we have done in the past and what we are doing, the QEP looks to the future at where we want to be and how we plan on getting there. The focus of the QEP is used to steer, however, the focus must be tied to improving student learning and key student learning outcomes.

Over the past year, discussions about a possible QLI topic as it relates to our mission and strategic plan have occurred. As a result several broad categories for consideration have emerged. To help us understand everyone’s ideas surrounding these categories, more information is needed. Your completion of the survey below will help us move closer to discovering our QEP.

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

2.1 Our students express themselves through emails in a professional manner.
2.2 Our students demonstrate a mastery of basic writing skills in their correspondence and assignments.
2.3 Our students are able to effectively communicate across a variety of platforms (letters, emails, voice mail, text messages, etc.).
2.4 Our students read and process information in order to successfully fulfill assignments.
2.5 Our students consult a broad range of media sources to obtain information.
2.6 Our students are able to effectively summarize key information from texts.
2.7 Our students are able to take theoretical applications from the classroom and apply them in real world situations.
2.8 Our students demonstrate an understanding of how to critique information for reliability and relevance.
2.9 Our students use methods of communication appropriate for their audience.
2.10 Our students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation for other cultures.
2.11 Our students are engaged in the world outside of their immediate geographical boundaries.
2.12 Our students exhibit an understanding of the appropriate dress for various situations.
2.13 Our students demonstrate the ability to manage time and expectations effectively.
2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. [Continue]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.14 Our students show an awareness and understanding of the revolution of current events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15 Our students' long-term goals are accompanied by a realistic understanding of the steps needed to achieve those goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16 Of the above statements, which would you like to see UWA focus attention in order to enhance our students' college experience and ultimate success?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.17 Additional comments

Thank you for your participation in completing this survey!
Appendix F: Faculty/Staff Survey Results

Quality Enhancement Plan  QEP

Overall indicators

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Survey Results

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question text</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Our students express themselves through emails in a professional manner.</td>
<td>36% 44.3% 41.1% 10.9%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Our students demonstrate a mastery of basic writing skills in their correspondence and assignments.</td>
<td>32% 57.6% 56.9% 7.7%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Our students are able to effectively communicate across a variety of platforms (letters, email, voice mail, text messages, etc.).</td>
<td>78% 53.3% 31.6% 6.7%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Our students read and process information in order to successfully fulfill assignments.</td>
<td>48% 60.6% 31.7% 8.9%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Our students consult a broad range of media sources to obtain information.</td>
<td>35% 59.8% 27% 3.7%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Our students are able to effectively summarize key information from texts.</td>
<td>42% 60.6% 26.6% 5.2%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Our students are able to take theoretical applications from the classroom and apply them in real world situations.</td>
<td>22% 53.8% 39.2% 4.8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6 Our students demonstrate an understanding of how to critique information for reliability and relevance.

2.8 Our students use methods of communication appropriate for their audience.

5.3 Our students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation for other cultures.

5.1 Our students are engaged in the world outside of their immediate geographical boundaries.

2.10 Our students exhibit an understanding of the appropriate dress for various situations.

2.11 Our students demonstrate the ability to manage time and resources effectively.

5.14 Our students show an awareness and understanding of the relevance of current events.

5.16 Our students long-term goals are accompanied by a realistic understanding of the steps needed to achieve those goals.

---

Presentation template

Quality Enhancement Plan Survey
Quality Enhancement Plan QEP
No. of responses = 195

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following

[1-4 scale]

av. = 2.5
1. Of the above statements, which would you like to see UWA focus attention in order to enhance our students’ college experience and ultimate success?
- Social skills and study habits
- Writing skills, email correspondence skills
- Professionalism
- Assist students in demonstrating mastery of basic writing skills
- Writing, communication
- Professionalism
  – respecting deadlines, quality of work, parameters, written communication, etc.
- Appropriate behaviors in and out of the classroom are an issue, the thing that I find most distressing is that many students do not appreciate the work required to do well, and they have an expectation that learning ins a passive process they are less than cooperative when I try to introduce active learning, critical thinking does not exist for most of the students, this still is critical, they do not have this skill out of high school, but they do not want to learn it, they are expecting us to pass them because they pay tuition.
- Methods of communication appropriate for audience work ethic development
- More emphasis on writing skills, getting students out of the classroom and into the working world, internships, etc.
- Experience with other cultures and the “real world” are desperately needed. Service learning opportunities and/or student travel could open the eyes (and minds) of our students.
- 2.3 or 2.4
- 2.7, 2.10
- Mandatory internships among corporate settings for COB students begin a co-op program (alternate semesters of work vs. school). These two concepts my embellish each of the above.
- Writing skills are very poor! Unprofessional emails
  – tend to use texting format. Public speaking!
- Students must learn to communicate and behave professionally at all times. This includes email, phone conversations, appropriate attire, and other personal presentation skills.
- Writing, reading
- Taking theoretical applications from the classroom and applying them to real world situations.
- Increase their understanding of globalization
  – most students do not think there is a world outside of West AL/East Mississippi!
- The way students communicate through media, they need to be more professional and know that the people they are dealing with, they may need to deal w/these same people when they get out of college.
-Many of our students need to work on their writing skills; they especially need to work on spelling and punctuation.

-More study groups for students learning enhancement.

-Understanding the steps to reach long term goals.

-2.7, 2.4, 2.6

-2.2, 2.4, 2.8, 2.9

-2.2, 2.7, 2.11, 2.14

-2.10, 2.11, 2.2, 2.7, think these are the most valuable tools for them to take outside of institution

-2.4, 2.8

-Help students realize the importance of time management and communication skills.

-Read and process information, 2.4 2.8.

-Demonstrate a mastery of basic writing skills

-2.1, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13

-Awareness of cultures outside the region and better communication skills

-Promote cultural diversity and recruiting of international students as well as faculty/staff members.

-Increasing reading and writing capabilities, decrease cultural ignorance, increase student professionalism, dress, and general demeanor.

-Critical thinking skills, 2.7, 2.8

-Writing skills improvements and cultural awareness.

-Writing skills

-Student recognition of and appreciation for other cultures should be an area of focus.

-2.4, 2.13

-Students need a better use of time. Students also need better writing skills. I teach a 200 level course. I can’t turn students into the writing program until they have finished EH 101.

-2.9

-Professionalism of communication and dress

-Improve ability to apply theory/classroom content to the real world or work settings.

-The need for students to know how to dress appropriately for various situations.

-Student accountability, appreciation of methods taught in class, managing their time in online programs.

-Manners in professional settings, reading, writing

– inc. ordinary business letters, basic math skills

-Professional ethics of students to be addressed in terms of: submitting quality work, on time, completing all assignments, not do enough to get desired grade.

-#14

-I would like to see the institution concentrate on writing, particularly as it relates to appropriateness of media and audience.

-Developing our students abilities in critical thinking

-Professional development skills

-2.15
- I would like to see our students develop their written and oral communication skills.
- Make sure students know what they need to be successful in the outside world, 2.15.
- Communication and meaningful activities.
- Respect for other in other cultures.
- Emails in professional manner, 2.1.
- Basic empirical reading and writing literacy. We cannot assume basic academic ability to our students and need to find a way of providing and ensuring they have these as early as possible.
- 2.2 is the weakest area as a whole for our students!
- Team/relationship building among students. Developing flexible communication techniques that are much more diverse
  - 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
  - 2.3, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13
- Students can’t learn to think in an environment of memorize and regurgitate 2.7.
- Communication skills – specifically writing
  - 2.10, 2.11, & 2.14 address the need for students to be aware of, if not engaged in, the world outside West Alabama. Students cannot accurately assess their place in the world or how best to improve it without some knowledge of who they are in the world, and without this knowledge, this region becomes narrower, to other culturally & mentally, “get out of the classroom and get into the world!”
  - 2.4, read and process information
  - 2.7, in the class I teach, I see a general ability to students to be able to memorize and regurgitate information, but a generally poor ability to analyze and synthesize information.
- Critical thinking skills need to be developed with the students I have experience with. Also, students are unaware of other cultures due to “isolated” experiences.
  - 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14, 2.15
- I think 2.2 and 2.8 are the most vital issues.
- 2.13, our students demonstrate the ability to manage time and resources effectively.
  - 2.6, 2.8, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7
- Writing!
- 2.2, writing mastery!
- Basic critical thinking & writing
- Ability to effectively communicate across broad platforms
- 2.9, would like to see improved communication skills starting with our incoming freshmen. One of the most important skills in life is the ability to correctly and effectively communicate (verbally) with others.
  - 2.1, 2.2
- 2.2, writing skills
- Points 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.9, need strong focus
- More media focus on current events.
  - 2.2, 2.3
- Effective communication across a variety of platforms
- Effective communication skills – important now and in their career.
- Communication skills both verbal & written
- Writing and critical thinking skills, communication skills development uses a variety of media
- More general orientations for students on skills listed above both on campus and online, online learning resources
- Writing, critical thinking, 2.1, 2.4, 2.6 – etc.
- Written communication and critical thinking
- I would prefer the students more opportunities for written communication skills dealing with current events and cultures. Also, if the student workers worked in a job that will help with their majors instead of just taking any job.
- Focus on communication and analysis of documents
- I think the best thing to do is the writing skills
- Writing skills, verbal communication skills, awareness and tolerance for other cultures, races, ideas, an appreciation of UWA and opportunities offered leading to more positive allegiances to the institution
- Writing and communication needs improving, dress code policy needs to be enforced, students need to present themselves more professionally
- Professionalism
- Writing skills (complete sentences would be a start!)
- To improve writing skills, to improve organizational skills
- 2.11
- 2.2, our students would be more successful in all aspects of school and future careers if their writing skills improved.
- Writing and reading – oriented areas need addressing
- Time management is critical for student success. We need more focus on writing & grammar! Goal setting for student is needed.
- Writing
- Writing and communicating properly with university personnel.
- Reading & retention, appropriate dress and manners for class, formal events, etc.
- Develop more hands on courses
- Students need to be better communicators, and they also need to be able to read and process information in homework/reading assignments to be prepared for class. Completing homework is a critical item and many students do not do this. Students need to take ownership in their own education.
- Many of our students (Graduate school in my area) are unable to speak and write in Standard English. They do not know how to problem solve and cannot think abstractly. Practical application is lacking.
- Help the students develop more writing skills.
- Student dress
- Great effect must be offered to address communication and writing skills.
- Improve written and oral communication skills, written primarily.
- Basic skills, writing follow direction, better communicating skills
- Effectively communicate across a variety of platforms.

2.3
- Professionalism in communication, engagement in the world outside UWA.
- Writing skills are a significant deficit for our students. I think we need to address this skill to enhance student learning.
- Reading & writing; communication
- Understanding of current events.
- Emphasis on writing skills. Not so much information copied from sources, but written in their own words.
- Awareness of audience and occasion and appropriate tone and style
- Students must read and write more in courses across the curriculum
- Assess reliability/validity of information (internet) and the ability to use information (theoretical) into application

2. Additional comments.
- This could be tied in with graduation and retention rates
- Fantastic effort! Thanks for all your committee does!
- Overall writing skills-grammar, spelling, syntax one at time defined
- It is frustrating to try to teach folks who do not want to learn
- Consider offering an MBA degree -- may attract a higher quality of student within COB.
- Need for better understanding of geography demographics, world & current events.
  Knowledge of U.S. is poor– much less other countries!
- We need higher standards for our lower level standards – they cannot read, write or think well in higher level courses
  – I didn’t see many getting jobs either.
- Positive reinforcements
- Many students seem to struggle w/basic reading comprehension.
- It’s important that these students learn the “soft skills” of college in order to succeed. How to behave and communicate and present themselves in academic and professional contexts. These skills are easier to teach and learn than the higher order critical thinking skills.
- Writing is the biggest area of focus
- This university fosters the “small tour” aesthetic, instead of creating culturally aware environments that expose students to new ideas & concepts; education sometimes feels “behind the times.”
- Difficult to answer survey. What % of students need to demonstrate success or failure? For each some students are succeeding and some are failing, more students than I would like are demonstrating poor skills in writing and critical thinking. I do not think the majority are.
-I think students should be taught to apply their education in realistic, real-world settings and the appropriate professional behavior in classroom and career.

-Basic writing and communication should be focus in all classes, more attention on the English language, grammar and pronunciation.

-UWA needs to simplify its undergraduate catalogue to make it more understandable – to faculty as well as students. For example: in lists of required courses, it would be helpful to include the semesters in which the courses are taught.

-Students have a profound ability to ignore what they don’t like.

-In order for our students to gain a better understanding of the outside community we need to recruit students from outside communities.

-Tighten standards for admission and registration deadlines. Use the most basic screening method possible to eliminate future problems. If paper work is not on time, if classes are not registered, don’t let them in.

-“Critical thinking” improvement is cliché. Manners and professionalism will come naturally with faculty leadership and guidance and from personal achievements. These are not appropriate goals for a university, regardless of their important in a job interview.

-Less lecture, more discussion

-In addition to the above comment regarding “critical thinking,” students seem too focused on the notion that making a good grade is the goal of their education, rather than the idea that we are trying to prepare them for a career in the real world. They do not seem to grasp that memorization is not necessarily a valued skilled in the real world, as opted to the ability to think through a problem.

-Writing and reading and communication skills need improvement. I think improving critical thinking skills will address these areas as well.

-I would love to see our students have a greater global understanding of the world but communication skills must take priority over other interacts.

-The students and faculty and staff need to use resource more effectively as well as focus on becoming more “green” on campus.

-Students don’t always seem to appreciate the fact that faculty are authority figures as well as teachers. Not check-out clerks from whom they are purchasing an education. Students also seem to carry over the “one-click” internet convenience into to other aspects of learning, expecting to be able to get ideas/research/etc., just as quickly, the result is a student who does not achieve as highly the success of research and interpretation and assimilation of lecture topics. Basics are still basics, no matter our formats.

-Because of a lack of quality educational experiences, our students need to visit good schools and go one field trip.

-Focus on transfers

-Since I teach a remedial level course my views may be more “negative.”

-We need to focus on 2.3 heavy during the freshman year.

-Summer bridge programs to improve basic academic skills

-We need more foreign language courses. Also, it would help if the student activities offered more diverse choices.
-Although, I have marked agree to most items this refers to the majority of my students. I do think there are concerns in these areas of communication.

-2.15
-We have many very fine students, and my response to this survey largely do not apply to them, but too many of our students have many weaknesses in language/communication areas. Our students rely too much on other people to do their work, they do not want to know how to do an activity they want someone to do it for them.

-UWA must include a conditional behavior to allow early remediation in writing and communications skills that will affect the likelihood of eventually being successful in academic efforts.

-We must require a higher standard of these skills for our students.
Appendix G:

QEP White Paper Stipends and Research Grants Application

Purpose: As part of the SACS reaccreditation procedure for the 2013 review, the University of West Alabama must create a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The purpose of the QEP is to engage the wider academic community and address one or more similar issues that contribute to institutional improvement. The plan should be focused, succinct, and limited in length. The QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student learning.

According to SACS, “The Quality Enhancement Plan is a document developed by the institution that (1) includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. This document is reviewed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is an integral part of an institution’s decennial reaffirmation of accreditation. In addition to making a persuasive argument that it continues to comply with all of the standards set forth in the Principles of Accreditation, the institution must also develop a plan to enhance the quality of its educational programs by focusing on an important aspect of student learning and/or the environment supporting that learning. Two of the standards – Core Requirement 2.12 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 – present specific guidance as to the content and intent of the institution’s QEP.”

http://www.sacscoc.org/documents/QEPLeadEvaluator1.pdf


In order to decide on a QEP topic, the University is providing stipends of $500, along with up to $500 for research costs, to no more than five individuals to prepare white papers that use the latest research to guide the QEP committee toward a topic selection. The stipends will be paid to the authors of the white papers. The grants are available to cover research related fees such as travel and photocopying. Applicants will apply for both the stipend and the grant in this application. This is an application to apply for the stipend and grants themselves, not an application or a commitment to write UWA’s QEP document.

After soliciting input from the campus community about issues they would like to see addressed across the campus, the following suggestions emerged as the most popular possibilities for a QEP topic. The QEP stipend applications must address one of the following topics:

1. Writing across multiple platforms and for different audiences
2. Presenting a professional image
3. Media literacy
4. Service learning requirement
5. Globalization and cultural exchange/literacy

A white paper can be on one topic, or it can incorporate a combination of any of these topics as well.
Guidelines

1. White paper will need to be 8-10 pages and include a review of the current literature on the topic.

2. The proposed QEP topic must follow SACS guidelines and be tied to UWA’s mission.

3. Any full-time faculty or staff member at the University of West Alabama is eligible to apply to write a white paper on one of the designated topics.

4. A White Paper Committee, which will be pulled from the QEP advisory committee, will review the applications and notify those selected to write papers. The stipend will be awarded upon submission of the completed paper. Grant money for research will be reimbursed upon the submission of receipts. The Provost and the Dean of the Division of Educational Outreach will serve as ex-officio members of the White Paper Committee.

5. Grant applications are due September 30. Writers will be notified by October 7. White papers are due November 15, 2011.
Appendix H:

iCommunicate Two-Page Abstract

Quality Enhancement Plan
The Quality Enhancement Plan is part of the reaffirmation process of the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS). While the compliance sections of our reaffirmation process look at what we have done in the past and what we are currently doing, the QEP looks to the future at where we want to be and how we plan on arriving there.

Through discussions with students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders of the University, UWA has selected a QEP that will focus on appropriate and effective communication: iCommunicate: Translating Effective Communication Strategies Across Multi-media Platforms.

This QEP is a five-year plan designed to enhance student learning by targeting effective communication both as it relates to the classroom and to the real world. Specifically, this topic addresses the University’s mission “to assist students in developing the important qualities of independent thinking and respect for the ideas of others” and to provide “opportunities within the curricula for the development of enhanced skills in . . . communication . . .”

Effective Communication Strategies
The UWA QEP is designed to teach students how to translate communication strategies across multiple media platforms (i.e., email, journal article, essay, blog, twitter, etc.). In the process of developing the QEP, it became clear that traditional core elements of effective communication are often lost as students move rapidly from one channel of communication to another. For this reason, there is a need to increase awareness that core elements of effective communication must be considered regardless of the channel used. Translating the communication strategies below is not only useful, but imperative in the creation and analysis of any effective communication.

- **Persona**: Individuals have a different persona for the various roles that they play (i.e., student, son/daughter, church member, employee, friend).
- **Audience and Audience Image**: The intended receiver of the message. Elements of audience image include demographics and psychographics and relationship to the subject and the sender.
- **Tone**: The “attitude,” “color,” “spirit,” or “accent” within the message, directed toward the audience and/or the subject.
- **Style**: Styles vary and can include slang, colloquial, informal, formal and even text-speak.
- **Occasion**: Fitting a communication message to the appropriate persona, audience, and time and place of the event.
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

UWA students will:
- demonstrate a greater understanding of the traditional strategies of effective communication, including persona, audience, tone, style, (PATS), occasion, and media literacy.
- demonstrate improved writing skills across multiple media platforms.
- demonstrate an improved ability to critique existing messages.

Assessment of the SLOs
Data will include the following:
- Formative and Summative
- Direct and Indirect
- Quantitative and Qualitative.
Assignments and rubrics will vary for each QEP course.

Courses Used to Achieve Goals
The following courses will be used during portions of the five-year plan to assist UWA students in achieving the established QEP goals: EH 101 Written English I, BY 101 Principles of Biology, and BA 320 Business Communications

The QEP Development Committee
The QEP Development Committee worked collaboratively with other committees comprised of faculty, staff and students.

QEP Timeline
After receiving SACS approval in Spring 2013, the program will officially begin in Fall 2013. It will be under the supervision of the UWA QEP Implementation Team. In 2018 an impact report will be submitted to SACS describing the results of the first five years of the program.

Additional Information
Further information will be available in upcoming workshops, campus publications, and the QEP website on UWA’s homepage.
Appendix I:

Model Questions for the EH 101 QEP Assessment

Please answer the following questions regarding proper documentation of sources in an academic essay. For the questions below, assume that you are writing an argumentative paper for EH 101, and your topic is Facebook and social media.

1. In every article and on-line resource that discusses Facebook, the authors mention that Facebook was launched by Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard, in the year 2004. Does this need to be cited?

   a. Yes, because not everyone would know that Zuckerberg was at Harvard
   b. Yes, because not everyone would know it was in 2004
   c. No, because even though not everyone would know these facts, the facts are not considered to be anyone’s intellectual property
   d. Yes, because Zuckerberg is the majority shareholder in Facebook

2. Is Wikipedia generally considered to be a reliable source?

   1. No, because one cannot be sure that each entry is written by an expert
   2. Yes, because so many people can contribute to each entry that wrong information is automatically filtered out
   3. Yes, because it is available online, free, to everyone
   4. Yes, but only for general background reading at the start of a writing project, not as support for any particular point

   a. 1 and 4
   b. 2 only
   c. 3 only
   d. 4 only
   e. 2 and 4 only

3. In writing academic prose, is it a good idea to start your sentences with something like “in my opinion,” if you really believe it?

   1. Yes, because it adds authenticity to your statement
   2. No, because unless you are a recognized authority, your personal opinion carries very little weight
   3. Yes, because it makes your paper more personal
   4. No, because it sounds like you are apologizing for an assertion you can’t otherwise defend

   a. 1 and 4
   b. 2 only
   c. 3 only
   d. 4 only
   e. 2 and 4 only
4. In one passage of “The Language of Fakebook,” an article by Katie Roiphe, Roiphe states

“In the dark, medieval days before the Internet, teenagers were forced to express themselves through their clothes. The high drama was the same, the amped-up, overstated processing of life the same, but the media available were inferior. How amazing to be able to tell your 1,344 closest friends, “guess who I saw at the Apple store? I died it was so awkward!!!!!!!” . . . Facebook gives the exhibitionism, the pure theater of those years, a whole other level of stage”

You wish to use her exact words in your essay because you like the way she expresses this point. Would it be better to quote this passage directly, or simply paraphrase it?

a. Always quote things directly so that you won't be accused of plagiarism
b. Quote it directly, but select only a few key phrases, and weave them into your own sentence structure

c. Paraphrase it, so that you won’t have to cite it.
d. Quote the whole thing directly, because Roiphe expresses herself in such a colorful manner

5. If you were using the passage above, from “The Language of Fakebook” and decided not to quote directly, or even paraphrase it, but simply to summarize the main ideas, would it be necessary to cite that borrowing with a parenthetical citation?

a. No, because you’re not using someone else’s exact words
b. Yes, if you consider these ideas to be the intellectual property of Roiphe

c. No, because citing too many sources makes it look like you’re not doing your own work
d. Yes, because any time you refer to an author by name, you need to cite the source.

6. Would the following would make an effective thesis statement for an academic essay about Facebook?

“Facebook now has over 900 million users, as of April 2012, and sometime later this year will attract its one billionth user.”

a. Yes, because you can back this statement up with credible sources.
b. No, because the statement is simply a fact, and does not have anything to say about the fact.
c. Yes, because the statement engages reader attention.
d. No, because you have not cited your source
7. In everyday texting language, we frequently use abbreviations such as LOL and shortened spelling such as “U” for “you.” In writing academic or professional prose, could such usages be advisable?

   a. Yes, if your reader also has a cell phone with a texting plan and would recognize what you’re trying to say
   b. No, even if one reader might understand the meaning, your reader might sense that you don’t know one form of writing situation from another
   c. Yes, since our language evolves across time, at some point these usages will be considered appropriate.

8. If you are writing about a “hot-button topic” such as abortion for an audience that you can assume to be generally neutral or undecided, and you wished to persuade your audience to oppose abortion rights, would the following line be effective?

   “Satan Laughs as mothers murder their own babies in the name of "freedom of choice"—but the baby has no choice.”

   a. Yes, because the vivid language will appeal to undecided readers
   b. Yes, because you believe it to be the truth
   c. No, because not all of your readers will accept the reality of Satan
   d. Possibly not, since the line is so loaded with strong language that you will seem overly biased on this issue.

Please choose the best response in answer to the following questions regarding effective communication skills as they apply to all academic disciplines.

1. The attitude indicated by the language of a speaker or writer is referred to as _____.
   a. posture
   b. mind-set
   c. tone
   d. none of the above

2. When choosing the appropriate language to use when addressing a professor or potential employer, the writer or speaker should be most attentive to which of the following?
   a. national origin
   b. occasion
   c. purpose
3. In a writing or speaking situation, the term occasion best refers to ____.
   a. the event in question
   b. the historical setting
   c. the time of day in which the message is conveyed
   d. the rhetorical context of the message

4. Addressing one’s professor as “dog” in an email intended to ask a serious question about an assignment is a violation of which of the following elements of effective communication?
   a. grammar
   b. tone
   c. manners
   d. audience
   e. a and b
   f. b and d but not a
   g. none of the above

5. The best definition of persona is ______.
   a. phoniness
   b. the tone of a message
   c. the image a speaker or writer presents to an audience
   d. style
   e. none of the above

6. The effective use of clear language is ______.
   a. tone
   b. audience
   c. persona
   d. style
   e. a and b but not c

7. The best definition of a person or persons who receive a message is ______.
   a. listener
   b. audience
   c. reader
   d. receiver
   e. none of the above
8. **Tone** can best be defined as the ____ of a speaker or writer.
   a. style
   b. attitude
   c. opinion
   d. sarcasm
   e. image

9. Using formal language in an academic assignment is an appropriate response to which of the following? (Choose the best answer.)
   a. receiver
   b. occasion
   c. persona
   d. public image
   e. ethnicity

10: An individual who is media literate, likely possesses which skill(s)?

2. an understanding of the mass communication process
3. critical-thinking tools
4. the ability to interpret and evaluate mass media products
5. a and b
6. a and c
7. a, b, and c
Appendix J:

Model Questions for BY101 QEP Assessment:

Please answer the following questions regarding writing and analysis of biological messages, as they apply to learned skills and effective strategies in BY101.

1. When writing in the sciences, our primary purpose is typically:
   a. to entertain the reader.
   b. to persuade the reader to a particular viewpoint.
   c. to present data or ideas clearly enough to allow the reader to assess their validity.
   d. to impress the reader with our vocabulary.

2. Which of the following would not constitute plagiarism?
   a. Paraphrasing a passage taken from a reference without citing the reference.
   b. Directly quoting a passage without enclosing it in quotation marks.
   c. Paraphrasing a passage from a reference and providing a citation to the reference.
   d. All of the above constitute plagiarism.

3. Imagine that you are writing a paper about Pacific kelp forests, and you are referencing material that you have found in sources. Which of the following facts would NOT require a citation?
   a. The kelp *Macrocystis* may grow as much as a half meter daily.
   b. Sea otter populations are thought to have once numbered more than 200,000.
   c. The coast of Oregon borders the Pacific Ocean.
   d. Sea otters must consume over 25% of their body weight in food each day to survive.

4. Scientific writing often uses the passive voice. Why?
   a. Because the scientist wishes his identity to remain hidden.
   b. Because it allows us to express the same idea with fewer words.
   c. Because the action (the science) is more important than the doer (the scientist).
   d. Because all writing should use the passive voice.

5. Which of the following passages is written in the passive voice?
   a. Dissolved oxygen levels were measured daily.
   b. The blue whale consumed large quantities of plankton.
   c. We determined that there was no effect of temperature.
   d. I collected samples at midnight.
6. The following passage is taken from a paper by A. Judson Wells which appeared in the American Journal of Epidemiology in 1998.

   “Thus, there are four studies indicating an increased breast cancer risk from passive smoking and no studies indicating no such risk.”

If you wish to use this information in a paper that you are writing, which of the following usages is appropriate.


b. There are four studies indicating an increased breast cancer risk from passive smoking and no studies indicating no such risk (Wells, 1998).

c. More studies indicate an increased breast cancer risk from passive smoking than don’t

d. Because “four studies associated passive smoking with higher risk of breast cancer”, we must assume these factors are related.

7: Read the following passage:

   “Many articles were read about proteins in the preparation of this paper. This paper will focus mainly on the protein hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is found in red blood cells, increasing the ability of the blood to transport oxygen. Since space is limited, this paper cannot cover all aspects of hemoglobin, so a narrower focus will be taken.”

How might you rewrite this passage to make it more effective?

a. Add additional details.

b. Correct grammatical errors.

c. Remove sentences and phrases that do not provide useful information.

d. Correct subject/verb agreement

8: The following passages express the same concepts. One passage is less effective than the others. Which one?

a: An increase in enzyme concentration increased the reaction rate, as did an increase in substrate concentration, so the concentration of the molecules have an influence on how the enzyme reacts.

b: As enzyme concentration and substrate concentration increased, so did the reaction rate.

c: Enzyme and substrate concentration influence reaction rate: an increase in either resulted in higher reaction rates.

d: Higher reaction rates resulted from increases in both enzyme and substrate concentration.
Read the following passages. If a problem exists, identify it.

9: The tertiary structure of enzymes may be destroyed at high temperatures. Thus changing the ability of the enzyme to catalyze reactions.
   a: Contains a fused sentence.
   b: Contains a sentence fragment.
   c: Incorrect subject/verb agreement
   d: No problem.

10: There are two protein assays that are commonly used in research laboratories.
   a: Too wordy.
   b: Incorrect subject/verb agreement.
   c: Poor grammar.
   d: No problem.

Please choose the best response in answer to the following questions regarding effective communication skills as they apply to all academic disciplines.

11: The attitude indicated by the language of a speaker or writer is referred to as _____.
   a. posture
   b. mind-set
   c. tone
   d. none of the above

12: When choosing the appropriate language to use when addressing a professor or potential employer, the writer or speaker should be most attentive to which of the following?
   a. national origin
   b. occasion
   c. purpose
   d. personal preference
   e. both a and c
   f. b and c

13: In a writing or speaking situation, the term occasion best refers to _____.
   a. the event in question
   b. the historical setting
   c. the time of day in which the message is conveyed
   d. the rhetorical context of the message
14: Addressing one’s professor as “dog” in an email intended to ask a serious question about an assignment is a violation of which of the following elements of effective communication?

a. grammar  
b. tone  
c. manners  
d. audience  
e. a and b  
f. b and d but not a  
g. none of the above

15: The best definition of persona is ______.

a. phoniness  
b. the tone of a message  
c. the image a speaker or writer presents to an audience  
d. style  
e. none of the above

16: The effective use of clear language is _____.

a. tone  
b. audience  
c. persona  
d. style  
e. a and b but not c

17: The best definition of a person or persons who receive a message is _____.

a. listener  
b. audience  
c. reader  
d. receiver  
e. none of the above

18: Tone can best be defined as the ____ of a speaker or writer.

a. style  
b. attitude  
c. opinion  
d. sarcasm  
e. image
19: Using formal language in an academic assignment is an appropriate response to which of the following? (Choose the best answer.)

a. receiver  
b. occasion  
c. persona  
d. public image  
e. ethnicity

20: An individual who is media literate, likely possesses which skill(s)?

a. an understanding of the mass communication process  
b. critical-thinking tools  
c. the ability to interpret and evaluate mass media products  
d. a and b  
e. a and c  
f. a, b, and c
Appendix K:

**QEP Rubric: Writing Assignment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent 2</th>
<th>Average 1</th>
<th>Inadequate 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The student demonstrates a clear understanding of audience, and the message is appropriate and effective for the intended audience.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The student considered audience when crafting the message. The message could be ineffective, even though it is likely appropriate.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The intended audience for the message is unclear.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The message is consistent, appropriate, and effective with choice of style.</strong></td>
<td><strong>While the chosen style may be effective, it is likely inappropriate.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The message is lacking a consistent style, and the chosen style is ineffective and inappropriate.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The message is consistent, clear, appropriate, and effective with choice of tone.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The chosen tone may be effective, but is likely inappropriate.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The tone is ineffective and inappropriate.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, the message is effective and appropriate.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The message is effective, but not appropriate.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The message is inappropriate and ineffective.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade: /8

Comments:
Appendix L:

QEP Rubric: Message Critique Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student demonstrates clear knowledge of the differences between messages using a variety of media modes.

The student may understand the differences between media modes, but the provided analysis is not complete.

The student does not attempt to find differences between media modes, or does not understand the differences.

The student clearly critiques and fully identifies the author's use of persona.

The student may identify the author's use of persona, but does not critique the use.

The student does not attempt to identify or critique the author's use of persona.

The student clearly identifies the occasion of the message, and offers a clear critique.

The student may identify the occasion, but does not offer a critique.

The student does not attempt to identify or critique the occasion of the message.

Overall, the student demonstrates a clear understanding of message analysis. The provided analysis shows depth.

The student understands message analysis, but the provided analysis is not complete.

The student does not attempt to critique the message.

Grade: /8

Comments:
Appendix M:

EH101 Writing Assignment

TRANSLATING “TEXT-SPEAK”

EMILY: Omg i got that job i applied 4! I am sooo pumped! My mom kept telling me KUTGW, but I didnt know it would pay off like this! $$$! imho, it was my resume that got their attention

CALLIE: Yay u! hope u can give me some pointers

EMILY: Def. i just kept my cvr ltr shrt and ttp. Not too much bs.

CALLIE: Did u use any job sites?

EMILY: I used LinkedIn and updated my profile.

CALLIE: What about Fb?

EMILY: Yes. But I took all the pix off that made me look sketchy.

CALLIE: Anything else?

EMILY: I had to ansr evry call that I got. Nvr let anything go to VM.

CALLIE: Lol! So much for screening calls!

EMILY: Yeah. Ha! Also had to answer phone professionally. No “what’s up” or “WTHIT?”

CALLIE: Good point. What about email?

EMILY: I had to chk my spam folder constantly. Couldn’t risk something being sent there.

CALLIE: Sounds like a lot of work but I guess it paid off.

EMILY: Don’t forget to say TYVM after an interview. Email will work. Snail mail mite get to them after theyve already made their decision.

CALLIE: Hey gotta go grab dinner but will text later. BTW I want to pick your brain more later about job stuff. TTYL! And congrats!

EMILY: Thx!

Your task: Pretend that you are Emily, and you’ve been asked to write a brief piece (roughly a paragraph) offering advice to potential job seekers in your peer group (e.g., college students). Construct a paragraph in which you offer the tips that Emily gives to Callie, but transform the very informal (and grammatically atrocious) language of “text-speak” into a concise, semi-formal, and grammatically correct piece of writing. Good luck!
BY 101 Writing Assignment I  
Fall 2012

We will spend the next two lectures discussing the topic of cellular respiration. I will then ask you to produce two short (~200 word) documents in which you will summarize the central points of these lectures for two groups, as described below.

1. Relate the material as if you were describing it to a Facebook posting for a group of freshman biology students in a local high school. Use terminology understandable to a 14 year old student, and write in a way that will appeal to them.

2. Discuss the material in a letter to a faculty member at a university to which you are considering application for graduate or professional school. Your aim in this passage is to demonstrate your understanding of the content to a person who is quite familiar with the field, and to illustrate that you are capable of communicating professionally.

Both passages will be evaluated by your fellow students, and by a group of UWA faculty. You will turn these in as hard copies in class on Monday, October 29. In addition, you will submit as a Turnitin assignment through the class Blackboard page.
Appendix O:

**EH 101 CRITIQUE ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment requires that you evaluate and critique two responses to a recently published study. The first site presents the findings gleaned from the report as well as the actual report (embedded .pdf file); the second and third sites offer responses to this study from two different web sources.

Your task is this: In approximately 500 words, evaluate the two responses (2 and 3) in terms of **persona**, **audience**, **tone**, and **style**.

- **Persona**: The “role” that the writer assumes in relation to the audience (the “learned expert,” for example, or the “friendly advisor”).
- **Audience**: The intended receiver(s) of the message.
- **Tone**: The “attitude,” “color,” “spirit,” or “accent” within the message, directed toward the audience and/or the subject.
- **Style**: The message’s level of formality (ranging from elevated to very casual), indicated by diction, syntax, and grammar.

1. “Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution? Women Get Fewer of the ‘Hot Jobs’ Needed to Advance”
   

2. “Catalyst Study Finds Women Fall Back as Men Get the Hot Jobs”
   

3. “Women Are Still Paid Crap, and What We Need to Do About It”
   
Appendix P:

**BY 101 CRITIQUE ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment requires that you evaluate and critique a review of a recent book on evolutionary biology by famed biologist (and Alabama native) Edward O. Wilson. Wilson’s work in the 1960s revolutionized the fields of entomology and island biogeography, and his controversial work on the evolution of social structures in biological systems basically created the field of sociobiology. His latest book paints a new view of the role of social interactions in biology. I will ask you read the book review posted here:

http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2012/04/26/unnatural-selection/TsfLmvk0TBBZjmxk2VWTL/story.html?camp=pm

Your task is this: In approximately 200 words, evaluate the book review in terms of **persona, audience, tone, style, and occasion**.

- **Persona**: The “role” that the writer assumes in relation to the audience (the “learned expert,” for example, or the “friendly advisor”).
- **Audience**: The intended receiver(s) of the message.
- **Tone**: The “attitude,” “color,” “spirit,” or “accent” within the message, directed toward the audience and/or the subject.
- **Style**: The message’s level of formality (ranging from elevated to very casual), indicated by diction, syntax, and grammar.
- **Occasion**: The time, place, and circumstance of the message.

You will submit this writing assignment by Turnitin.doc by midnight on Tuesday 12/11 (I'll provide the link), and as a hard copy on the day of your final exam (8:00 AM on Wednesday, 12/12).