A QEP Proposal Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Writing Across Communities:
Building a Learning-Centered Writing Community

Writing is one of the cornerstone skills for success in acquiring a university degree and working as a professional, yet many college students are not prepared for the demands of writing at institutions of higher education, as well as in the workforce. Broward College has recognized a need for improvement in student writing in all its general education courses. The Writing Across Communities program aims to enhance and improve student writing, while offering its instructors the resources necessary to accomplish that goal. This initiative is consistent with Broward College’s mission to foster a “learning-centered community” that empowers and engages a diverse student body and staff.

Writing Across Communities will work towards accomplishing its goal by implementing the following initiatives: (Initiative 1) general education writing needs assessment and research; (Initiative 2) development of writing resources (workshops, handouts, website) for students and instructors; (Initiative 3) faculty participation recruitment and training; (Initiative 4) development of interdisciplinary learning communities; (Initiative 5) interdisciplinary writing/tutoring spaces development.

In Writing Across Communities, the interdisciplinary learning communities will be used to pilot the program and provide a venue for data assessment, while encouraging cross curricular connections between different disciplines. The development of writing resources for both students and instructors will lead to an increase and improvement in writing assignments in disciplines other than English. The tutoring spaces will offer locations specifically dedicated to the improvement of writing in general education courses. All these initiatives will create a culture of writing within the college where writing is not just emphasized in English courses. The interdisciplinary connections will ultimately help in the attainment of the college’s mission of
achieving student success “by developing informed and creative students capable of contributing to a knowledge and service based global society” (Broward College “Institutional Vision…”).

ABOUT BROWARD COLLEGE

To understand the need for Writing Across Communities, the history and student population of Broward College needs to be explained. Broward College was originally named the Junior College of Broward County, then later Broward Community College, and eventually Broward College with the introduction of Bachelor programs. It opened in September 1960 with 701 students and 47 faculty and staff. It now serves more than 67,000 students and has more than 2,000 faculty and staff, including 435 fulltime professors. The college offers degree, certificate, and diploma programs, including a Bachelor in Nursing, Bachelor in Education, Associate in Arts, Associate in Applied Science, Associate in Science, and certificates in such fields as avionics, aircraft airframe mechanics, and police academy, as well as an applied technology diploma. In January 2013, the college will offer a Bachelor in Applied Science in Supply Chain Management.

In 2012 the college was ranked in the top 10 percent of community colleges in the U.S. by the prestigious Aspen Institute and became eligible to compete in its 2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Also, Community College Week ranked Broward College fifth in the country among four year institutions in awarding associate’s degrees in the 2010-2011 academic year (“Associate Degree & Certificate Producers, 2012”).

Broward College has a diverse student population representing more than 150 nations with students that range in age from teens to over 60 years of age. According to Community College Week, it is one of the top ten community colleges for the number of associate’s degrees

The level of student writing skills is as diverse as Broward College’s student population. This is evident in statistics from the 2011/2012 academic year. Of the 11,442 students who entered Broward College in fall 2011 (Term 20121) over one-third (33%), 3,837 were enrolled in either EAP (English for foreign language speakers) or prep writing courses. For winter 2012 (Term20122) out of 6,076 students who enrolled twenty-eight percent, 1,728, students were placed in EAP or college prep writing (Division of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness).

The college has begun recognizing the need for improvement in student writing in all its general education courses. In January 2012, a Writing Credit Committee was created which is examining the requirements of writing credit courses and making recommendations on writing outcomes and assignments. Also, anecdotal evidence reflects faculty interest for writing improvement in general education classrooms.

A faculty survey of general education class instructors other than English faculty was completed in July 2012 by the writers of this proposal. The survey showed that general education instructors are interested in addressing issues related to writing within their classes and in resource support from the college. Ninety percent of 100 participants said they thought the college should offer resources that help students with writing assignments in disciplines other than just English. Seventy three percent of the survey participants stated that Broward College should offer writing workshops and online writing materials to all of its general education instructors. Seventy seven percent of the survey participants said they would use discipline specific writing rubrics if they were available. About 57% said they were unsatisfied with the level of student writing, with 82% feeling the largest need for improvement in grammar and sentence fluency (see Appendix A).
STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN BROWARD COLLEGE

In another initiative, the College has also begun collecting data that is examining the quality of writing in general education courses, and evidence shows the need for improvement. One study by Broward College’s General Education Outcomes and Assessments Team examined whether students demonstrated literacy appropriately within the disciplines. A five semester study of eight randomly selected general education courses from 2010-2012 showed that only 64.2 percent of 14,748 students achieved this competency (Walsh-Portillo et al.). Writing is a vital part of literacy within a discipline because it demonstrates critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis of information.

In another study, the General Education Outcomes and Assessments Competency Level Report for 2011-2012 examined levels of success in core competencies in general education courses. Core Competency 2 – to write clearly and coherently - was examined in eight different types of courses and showed that 79 percent of the writing, examined in a total of 4,866 samples, had clarity and coherence (Walsh-Portillo et al). While those numbers are positive, they may not reflect the need for improvement in general education courses because 43 percent of the samples examined came from ENC 1101, an English composition course which is also a general education course. Further studies are needed to evaluate the true level of student writing performance in general education courses other than English.

While Broward College has writing labs and offers Developmental Writing classes, EAP classes, and college English classes, these initiatives are not specifically aimed at addressing specific areas of writing improvement across the curriculum. The Writing Across Communities program would focus on improving and encouraging writing in classes other than English.

In addition, Writing Across Communities ties directly to many of the directives in Broward College’s Strategic Plan, 2012-2017. The Strategic Plan's focus is “transforming students’ lives
by connecting, challenging, completing” (Broward College). Writing Across Communities will help implement this goal through the use of pedagogies that encourage not only student success through writing improvement, but faculty development. The program will create cross discipline learning communities focused on learning-centered teaching and writing to learn pedagogies. The data gathered in these communities ties to Strategy 1.1 of the Strategic Plan which is to “implement data driven initiatives to increase college readiness” (Broward College). Writing Across Communities also directly connects to initiatives in Strategy 1.3 to “align faculty and staff [professional development] opportunities to student success” and to “promote collaborative learning” (Broward College).

Writing Across Communities will connect students from different disciplines and with different writing ability levels, and along with the use of innovative writing pedagogies will create an inclusive culture of writing at Broward College.
DESIRED STUDENT LEARNING AND COLLEGE OUTCOMES

**Student Learning Outcomes**

General Education Competency #2 states that students should be able to write clearly and coherently in all general education courses. The initiative will work towards success in accomplishing the following Student Learning Outcomes which are part of Broward courses:

- In General Education Courses at Broward College, the students shall be able to compose units of discourse and provide ideas and information suitable to the audience and purpose of the discipline.
- In General Education Courses at Broward College, the students shall be able to write comprehensibly using standard written American English grammar and usage.
- In General Education Courses at Broward College, the students shall be able to identify the critical components of research and create discipline appropriate style papers.

**Broward College Outcomes**

In order to facilitate the above student learning outcomes, the college, as an institution, needs to provide adequate training, support, and resources to staff. Therefore, the initiative will work towards success by accomplishing the following Broward College Outcomes:

- Broward College will create a culture of writing by promoting writing in all of its General Education Courses.
- Broward College will provide writing workshops and other resources to all of its General Education course instructors to help them increase and improve their assessment of student writing in the General Education classroom.
- Broward College will adequately fund and support initiatives related to its Writing Across Communities Program.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Across the Curriculum (or WAC) has a complex but rich history in the United States. This section of the QEP proposal surveys the history of writing and the WAC movement in higher education, WAC initiatives in community colleges, effective WAC programs, WAC and basic writing students, as well as the benefits of WAC learning communities.

I: Writing Courses and WAC in Higher Education—A Historical Overview

In his article “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” Mike Rose discusses the “myth of transience,” to which he states that if “x or y” solution is implemented on a college campus, the “problem [of poor student writing] will be solved---in five years, ten years, or a generation---and higher education will be able to return to its real work” (355). Throughout history, state officials, higher education administrators, and faculty members have viewed poor writing as a temporary problem and have relied on single writing courses, such as remedial and Freshman Composition courses, to fix this writing problem. These types of temporary solutions implemented by colleges and universities have not worked, according to Rose. In the course of 125 years, the United States has gone through five literary crises, in which colleges and universities have been “under pressure…to redefine [their] boundaries…[starting first from] the sons of the middle class [of the 1870s], and later the daughters [of the 1910s], and then the American poor [of the 1930s], the immigrant poor [of the 1940s], veterans [of the 1950s], the racially segregated [of the 1960s], and disenfranchised [of the 1970s]” (355). English composition courses alone have not solved the poor student writing stemming from these literacy crises.

Efforts to improve writing in American colleges began in the late 1800s, but were largely ignored by the institutionalization of discipline departments and implementation of traditional lecture-style courses, which were models borrowed from German universities. Writing during this time was not considered a valid academic discipline, but “a set of transcription skills
unrelated to disciplinary activity [or] as a bellettristic art, the product of genius or inspiration” that only talented poets or novelists possessed (Russell 4). Freshman Composition would not be included in the college curriculum until 1874 as a result of the first literacy crisis that emerged from the impact of new technological inventions, the increase in immigration from Eastern Europe, and reformist movements that embraced the democratization of education (Brereton 3). Many discipline scholars felt this course would be “a temporary stopgap until the secondary schools could improve” (Connors 48-49), but this belief, which reflects Mike Rose’s myth of transience theory, did not prove to be true. In the 1910s, the increase in enrollment of middle class students unprepared for the rigors of academia made Freshman Composition an indispensable course in college curriculums across the US (Fleming 30-31). Universities began to hire lower-level instructors and graduate assistants to teach writing courses, which relieved high-ranking professors from having to teach them. Some “cooperation movements” within academia had formed to “enlist teachers of all subjects into the teaching of writing” but these were quickly rejected by discipline departments who felt that writing was not a discipline, but a component of literature, which was the accepted college discipline of the time (qtd. In Bazerman 17).

Freshman Composition courses did not help to solve another literacy crisis in the 1930s, which was brought on by another increase in student enrollment, as well as the presence women and people of lower socio-economic levels in college campuses who were underprepared for the rigors of academia. In 1931, a multidisciplinary effort to improve writing was brought up again at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) convention, whose members concluded that freshman composition courses were not enough to prepare students to write for higher level courses; they advocated more collaborative work among English and non-English educators to design more writing based assignments. However, the Great Depression and ensuing World War II shifted the focus of colleges to other efforts instead of interdisciplinary
writing, so these efforts never took flight. In a second attempt to fix the problems with student writing during that time, colleges and universities began offering a second Freshman Composition course. However, they realized this measure did not solve the continuing problem of poor student writing.

After World War II, colleges saw themselves restructuring their programs and policies in efforts to accommodate a new student population: veterans. Significant changes in the workforce during and after World War II challenged colleges to re-think their traditional curriculums and adjust to these workplace changes—many of which required employees to write in a “host of new situations” (Russell, qtd. in Bazerman 19). This interest in communication and rhetoric studies gave rise to writing studies during the 1960s, namely that of British composition theorists James Britton, Douglas Barnes and Harold Rosen. Britton and his colleagues conducted studies on the writings of British grade school children and concluded that these children could not achieve the level of critical thinking proficiency to respond to traditional “transactional writing” assignments if they did not first write about themselves and the way they felt said topics related to their life experiences (Bazerman 57-58). They described “transactional writing” as those which ask the writer to develop a composition that fulfills a certain task like, for example, to report or supply information to the reader, or to develop an analysis of a particular concept. This writing was similar to the “transcription skills” writing that American students have produced since the 1800s (Russell 4). He discovered that children who were allowed to first write about themselves, about their experiences and backgrounds, and about the way a topic or idea relates to their lives, produced better writing that reflected higher levels of critical thinking and analytical skills. Britton also discovered that cross-disciplinary writing and self-reflection assignments helped students strengthen their writing skills. The results of this observation on the importance of self-reflection became the cornerstone of the writing-to-learn pedagogy. In the classroom, writing-to-learn assignments are short and informal and used to help students
with understanding key concepts and ideas in a course or subject (Kiefer, “What is Writing to Learn”). According to Toby Fulwiler and Art Young, writing to learn is used by writers to “objectify our perceptions of reality” and lead to understanding, discovery, and meaning (qtd. in Kiefer, “A Fuller Definition”).

The work of Britton and his colleagues inspired American scholars to create Writing across the Curriculum initiatives across college campuses in the 1970s. Initiatives such as the Bay Area Writing Project in California and the WAC program at George Mason University used writing-to-learn pedagogies to improve the interdisciplinary writing skills of a new group of students, namely African Americans, women, international, and disabled students who were “long excluded social groups who did not write the dominant form of English” and lacked, regardless if they had been educated or not in the United States, college level writing skills (Russell 9). Many WAC programs used writing-to-learn pedagogies that stemmed from the studies of composition scholars such as Janet Emig, whose groundbreaking work, *The Composition of Twelfth Graders* (1971), was the first article that proposed writing as a process rather than a product. Her article, “Writing as a Mode of Learning” (1977), described writing as a “unique form of learning that deserves increased experimental and theoretical attention” (Bazerman 58). Both of Emig’s articles open up research on student writing, further solidifying it as a scholarly discipline. By the 1980s, a plethora of research articles on student writing as a “central learning process” were produced by faculty involved in composition studies and WAC programs (58). These studies produced the following results: (1) writing is a series of processes, (2) writers produce these processes differently, and (3) these processes depend on the writing task at hand (58). What these studies show is that academic writing proficiency takes time, and that a few English composition courses may not be enough to acquire this proficiency.
II: Writing Across the Curriculum in Community Colleges

As a result of the initiative to improve student writing, different forms of Writing Across the Curriculum emerged as a result of faculty-driven initiatives to improve writing in higher education. Some programs began with informal, writing-to-learn workshops that taught Non-English faculty how to incorporate and assess writing in their courses, while others developed writing centers to help students and faculty in various departments. Some WAC programs focused on faculty from different disciplines working together to improve writing across the curriculum. Other institutions created Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs that trained faculty to teach Writing Intensive (WI) courses within departments where students would be exposed to academic writing and discourse within their disciplines. These programs began in four-year universities and, soon after, emerged in community colleges.

Although there are no large-scale studies that have measured the effectiveness of WAC/WID programs across the nation, studies like the 2005 National TYCA Research Initiative Survey do provide a glimpse of what elements characterize long standing WAC/WID programs from those that have died out. In 2005, the Two Year College Association (TYCA) committee distributed a questionnaire to community colleges across the nation. The TYCA sought to measure “satisfaction within four areas [:] Assessment, Technology and Pedagogy, Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID), and Teaching Conditions” (Roberts 138). Only 63 community colleges reported the presence of WAC/WID programs in their campuses as opposed to 121 community colleges in 1987 (140-141). It is important to note that although 63 community colleges stated their campuses housed a WAC or WID program, other schools who did not report a WAC/WID program did report the existence of WAC/WID components such as Writing Intensive (WI) courses; learning communities with multidisciplinary faculty focused on improving writing in non-English courses; writing centers with multidisciplinary writing resources available; and writing workshops for non-English faculty. However, the reason for the decline in WAC/WID programs at community colleges is not due to
these WAC/WID components, but to non-WAC/WID factors such as (1) the lack of coordinated program efforts at community colleges, (2) the excessive workloads of faculty who teach larger class sizes at the community college, (3) the resistant attitudes of such faculty, and (4) the lack of funding and institutional support to continue these programs.

WAC programs were first grass roots movements that faculty put together to improve the quality of writing in non-English courses. However, many of these initiatives were random efforts borne from the voluntary impulses of faculty at four-year institutions. When community colleges tried to model these initiatives, they discovered that these initiatives could not continue due to a lack of coordinated program efforts needed to sustain them. As Dr. Mary McMullen-Light, director of the WID program at Metropolitan Community College-Longview, states, “the structure and arrangement of community colleges do not typically accommodate independent WAC programs but rather promote the infusion of various new initiatives that emerge through other institutional agendas and don’t require the same level of oversight a WAC program does.” These initiatives do not always merge together and may even compete with one another in their attempt to draw attention to college administrators to fund them (Dr. McMullen-Light), which results in a lack of coordinated efforts on the part of faculty interested in building WAC/WID programs in community colleges. The TYCA survey results concluded that “approaches tend to be scattershot, not organized or developed in a way that allows phases of growth” (Dr. McMullen-Light). Although the survey pointed out components such as Writing Intensive (WI) courses, learning communities, and writing-to-learn assignments did exist at institutions that did not report a WAC/WID program structure, “there was still a need for more elements of a program, including release time for coordination, more attention to scheduling issues, and ongoing staff development” (Roberts 143). According to WAC scholar Chris Thaiiss and his research partner Tara Porter, long-standing WAC/WID programs have at least one director and committee of faculty members to help run the coordinated activities of the program (see p. 17 for further discussion of WAC directors).
A second barrier affecting the longevity of WAC/WID programs in community colleges is the workloads of its faculty members. The viability of WAC/WID programs in four-year institutions rests in the availability of teaching assistants to help full-time faculty grade WAC/WID assignments or have these assistants teach the WAC/WID courses altogether. However, writing professors David Hennessy and Ruba Evans mention that “at the community college level such teaching assistants do not exist” (269). Dr. McMullen-Light also adds that faculty at community colleges “are palpably busier than in previous decades” because they not only juggle “staggering 5-course or 15-hour teaching loads” but also have “special assignments to task forces” and are involved in a “myriad higher education initiatives, including assessment” at their institutions. Aside from these obligations, Hennessy and Evans explain that class sizes at community colleges may be larger than those at four-year institutions, leaving faculty with little time to provide quality feedback necessary to help students improve their writing skills (269). For instance, large lecture style courses may incorporate writing but without grades or instructor comments (269). These large courses may also force instructors to assign one long writing assignment, instead of shorter writing assignments, which can “result in students getting back assignments and earning passing grades on inferior writing” (270). For this reason, Dr. McMullen-Light recommends that “administrators…approve release time or pay units for WAC faculty participants, organizers, and directors.” Hennessy and Evans also recommend better faculty training “not merely on teaching writing methods and on creating worthy writing prompts, but also [on] ‘ways to teach students to evaluate the adequacy of an argument, strategies to show students how to navigate through facts, inferences, and opinions in their writing assignments’” (273-273).

The third barrier affecting the growth and sustainability of WAC/WID programs at the community college level is the resistant attitudes of non-English faculty toward participating in interdisciplinary efforts to improve student writing. Dr. McMullen Light contends that many non-English professors view WAC/WID as a “specialty area within the field of Composition and
Rhetoric” and may perceive it as “English Across the Curriculum.” WAC scholar Susan McLeod states that many writing programs have broken away from traditional English departments and these have established WAC initiatives in their programs. This phenomenon occurring within new writing departments often influences upper level administrators to make WAC the responsibility of the college’s writing department, which influences other disciplines to consider it an “English program” (McLeod). Another attitude that non-English faculty have toward WAC is that they “are concerned over their ability to evaluate and teach writing” (Hennessy and Evans 268) which negatively affects their “willingness to assign or confidence in assessing written work” which is a “deterrent to WAC” (Roberts 143-144). Dr. McMullen-Light suggests that “housing [a WAC/WID program] outside of the English department can strengthen the image that the position belongs to all departments.” Hennessy and Evans also recommend the following: “WAC-related faculty development opportunities need to allow for significant contact between composition instructors and those beginning to adapt writing for learning other disciplines….At the same time, institutions that can find discipline-specific facilitators for such training are likely to be more successful in overcoming faculty resistance” (273).

The fourth barrier preventing the establishment of WAC/WID programs in community colleges is the lack of funding and institutional support needed to sustain these programs. As was stated by Dr. McMullen Light, community colleges engage in a number of program initiatives, which often compete among one another for institutional funding. She argues that “administrators are typically assigned to [these] initiatives and can be the decision makers in terms of how available monies are doled out and even who is selected to be involved.” Among these competing initiatives, WAC may not get the attention needed by administrators and the monetary support to sustain itself as a program. However, Dr. McMullen-Light suggests that community colleges “find ways to fold WAC into existing college priorities and initiatives [such as] Learning Communities, Service Learning, Distance Education, New Media, Assessment, First Year Experience, and the Writing Center, by demonstrating how it can assist with
achieving their goals.” She recommends faculty interested in establishing a WAC/WID program to look at their institution’s current infrastructure and determine how a WAC/WID program can enhance that infrastructure. With many community colleges under SACS accreditation pressures, it is no wonder that WAC programs have emerged as QEP plans to help schools with their assessment of student learning outcomes. Despite these four deterrents to the establishment and growth of WAC/WID programs at community colleges, there is hope for community colleges to implement WAC as a viable program that can establish a culture of writing at these institutions.

III: Characteristics of Effective WAC Programs

As a result of the historical events of the past that helped shaped the WAC movements, WAC/WID programs have evolved differently in each institution based on student body, faculty climate, and administrative culture. In 2005, WAC Scholar Chris Thaiss and his research partner Tara Porter launched a national project called the International WAC/WID Mapping Project in which they electronically distributed surveys to over 2,600 educational institutions (540). Out of the 2600 institutions contacted, from 2006-2008, 1,338 US and Canadian institutions responded to the survey; from this number, 625 indicated the existence of a WAC/WID program, 568 being only from the United States (540). Out of the number of institutions who reported WAC/WID programs, 92 came from community colleges in the United States during 2006-2008 (541). This number is higher than the 63 community colleges that reported the existence of WAC/WID programs in the national TYCA survey in 2005, but still lower than the 121 community colleges who reported programs in a 1987 survey of community college WAC programs. In their project, Thaiss and Porter highlight characteristics of sustainable, long-term WAC/WID programs. Of the 568 US programs in existence, 240 have WAC/WID programs over 10 years old, 158 programs being more than 15 years old (558).
What factors characterize these 240 programs? Thaiss and Porter discovered that “continuity of leadership is a factor in program longevity: the average director of an older program has served 6-10 years” (559). They noted that “among older programs, the average length of service of the current director is significantly greater than that of directors of younger programs” (559). Moreover, if an institution places a tenure-line faculty as its QEP director, “WAC becomes a long-term priority in institutions” (559). Tenure-line faculty who are satisfied with their position at an institution will most likely stay at that institution and take part in many of its initiatives. This part of Thaiss and Porter’s study did not specify whether community colleges that had long standing programs also had long-standing tenure-line directors. WAC scholar Susan McLeod, who has overseen her institution’s WAC program since 1982, recommends that WAC directors learn statistics in order to assess their WAC programs appropriately. Colleges and universities then may want to consider hiring fulltime directors with knowledge in statistics and grant writing aside from their writing program management experience. Whatever the organizational structure of the WAC/WID program, one thing is common: a director that oversees the program operations and reports to higher ranking administrators, coordinators who assist the director and/or help run the writing center, and a committee consisting of multidisciplinary faculty that serve as mentors/recruiters of other faculty members. These different members of WAC/WID are integral to the function and life of the program because they serve as agents of change who represent the success or failure of WAC/WID at their institution.

Presently, a list of current WAC/WID programs was compiled into a table outlining their program components (See Appendix B). This table is not from Thaiss and Porter’s study, but was compiled by the writers of this proposal. Many of these programs share the same characteristics outlined in Thaiss and Porter’s study. Most programs contain websites describing the mission, goals, program components, and points of contact. These websites also contain online faculty resources such as sample WAC/WID syllabi, sample assignments, writing rubrics, among other material (see Appendix B).
Many programs today also offer faculty professional development opportunities that focus on specific WAC/WID issues such as designing Writing-to-Learn assignments, collaborating with fellow colleagues, and teaching Writing Intensive (WI) courses. Thaiss and Porter reported that the “program feature of the highest frequency in long-standing programs is the faculty workshop (87 percent) [or 208 out of 240 programs]” (561). They discovered that professional development in long-standing programs exist to “support a curriculum that requires students to write across the curriculum” (562). Older programs began “infusing writing across the curriculum through requirements” and therefore, it is no doubt that Writing Intensive (WI) courses comprise 67% of long standing programs (561). These researchers also note that not all long standing programs have implemented WI courses, but if “similar requirements are instituted at an appropriate time in the evolution of a program, then that curricular presence creates a continuing need for the kinds of faculty development and assessment services provided by the WAC program” (561).

These current programs also have strong ties with writing centers, or created WAC/WID specific writing centers, which help students with multidisciplinary or discipline-specific writing projects and/or portfolios. In the Thaiss and Porter survey, out of the 240 long standing programs, 75% or 182 of these programs have affiliations with the college’s writing center (560). Also a characteristic of long standing programs is that programs have library staff members who work with WAC faculty and students (560). Some programs may have conferences, institutes, journals, or awards that showcase talented faculty and/or students in the program, while others may have writing fellows, which are talented WAC/WID students trained to tutor students in WAC/WID courses.

In community colleges, the same WAC/WID programmatic structure exists. These schools have online websites with information for faculty and students, online teaching resources for faculty, faculty professional development workshops, writing centers or online writing centers available, writing rubrics, and Writing Intensive (WI) courses (See Appendix B).
However, many WAC/WID programs at community colleges do not have the additional help of graduate students, student writing fellows, and many do not provide opportunities for students to showcase their best work. This may be due in part to the lack of available funds community colleges have to sponsor these student opportunities.

For the community colleges who have written QEP plans on Writing Across the Curriculum, similar patterns emerge in their proposed program structures (See Appendix C). These colleges are working to establish faculty professional development, online faculty resources, writing centers or connections to existing ones, writing rubrics, and student perception surveys. They also want to implement WAC directors, coordinators, and/or an interdisciplinary faculty committee to help oversee the functions of the program. What should be distinguished between already established WAC/WID programs and QEP-WAC programs is the issue of time and program budgets. QEP-WAC proposals are pilot programs under the duress of 5-year time limits, where program officials must actively measure the effectiveness of their pilot components. If the pilots do not demonstrate evidence of program success, funding to keep these pilots running ceases, and programs end. The WAC programs that are already established may not have emerged as Quality Enhancement plans, which are governed by time-constraints and smaller budgets. These older WAC programs have been funded by their institution’s funds as well as external funds, the most successful ones having established relationships with grant funders that keep these programs running (Thaiss and Porter 555).

IV: WAC Programs and Basic Writing Students

Colleges and universities have tried to implement solutions they viewed as temporary “fix-it” initiatives for poor student writing, starting with the first Freshman composition course (1870s); then with a second semester composition course (1910s); and then adding basic writing courses (1960s). Colleges and universities believed that creating these courses would make the problem of weak student writing skills disappear, and that students who took these
courses would automatically become competent academic writers. This has proven untrue. Dr. Melissa Faulkner, English faculty at Cedarville University, explains that it is “unreasonable to expect one semester of remedial English to ‘fix’ the problem” of poor student writing if these students, who have had “twelve years of writing instruction at the primary and secondary level,” are still “matriculating into university...as unable to write” (10). Faulkner explains that the language of the college disciplines is a “conlang”, or “a language whose phonology, grammar, and/or vocabulary has been consciously devised by an individual or group” and many first year college students who take remedial writing courses are not familiar with these conlangs (3). David Hennessy and Ruby Evans further explain that “English departments in community colleges put new emphasis on serving the language development needs of... students” and focus on teaching remedial and first year composition courses “on various [paragraph and] essay formats” rather than critical thinking and analytical writing skills that are characteristics of discipline-specific writing (266-267). In Broward College, 746 out of 2564 or 29% of students who took college preparatory writing courses before 2012 unsuccessfully completed General Education writing courses from January-May of 2012 (see Appendix D). This data suggests that even if students pass their remedial courses and pass their first year composition classes, they may not yet have the practice and knowledge of discipline specific writing conventions needed when they take non-English courses.

Moreover, Dr. Melissa Faulkner explains that students who take preliminary English writing courses (i.e. college preparatory and First Year composition courses) improve their writing abilities; however, after they take these courses and enroll in discipline specific courses, their writing skills decline due to limited writing opportunities that discipline courses provide to them (3). She cites a study done at Cedarville University that assessed writing samples of first year students through seniors. A 15-point rubric was created to assess the writing level of students with criterion focused on “context and purpose of writing, organization and structure, critical thought and appropriate support, language and comprehensibility and grammar” (10-11).
First year students received a mean score of 11.72 out of 15 points on the rubric, whereas sophomores received 8.84 points, juniors received 12.17 points, and seniors, 9.05 (11). Dr. Faulkner concludes from this study that “the majority of students need writing remediation to learn the norms and conventions of academic writing... in their chosen disciplines” (11). Remedial writing and Freshman Composition courses are not enough to fully prepare students for the rigors of discipline writing that they are expected to produce once they have passed their English courses. Moreover, Dr. Faulkner calls for more writing across the curriculum and within disciplines to help students, especially remedial writers, as “they grapple with the new grammars and contexts introduced to them” in non-English courses (5).

V: WAC and Learning Communities

Dr. Terry Zawacki and Dr. Ashley Williams of George Mason University define Learning Communities (LCs) as “curriculum change initiatives that link, cluster, or integrate two or more courses during a given term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and involve a common cohort of students” (109). The type of LC that is of particular interest to the WAC QEP proposal writers at Broward College is the linked course because it is currently offered in Broward College. They also constitute 52% of instructional delivery methods in 63 community colleges that reported WAC/WID programs and 60% of delivery methods in 279 community colleges without WAC/WID programs, according to the 2005 results of the National TYCA Research Initial Survey (Roberts 142). Linked courses are “two courses which students are concurrently enrolled” whose instructors from different disciplines design “integrative and collaborative” writing assignments that fulfill departmental as well as institutional learning outcomes (Cargill and Kalikoff 83).

At the college level, learning communities have existed since the early 1980s and have been used to “reduce student attrition rates” and “create a more coherent, less fragmented curriculum” (Cargill and Kalikoff 83). However, respondents of the National TYCA Research Initiative Survey commented that scheduling issues frequently interfered with the enrollment of
students in linked courses at community colleges, which contributed to their viewing “interdisciplinary cooperation [as] a barrier to WAC programs” (143). Writing director Carly Sills states that learning communities are difficult to maintain because of the “fragmented structure of the university” which “leads to misdirected turf protection so that interdisciplinary courses often slip into the cracks between departments, inviting neglect and eventually the program’s demise.” In other words, scheduling issues may be the symptom of departments not wanting to work together to ensure the enrollment success of linked courses. Thus, it is no doubt that “almost one third of 200 open-ended comments” in the TYCA survey referred to a “need for a model that better fit the scheduling needs of two-year college students” (143). Despite these comments, there is research that supports the effectiveness of linked courses across the disciplines on student learning and writing performance, research that supports a particular model of linked courses that uses interdisciplinary learning and writing to solve real-world problems in the professions of their disciplines.

The Lake Research Partners were asked by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to conduct a study on non-traditional students in higher education. In their 2011 publication “Exploring Student Attitudes, Aspirations, and Barriers to Success,” Lake Research Partners explains that students in community colleges and universities perceived general education requirements as courses which “were uninteresting, did not seem applicable to their major or area of interest, or were unnecessarily difficult” (22). These students also felt they had “to spend a lot of time and energy [on Gen Ed courses]… before they [could] begin studying things they really want to study” (22). Hence, WAC scholar Chris Thaiss concludes that students often take Gen Ed courses “to get them out of the way’ before the real work of the major” (64). Thaiss also notes that general education courses are distinct fragments of different disciplines that students perceive no connections among them (72). However, Learning Communities across the curriculum, which emphasize writing as a mode of learning, can produce the following:
“collaborative social and intellectual cohorts, [increased] student and faculty enthusiasm,…and create a more coherent, less fragmented curriculum” (Cargill and Kalikoff 83).

In a longitudinal study of linked courses, Agronomy 356 and English 309, researchers Julie Watts and Rebecca Burnett wanted to investigate whether an interdisciplinary linked course improved the writing skills of its students more than a traditional, stand-alone Agronomy course. Twelve writing samples were collected, 6 from the linked course and 6 from a stand-alone Agronomy course in which student names were kept anonymous. These samples consisted of 20-page reports that students wrote in groups as if to present their findings to industry agronomy experts. Six assessment raters (which were not the LC instructors) comprised the assessment group that first conducted a holistic reading of 18 reports (which were not the actual writing samples) and classified these 18 reports according to the following criteria: “articulated purpose, consideration of context and consultant’s role; adaptation of audience, effective organization; content completeness and accuracy; useful visuals; appropriate signaling (i.e. headings, subheadings, topic sentences); sentence clarity and conciseness; and compliance with mechanical/grammatical conventions” (Watts and Burnett 220). Once the raters established a scoring system of 1-5 (1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest), they proceeded to read the 12 reports from the linked and stand-alone courses. Results from the writing assessment revealed that writing samples from linked courses received higher scores than writing samples from stand-alone agronomy courses. This result indicates that linked courses which focus on instructor feedback of student writing; design integrative writing assignments that focus on real-world, problem solving components of the discipline; and use class space for student group activities, positively impact the writing performance and learning modalities of students.

Another study, conducted by writing researchers Kima Cargill and Beth Kalikoff, paired a composition course with a psychology course. Cargill and Kalikoff note that students who were enrolled in the linked courses were relatively new to college and had not taken psychology
courses compared to students in the stand-alone psychology course that was used for comparison purposes in this study (86). Also, students who took the linked courses were lower level students than the upper level students taking the stand-along psychology course. Many students in the unlinked psychology class also had taken more writing classes than those students enrolled in the linked courses. Results indicate that students in the linked courses performed better academically than students in the unlinked psychology course. Also, there were more students who withdrew from the unlinked course than in the linked course (89). Cargill and Kalikoff explain that the results of better academic performance in the linked courses may have been due to the “social and intellectual relationships” that students in this cohort formed that were the results of “promoted study groups and partnerships that were less likely to occur for students in the unlinked group” (90). These partnerships contributed to students feeling more confident about taking exams and more comfortable in the college environment that these linked courses provided for them (90).

The research of interdisciplinary learning communities shows that there is both room for discovery and room for change in the way colleges introduce discipline-specific knowledge and practices to their student populations. In the case of community colleges, general education courses must serve not only as the foundations to a student’s well-rounded education, but as intellectual spaces where that student gets a glimpse of the professional environment that these disciplines encompass in the real world. Constructing learning communities that focus on the real-world applications of disciplinary theories and concepts through writing-to-learn assignments will improve the disciplinary writing skills of students.
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Writing Across Communities is proposed as a five-year pilot program. Its success will mitigate its continuance as a long-standing initiative. During those five years the program will create a number of initiatives geared towards improving student writing and faculty development. Those initiatives include the creation of rubric assessment teams, faculty workshops, interdisciplinary learning communities, web resources, and validating research. The next few pages show a five-year blueprint for launching and administrating the program.
WRITING ACROSS THE COMMUNITIES TIMELINE

I. YEAR ONE

Fall Semester 2012:

- **Write job description and responsibilities** of QEP director, campus and Writing Space coordinators, and Writing Space tutors.

- **Write job description** for WAC Learning Community faculty.

Winter Semester 2013:

- **WAC Student and Faculty Focus Groups: Establish faculty and student focus groups introducing the WAC concept to faculty members**: two workshops will be set up for faculty focus groups and two workshops for student focus groups. The faculty and student workshops will be held in each of the three campuses: South, North, and Central. In these focus groups, faculty will complete informal surveys regarding what they want and need in terms of their courses. Students will also complete the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and faculty will complete the (Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE)); these surveys measure faculty and student perceptions on teaching and learning at Broward College. These focus groups are important to figure out which disciplines are the most enthusiastic about this initiative and would want to participate in the Learning Community Workshops the following semester; more information regarding specific writing outcomes that faculty would like to see the students achieve in their respective Gen Ed courses from each discipline will help build a foundation for the rubrics later in the program.

- **Search and interview for QEP director, campus coordinators, and Writing Center coordinators.**
Summer Semester 2013:

-Hire QEP director, campus coordinators, and writing center coordinators: have these individuals prepare a plan that details the operational, day-to-day activities of the program and Writing Spaces.

-Hire Program staff members: have coordinators search, interview, and hire staff members such as Writing Space Instructors and Writing Space tutors as needed.

II. YEAR TWO

Fall Semester 2013:

-Learning Community Workshops: Invite interested Gen Ed faculty and interested ENC 1101 and ENC 1102 faculty to participate in team teaching workshops to brainstorm ideas about enhancing writing across the curriculum: Enthusiastic Gen Ed faculty about this project can meet with enthusiastic English faculty. It is important to let the bonding between Gen Ed and English faculty naturally happen instead of assigning them to their Learning Community counterparts. Participating faculty will be informed that the objective of these workshops is to choose a Learning Community partner and design a Learning Community course plan in which they create WAC writing goals and writing assignments with the help of the English teachers.

-Select first pilot group of Gen Ed courses for Winter 2014 semester: two Learning Community cohorts, each from South, Central, and North campus, will be selected to be in the pilot group - a total of 6 learning community cohorts.

-Recruit faculty members for holistic paper reading sessions.

-Select and train Rubric Consultants: Train Faculty in selected Learning Communities on how to help Gen Ed faculty create writing assessments. Faculty committed to teaching Learning Communities with Gen Ed faculty will go through training that will prepare them to mentor
discipline Assessment Teams on creating discipline specific rubrics. The ones who would oversee this training or be the trainers themselves could be the coordinators at our various campuses. Faculty already committed to teaching paired courses in this pilot will most likely want to participate in creating the rubric, but the important thing is that we invite all faculty members from that selected discipline’s department to also participate in creating this instrument. This would be another way to recruit faculty who may not have attended the focus groups and/or who are not part of a Learning Community to teach such a course in the future.

-Set up holistic paper reading sessions to determine Learning Community Assessment Rubrics: If, for example, the first Learning Community pilot group consists of faculty from Philosophy, Psychology, Social Sciences, and Education, then each of these disciplines will form discipline Assessment Teams. Each Assessment Team, with the mentorship of the rubric consultants, will then convene during the summer to read sample writing assignments from students in these Gen Ed courses in order to determine criteria and categories for their writing assessments. For example, the education Assessment Team will read papers from students who took the same type of education course that will be piloted in the fall semester.

-Create Writing Assessments for Learning Community courses: Each Assessment Team will create a rubric for its respective Learning Community. For example, the philosophy Assessment Team will create the rubric for the philosophy and English paired course, the psychology Assessment Team will create the rubric for the psychology and English pair, and so on. Each Assessment Team could create three types of rubrics: one for a diagnostic essay, another for lower stakes writing, and a third for high stakes writing.

Winter Semester 2014:

-Writing Spaces open to students and instructors

-WAC-LC Pilot Group 1 begins: Paired Courses will collect the following writing samples:

a. Diagnostic Writing Sample: Early in the semester, WAC-LCs could have students produce a response to a diagnostic writing assignment; copies of these diagnostic
student samples will then be sent to the Assessment Teams for scoring. This sample would be examined to determine what kinds of writing problems exist when students begin these Gen Ed courses.

b. **Low Stakes Writing Sample**: WAC-LC faculty collect samples of low stakes writing from their students and send copies of these to be scored by the Assessment Team.

c. **High Stakes Writing Sample**: toward the end of the semester, WAC-LC faculty could collect samples of high stakes student writing and send copies of these to be scored by the Assessment Team.

-Rubric Assessment Teams meet and score samples: The rubric Assessment Teams who met in the fall will convene throughout the Winter 2014 semester to read and score these samples using the discipline rubrics they created. Rubric assessment teams could also collect 2-groups of random writing samples from Gen Ed courses not in a WAC-LC: one group in the beginning of the semester and the second group of samples toward the end of the semester. This could be done to compare the writing in traditional Gen Ed courses versus the writing in WAC-LCs. Coordinators would oversee the work of these rubric assessment teams.

-Utilization of WAC Writing Spaces: Faculty in WAC-LCs will require their students to go to the writing spaces to get help with their discipline specific writing. The Writing Spaces will set up a computer system that tracks the frequency of student walk-ins and appointments; they will also have Writing Space tutors collect information about common writing issues among students in these WAC-LCs as well as demographic data on these students.

-Student Feedback Data of WAC-LCs: students will be asked to complete questionnaires about their experiences in their WAC-LC courses at the end of the fall semester.

-QEP Director and Coordinators will collect demographic student data, passing grades, failing grades, attrition rates in these WAC-LCs, and compare them to those in traditional Gen Ed courses. Coordinators will tabulate the results from the assessment team grading sessions and prepare a report to the QEP director.
- **End of Winter Semester**: faculty who participated in the focus groups, in WAC-LCs, in the assessment teams, along with coordinators and QEP director, will hold a luncheon to discuss the results of the 1st WAC-LC Pilot groups. This group would propose a WAC committee and invite faculty to join this committee to discuss what must be modified or changed for the 2nd WAC-LC pilot groups.

**Summer 2014:**

- **Writing Across Communities Website**: QEP director will oversee development of a Multi-disciplinary website where all students and instructors can access writing resources across the disciplines. Students will have access to web links, handouts, and videos that help with writing conventions and documentation styles in the different disciplines. All general education instructors will have access to grading rubric(s) and other pedagogical tools for writing (not to be confused with the three rubrics that will be used to measure the three types of writing samples, see. p. 30-31). Part of this will be having a mandatory online tutorial for adjunct professors teaching Gen Ed Courses that have resources for how to grade, as well as how to incorporate writing.
III. YEAR THREE

Fall 2014:

-Faculty Recruitment and Training for WAC-LC Pilot Group 2.

-English faculty recruitment and training: English faculty will be recruited to work as Mentors (similar to e-associates) for other discipline faculty who want or need support to incorporate more writing into their courses.

-WAC Writing Spaces Open for use to all students taking general education courses.

Winter 2015:

-WAC-LC Group 2 begins: Suggested modifications from earlier year will be employed, but the same writing data will be collected for long term program assessment.

-Student Feedback Data of WAC-LCs: students will be asked to complete surveys about their experiences in their WAC-LC courses at the end of the semester.

-QEP Director and Coordinators: will collect demographic student data, passing grades, failing grades, attrition rates in these WAC-LCs, and compare them to those in traditional Gen Ed courses. Coordinators will tabulate the results from the Assessment Team grading sessions and prepare a report to the QEP director.

-English Faculty mentoring will begin.

-WAC staff will plan for upcoming professional development and student workshops.

Summer 2015:

-Coordinator oversees creation of Writing Across Communities Journal and/or Blog. This will be a way for the college to promote its “learning-centered” mission, and provide opportunities for students to showcase their work.
IV. YEAR FOUR

Fall 2015:

- Faculty recruitment and training for WAC-LC Group 3.
- Writing Across Communities Workshops offered to both students and instructors. They will be held each major semester. For instructors, the workshops will be part of the college’s professional development offerings, and for students they will be offered through student skills workshops throughout the academic year.

Winter 2016:

- WAC-LC Group 3 begins: Suggested modifications from earlier year are employed, but same writing data will be collected for long term program assessment.
- Student Feedback Data of WAC-LCs: students could be asked to complete questionnaires about their experiences in their WAC-LC courses at the end of the fall semester.
- QEP Director and Coordinators: will collect demographic student data, passing grades, failing grades, attrition rates in these WAC-LCs, and compare them to those in traditional Gen Ed courses. Coordinators will tabulate the results from the assessment team grading sessions and prepare a report to the QEP director.
- Writing Across Communities Workshops continue.
- First Writing Across Communities Blog published.

Summer 2016:

- Coordinators begins planning for upcoming on-campus WAC Symposium (Winter 2017) where students can showcase and read their works.
- QEP Director begins searching and applying for grants to sustain the program beyond first five years.
V. YEAR FIVE

Fall 2016:

- **Faculty recruitment and training** for WAC-LC Pilot Group 4.
- **WAC Symposium** planning continues.
- **Writing Across Communities Workshops** continue.

Winter 2017:

- **WAC-LC Group 4 begins**: Suggested modifications from earlier year are employed, but same writing data will be collected for long term program assessment.
- **Student Feedback Data of WAC-LCs**: students could be asked to complete questionnaires about their experiences in their WAC-LC courses at the end of the semester.
- **QEP Director and Coordinators**: will collect demographic student data, passing grades, failing grades, attrition rates in these WAC-LCs, and compare them to those in traditional Gen Ed courses. Coordinators will tabulate the results from the assessment team grading sessions and prepare a report to the QEP director.
- **WAC Symposium takes place end of semester.**
- **2nd WAC Blog published.**
- **Writing Across the Curriculum Workshops** continue.

Summer 2017:

- **QEP director and coordinators will examine data and compile final report** to assess the impact and success of the program and how the Broward College will continue to fund this initiative.
ASSESSMENT PLAN

I. Overview

Broward College is in the process of creating a strong assessment of its general education courses. In 2010-2011 a General Education Task Force was formed and all general education courses were revised. One of the core competencies had to do with writing clearly and coherently. Faculty engaged in ample discussions to find ways which students improved writing in their courses. Research states that multiple assessment methods are best to assess success in writing initiatives. As a result, faculty from many schools across the country engaged in generating various assessments to meet the specific learning outcomes assigned to their courses.

These same assessment methods will be part of Writing Across Communities. To create a culture of writing, one of the initiatives of Writing Across Communities will be to implement a learning communities model of paired courses. This model will be used to assess student writing performance during the Writing Across Communities' pilot for 2012-2017. Moreover, this model will not only serve as an assessment structure for faculty and BC, but provide an enriching academic environment for students. Faculty from different disciplines will learn from each other and will serve as mentors to new groups of faculty as they engage in various assessment methods, collect data, share information and make improvements that will result in student success.

Faculty that will work in team teaching will complete a Learning Community Proposal. The teams will consist of an English professor and general education course professor. They will each select one of their courses creating a theme that guides the focus of the community and combines selected content of those two courses. At least four (4) assignments will connect the paired courses comprised of a cohort of students who are co-registered in the same courses for the term, three of which will be collected to assess student writing.
The purpose of Writing Across Communities is to create a culture of writing and promote writing throughout the college community. In order to obtain this, resources and professional development opportunities will be provided for faculty to increase their willingness to engage students in improving writing, changing attitudes about writing, and creating an environment of collaboration within the campus community.

II. Assessment Methods

The assessment strategies will include surveys, rubrics, writing samples, discipline specific assessment teams, and writing spaces. These strategies will add learning opportunities that will improve the writing skills of our students and that will lead to student success in the courses that they take.

Surveys

Surveys will be used to gather information that will help determine some of the needs of the faculty and students, and what their perceptions and attitudes on writing are. The data will provide a baseline and a starting point to implement changes to promote writing. The first step is to have focus groups of faculty determine their concerns, interests and areas they want to work on. The focus groups of students will provide information on their academic needs. A Faculty Perception Survey will be given to faculty at the beginning of workshops and at the end to observe changes in attitudes. Additionally, this survey will be given to faculty who work with other instructors that are collaborating in projects and creating writing tools to improve their courses. The results of the survey will provide information that will indicate if changes in attitudes can also produce changes in teaching strategies.

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) will be administered to faculty. The (CCFSSE) will provide information from faculty about their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences, their teaching practices, and will be a way to invite faculty to increase conversations about student engagement and student success. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) will be administered to
student focus groups and students enrolled in Learning Community courses. Surveys will be
given to faculty and students at the beginning (to provide a baseline) and end of the course to
document their experience and find ways to improve writing in future Learning Community
courses.

Writing Samples

As mentioned in the literature review of this proposal, writing is a process that needs to be assessed in many stages. Writing samples will be collected in Learning Community courses and in non-Learning Community courses to establish a baseline and make comparisons. The assessment teams will score these samples using rubrics designed for three types of writing samples. Analysis of the improvement of writing skills will be done at the end of the term and recommendations will be noted and discussed with faculty.

The first assignment will be a diagnostic writing sample that provides information about student writing problems at the beginning of the pilot’s semester. This writing sample will be used to measure the first student learning outcome which involves composing units of discourse and providing ideas and information suitable to the audience and purpose of the discipline (see p.8).

A low stakes writing sample will be the second writing sample that will be collected from the paired courses. Low stakes writing samples are informal assignments such as quickwrites, thinkpieces, and written discussions that allow students to organize their thought process as they learn the concepts and content of a course. This writing sample will be used to measure the second student learning outcome which involves writing comprehensibly using standard written American English grammar and usage (see p. 8).

A high stakes writing sample will be the third writing sample that will be collected from the paired courses. High stakes writing samples will be assigned during the latter half of the term and include formal writings that demonstrate knowledge of research writing, citation, and documentation conventions within the student’s discipline. This third writing sample will be used
to measure the third student learning outcome which is to identify the critical components of research and create discipline appropriate style papers (see p. 8).

Rubrics

These three types of writing given to students in paired courses will be scored by assessment teams. Faculty can assign several writing pieces, but three of those must be a diagnostic essay, a low stakes writing sample, and a high stakes writing sample. These three types of writing are what the assessment teams are going to collect and assess using writing rubrics. Creating rubrics will provide a more objective manner to assess papers. The assessment team will not score other assignment besides the three writing samples mentioned above.

Aside from the three main types of writing samples, program and writing center coordinators will provide faculty with individualized rubrics to help them with other assignments they may want to create in their Learning Community courses. As additional faculty from different disciplines become part of the assessment teams, more discipline specific rubrics may be created and others will be able to use them in their courses. Faculty will also have access to online sites that provide additional resources to design effective rubrics.

Discipline Assessment Teams

Discipline assessment teams will be those groups of faculty who will collect and score the three writing samples from the paired courses. These assessment teams will consist of 8-10 faculty members and be discipline specific, meaning that a majority of faculty members in each team must belong to that team’s discipline. For example, if one of the paired courses is English and psychology, then a psychology discipline assessment team will be set up. This also means that a majority of members in that psychology team must be faculty who teach psychology courses. Faculty that will serve in the Learning Communities can participate in the discipline assessment teams. However, to prevent scoring bias, these faculty members will not
participate in their own discipline’s assessment team. Rubric consultants will be selected and these will offer training for faculty involved in the assessment teams.

Assessment Teams will receive professional development training and consultants from outside the college will be brought in to train faculty. They will be available to provide assistance in developing rubrics and later the trained faculty will become faculty fellows that will provide training to the new groups of faculty. The initial activities will be to read sample papers from randomly selected courses similar to the ones that will be part of the pilot study. Rubrics will be created for each of the paired courses (i.e. English/Philosophy) and for each type of writing sample (diagnostic essay, lower stakes writing, and high stakes writing). These teams will score them and discussions among faculty will lead to continuous improvement of teaching, the modifying of assessment tools and increases in student learning.

**Writing Spaces**

The writing spaces will be used as a data collection lab. The creation of the writing spaces will increase the opportunities to reach out to students and offer additional assistance to improve students’ writing skills. Surveys and attendance data will be documented to analyze and compare support services and track students that are using the writing spaces. Virtual writing spaces will provide assistance to those students that will not be able to attend during the spaces’ regular working hours.
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

I. QEP Director

The QEP Director is responsible for all the aspects of the QEP. The primary responsibility of the Director is to effectively carry out the obligations and oversee the implementation of all activities, objectives, and outcomes of the program. The Director is to work collaboratively with the QEP Advisory Committee, faculty, administration and support staff for the comprehensive coordination and administration of all matters relating to personnel, students, scheduling, and program review.

The QEP Director is a full-time position or a tenure-track faculty position with a four-class release time. His or her responsibilities are effective coordination and leadership in directing all activities related with the program at all of the campuses. He or she works closely and collaboratively with faculty, administration, and support staff, provides supervision for personnel hired to carry out activities of the QEP programs, plans and coordinates focus groups, professional development activities, and meetings; works closely with staff from the student affairs and learning support divisions in ensuring a smooth process for student recruitment, advisement, mentoring, and tutoring to maximize student success; prepares and submits reports, results of assessments; disseminates information that is used for continuous improvement of the QEP initiatives; coordinates and maintains the QEP budget; uses marketing strategies in and outside the college to promote the program.

II. Campus Coordinator

Under general direction of the QEP Director the purpose of this position is to coordinate and manage multiple leading projects with faculty, students, and staff. The coordinator should have sufficient familiarity with the goals and structures of the QEP program and the college’s strategic plan. Some of the specific duties include overseeing the assessment teams, the faculty
learning community training, scheduling the WAC LC pilot groups, and collecting assessment data. This position is a faculty supplement that will receive 6-credit re-assigned time or a part-time position.

III. Assessment Teams

The primary responsibility of the Assessment Teams is to review writing samples, develop rubrics, and to collect data. They work closely with the campus coordinator and are part of the learning communities cohorts. They receive training through from consultants and campus coordinators, and train new groups of faculty.

IV. Writing Spaces Coordinator

Under the direct supervision of the QEP Director, the purpose of this position is to coordinate tutoring services and provide a comfortable learning environment to students; recruit and survey students when they come in and use the services of the writing spaces and collect data of the services provided at the Writing Spaces.

V. Webpage Administrator

Under the direct supervision of the QEP Director, the purpose of this position is to create and maintain the QEP webpage; organize digital media and web information for easy access; update these website features regularly; as well as participate in meetings to present ideas, and be part of the online marketing of the program.

VI. QEP Institutional Support

The Broward College Policy Manual under General Powers, Duties, and Responsibilities of the President states “In accordance with Florida State Board of Education Administrative Rules, Chapter 6A-14.0261, the President shall do the following:
1. Exercise general oversight of the college to determine needs and recommend improvements.
2. Counsel and advise the Board of Trustees and recommend board action.
3. Recommend and enforce rules of the Board of Trustees.
4. Recommend and enforce minimum standards for the operation of the College programs and for student completion of instructional programs.
5. Perform duties and exercise responsibilities assigned by law, by rules of the state Board of Education, and by the Board of Trustees.
6. Delegate authority necessary to insure that laws and rules are executed efficiently.

Broward College Senior Management Team includes President J. David Armstrong Jr.; College Provost and Senior Vice President Linda Howdyshell; Senior Vice President Thomas W. Ollif; Vice President Patti Barney; Vice President Nancy R. Botero; Campus President Barbara J. Bryan; Vice President Alex Denis; Vice President Gregory A. Haile, Esq.; Vice President Aileen Izquierdo; Campus President Sean Madison; Vice President Angelia Millender; Campus President Mercedes A. Quiroga; Associate Vice President Rigoberto Rincones-Gomez.

A QEP Director (QEPD) will assist Broward College in determining the logistical and financial resources that will be necessary to accomplish the QEP. The QEPD will plan and administer assessment of the QEP on all campuses with the assistance of Campus QEP Coordinators. Writing Spaces Coordinators with the assistance of Writing Spaces Assistants will work with students at the Writing Space Centers.

This plan has been developed with the assurance from College Administration with regard to funding and sustainability. Wherever possible, this plan will utilize existing college resources. The QEP budget outlines estimated expenditures including salaries, space allocations, supplies, and materials. Throughout this process, BC has shown a commitment to the long-term implementation of this plan.
DIAGRAM OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Provost + SHR. VP

QEP Director

QEP Advisory Board

Professional Development

Campus Coordinators (North, South, Central)

Writing Assessment Teams

Writing Spaces Coordinators

Data Collection and Assessment Analyst

Webpage Administrator

Part-time Graduate Assistants

Part-time Student Assistants

Workshops/Training

English Faculty (LC)

Gen Ed Faculty (LC)

QEP Director

QEP Advisory Board

Professional Development

Campus Coordinators (North, South, Central)

Writing Assessment Teams

Writing Spaces Coordinators

Data Collection and Assessment Analyst

Webpage Administrator

Part-time Graduate Assistants

Part-time Student Assistants

Workshops/Training

English Faculty (LC)

Gen Ed Faculty (LC)
MARKETING STRATEGIES

In order to make Writing Across Communities successful, vital, and recognized within and outside of Broward College, various marketing strategies need to be employed. Writing Across Communities will utilize both in-house and outside marketing initiatives.

In-house the program will first be presented at meetings and gatherings where students, the college president, faculty, administration, and cabinet and board members attend. This initiative must be presented to students, the Broward College President and his Cabinet, the Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate, Deans, Campus Leadership Teams, Associate Deans, Faculty, Student Affairs staff, Advising/Counseling staff, College Librarians, and other personnel at all campuses. The media used during those presentations may include Power-Points, videos, flyers, brochures, and handouts. Follow-up presentations showing data and results of the program should be included at different stages of the QEP that reflect its advancement and to continue promoting the initiative.

Other ways to continue promoting Writing Across Communities within and also outside of the college is the use of the media and web resources. For example, the initiative should be written about in the college newspaper, The Observer and in the college website. Information about Writing Across Communities can be announced through mass e-mails to students and faculty. Other popular social media such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and mobile technology should be used. The initiative will have its own website and the required QEP Portal. Finally, the program, its results and research, should be presented at academic conferences and for other colleges and universities.
BUDGET PLAN

Below are two models for the financing of Writing Across Communities. The first proposed budget shows that the position of QEP Director as a fulltime, stand-alone position with stand-alone, part-time campus coordinators. The second model is a faculty tenure model that shows the positions with class release times or supplemental pay.

Throughout the planning of the QEP, the SACS Leadership Team has discussed the resources required to implement and administer the plan. Budget #1 estimates the total cost of the QEP program to be $2,460,694.76. This chart is based on the salary of a full-time QEP director; part-time campus and writing spaces coordinators; part-time assistants, instructional technologists and writing consultants; an administrative assistant; faculty assessment teams, professional development costs; and other expenses such as supplies and incidentals. The second chart, Budget #2, estimates the cost of the QEP to be $1,992,200 for the five years that it is implemented. This includes 4 release times for the QEP director or its equivalent in salary, 2 release times for the campus coordinators or its equivalent in salary, 2 release times for the writing spaces coordinators or its equivalent in salary, 9 part-time graduate assistants, 9 part-time student assistants, an administrative assistant, and other expenses such as supplies and incidentals. The salary estimates are comparable to how other similar positions are funded at Broward College. The annual budgetary requests are estimated in the tables below. The estimates do not include any raises that may be approved by the college during this five year period. The QEP Director as the planner and administrator of project will ultimately determine the logistical and the financial resources necessary to accomplish the QEP.
# BUDGET PLAN #1

(QEP Director as Fulltime Position with Part-Time Campus Coordinators Model)

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<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
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<td>$54,000.00</td>
<td>$54,000.00</td>
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<td>$54,000.00</td>
<td>$54,000.00</td>
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<td>$54,000.00</td>
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<td>Part-time Graduate Assistants</td>
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<td>$11,040.00</td>
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<td>$99,360.00</td>
<td>$99,360.00</td>
<td>$99,360.00</td>
<td>$99,360.00</td>
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<tr>
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**Budget Plan #2**

*(Tenured Faculty Release Time Model)*

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<td>$398,440.00</td>
<td>$398,440.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

Broward College’s Writing Across Communities will leave a long lasting effect on its college community, one whose impact will be felt in the wider society. Within the college the foundational bricks will have been laid for a culture of writing that will have begun to permeate classrooms in all disciplines, while impacting the wider community. South Florida will have college graduates with stronger writing and communication skills. Employers will have the opportunity to hire more workers who have already experienced working and producing in collaborative settings and who understand the inherent connections between sometimes disparate subjects or situations.

So how does Writing Across Communities continue beyond its five year pilot program? While the five -year pilot program’s Learning Communities will set up the parameters for student and faculty collaboration and student success assessment, the results will be self-sustaining beyond the five years, whether the learning communities are continued or not.

After five years the college will be left with writing resources for both students and faculty both online and off, writing tutoring spaces for general education class students, faculty workshops, student writing blogs and/or symposiums in which to share their work, and personal and professional connections between faculty of different disciplines and students in different fields of study. It will also leave the college with research that will help guide curricular changes that help students improve their writing skills and that will lead to other faculty initiatives. This foundational groundwork will continue to be seen throughout the years.

This groundwork could result in the development of Writing Intensive (WI) courses within general education courses. It might be reflected in an automotive class instructor who uses writing to learn assignments in his classroom. It might be seen in the team-teaching project that
two professors from disparate disciplines decide to embark on, and it might be seen in the development of subsequent learning communities modeled on the ones created during the pilot program.

The success of Writing Across Communities cannot be measured strictly through a series of statistics from studies and surveys done throughout the five-year pilot program, but from the people the program involves and the culture it creates. It will best be measured through experiences: students connecting both personally and academically; students discovering links between two very different disciplines; students improving their writing; faculty learning and sharing with colleagues from other disciplines; colleagues within a department sharing writing assignment tips, and faculty using proven and readily available writing rubrics and other writing resources. This is what Writing Across Communities hopes to accomplish in its quest to create a flourishing writing culture at Broward College.
WORKS CITED


McMullen-Light, Mary. “Great Expectations: The Culture of WAC and the Community College Context.” [Special Issue. Writing Across the Curriculum at the Community Colleges:


Walsh-Portillo, Joyce and General Education and Assessments Outcomes Participating Faculty. *General Education Core Competencies, 5 semesters of data results*. Broward College, Fort Lauderdale, FL. 15 March 2012. Address.


# APPENDIX A: Writing in the General Education Classroom

## Results of Writing Across Communities Survey (June through July 2012)

(100 Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Some questions allow for more than one response.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Do your students do any type of writing during the semester?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Yes</td>
<td>92.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. No</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If no, please skip questions 2 through 8.

| 2. What type of writing assignment(s) do your students do?               |           |
|   a. Essay(s)                                                            | 64.2 %    |
|   b. Documented essay(s)                                                 | 25.3 %    |
|   c. Formal Research Paper                                               | 40 %      |
|   d. Short answer question responseS                                     | 49.5 %    |
|   e. Blue Book Essay Test(s)                                             | 9.5 %     |

| 3. Do you use a writing rubric when grading student writing?             |           |
|   a. Yes                                                                  | 59.8 %    |
|   b. No                                                                   | 40.2 %    |

| 4. If general or discipline specific writing rubrics were available to instructors would you use one? |           |
|   a. Yes                                                                  | 77.3 %    |
|   b. No                                                                   | 22.7 %    |

| 5. Are you satisfied in your ability to assess all elements of your student writing (from grammar to documentation elements)? |           |
|   a. Very satisfied                                                      | 52.6 %    |
|   b. Satisfied                                                           | 40.2 %    |
|   c. Unsatisfied                                                         | 7.2 %     |
|   d. Very Unsatisfied                                                    | 0 %       |

| 6. What elements of assessing student writing would you like more information on? |           |
|   a. I don’t need further information                                    | 56.3 %    |
|   b. Grammar and Sentence Fluency                                        | 22.9 %    |
|   c. Discipline appropriate documentation                                | 26 %      |
|   d. Thesis and Support                                                  | 16.7 %    |
|   e. Organization                                                        | 13.5 %    |
7. I am ___________ with the quality of student writing in my class.
   a. Very Satisfied  4.1%
   b. Satisfied       38.8%
   c. Unsatisfied     41.8%
   d. Very Unsatisfied 15.3%

8. In general my students need most improvement in the following elements of their writing.
   a. Grammar and Sentence Fluency     82.5%
   b. Discipline appropriate documentation 44.3%
   c. Thesis and Support               44.3%
   d. Organization                    45.4%
   e. My students do not need improvement. 3.1%

9. Do you think BC should allocate tutoring and other resources that specifically target helping students with writing assignments in disciplines other than English?
   a. Yes, it’s necessary            89.7%
   b. No, it’s not necessary        10.3%

10. Do you think BC should offer resources (i.e. writing workshops and online writing materials) to instructors in all disciplines?
    a. Yes, it’s necessary           73.2%
    b. No, it’s not necessary        26.8%
### Appendix B: Sample of Current WAC/WID Programs in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Program Website</th>
<th>Online Faculty Resources</th>
<th>Faculty Prof. Dev.</th>
<th>General Writing Center</th>
<th>WAC Writing Center</th>
<th>WI Courses</th>
<th>WAC Courses</th>
<th>Capstone Courses</th>
<th>WAC Learning Communities</th>
<th>Writing Rubrics</th>
<th>Faculty Conferences</th>
<th>Faculty Publications</th>
<th>Faculty Surveys</th>
<th>Student Conferences/Institutes</th>
<th>Student Surveys</th>
<th>Student Portfolios</th>
<th>Student Publications</th>
<th>Student Awards</th>
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## Appendix C: Community College WAC-QEP Proposals

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APPENDIX D

Grade Distribution of Former College Preparatory Students in General Education Courses at Broward College Winter Term (Jan-May 2012)

N=2564 students

Source: Broward College Division of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness Office