

## Part V – QEP Impact Report

**Title: Bridging the Academic Gap between Teaching and Learning: Developing Writing Skills**

### **Brief Description of Coker College's Quality Enhancement Plan**

The Coker College QEP has two major goals: to improve the writing skills of its students and to improve the ability of the faculty to assist students in developing those writing skills.

The Coker College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) originated from extensive discussions among faculty and administrators about the disparity in what faculty expect of students and what students expect of faculty when it comes to learning and teaching. This disparity was termed the “academic gap.” In fall semester 2003, the QEP Committee empirically determined the components of this academic gap, as well as the relative importance of those components to faculty and students, using subjective internal surveys, the College’s Faculty Assessment of Core Skills (FACS), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and focus groups with faculty (including adjuncts), high school teachers, and students. Although the QEP Committee identified many potential foci for the Quality Enhancement Plan, the final plan focused on the “academic gap” between the teaching and learning of writing skills. Writing was chosen because of its relevance to the College’s mission, importance to faculty and students, tractability, and alignment with existing resources, such as existing assessment practices, the writing center and new library building. Further, the problem of closing the academic gap in writing is also important to the wider academic community.

### **Key Components of the QEP**

1. A **Supplemental Education Program** that:
  - Delivers more support services to incoming students as they begin to develop their writing skills through a revision of the English composition sequence of courses, including the addition of peer writing assistants.
  - Delivers more support services to students at all academic levels through a much enhanced Writing Center with improved capabilities to serve students at the Hartsville campus and at the College’s off-campus sites.
2. **High School-College Partnership** that:
  - Establishes an ongoing research project for the College to refine its approaches to teaching writing skills through an improved understanding of the level and means of preparation in writing that incoming students have received in high school.
  - Provides information for our partner schools to better prepare college-bound students with the writing skills expected at the college level through collaborative inquiry about best methods.
3. **Professional development and promotion** that:
  - Improves the ability of faculty in all disciplines to teach writing skills.
  - Raises the awareness of the importance of writing and celebrates successes, helping to motivate students and faculty and creates a common vocabulary for setting expectations and outcomes.
4. **Assessment of individual student writing abilities** that:
  - Is integrated into courses using custom rubrics.

- Provides useful and timely results to students and faculty.
- Informs overall direction through evaluation of program effectiveness by examining trends in learning outcomes disaggregated across important student groups.

### **Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes**

The initial goals of the Coker College QEP were to improve the writing skills of students and to improve the ability of faculty to assist students in developing those writing skills. The intended outcomes for the plan overall and for the plan's key components are presented below as they were in the original submission of the QEP.

The expected outcome for the QEP overall is a progressive enhancement in the faculty's ability to teach writing as demonstrated by the corresponding improvement of individual student writing skills. Since this outcome depends upon an appreciation by both students and faculty for the value of effective writing, a concomitant outcome that is expected is a progressive improvement in the attitudes of students and faculty about the importance of writing skills.

#### **Supplemental Education Program** - Intended Outcomes

By having additional support in the Writing Center and by enhancing instruction in the *Introduction to Composition* (ENG 100) course with peer tutors, students will better understand the writing process and will more often take advantage of peer tutoring. Further, online and phone tutorials will greatly improve access to the Writing Center, particularly for clients at off-campus sites. In five years, conference notes documenting each tutorial will indicate at least a 75 percent increase in the number of sessions in which students engage with writing tutors.

As a consequence of the extra help and the change in grading scheme in the ENG 100 course, the proportion of students who fail ENG 100 in comparison to those who fail the current writing tutorial course (ENG 100L) should decrease by at least 50 percent. The proportion of students placing into the ENG 100 class and not enrolling in the course will be dramatically reduced in comparison to the current proportion of students who place into the current writing tutorial course (ENG 100L) and who do not subsequently enroll in it. Comparisons between English placement results and the composition course in which students enroll will indicate that nearly all students will have enrolled in the composition courses apropos to their placement results.

#### **High School-College Partnership** - Intended Outcomes

The College-High School Partnership will provide an awareness of the crucial skills that high school students will need to be successful in college. Coker College faculty expect, through its proposed interactions with secondary school faculty and in freshmen surveys, to gain a better understanding of the gap in teaching and learning, and consequently, improve the level of writing skills for its students.

#### **Professional Development and Promotion** - Intended Outcomes

By providing the faculty with training in teaching writing and by informing faculty of the resources available for students to use to improve their writing, faculty members will be enabled to discuss and

respond to student writing more confidently and more effectively. It will also create an atmosphere among the faculty that fosters the free exchange of ideas concerning writing.

### **Assessment Activities** - Intended Outcomes

The results of the various measures of writing effectiveness will be reported to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Council of Chairs, the Provost, academic advisors, and the academic department chairs. This will create an institution-wide awareness of student writing abilities that will be used as a formative assessment for the enhancement of individual student advisement, as well as the improvement of academic programs. In addition, specific outcomes expected from each of the three other major components of the QEP will be assessed. Assessment findings will be used by the QEP Steering Committee to confirm, or serve as the bases to modify the approaches of the QEP.

### **Discussion of Significant Changes**

We implemented all components of the QEP with few significant changes except for how we assessed the improvement of student writing. We originally planned to evaluate student writing qualitatively by a timed essay administered to entering freshmen and graduating seniors and based on the same writing prompt. Preliminary research showed this to be too simplistic to be useful. We did not change how we assessed student writing quantitatively by using FACS scores; that method of assessment and the results are discussed below under "The Impact of the QEP."

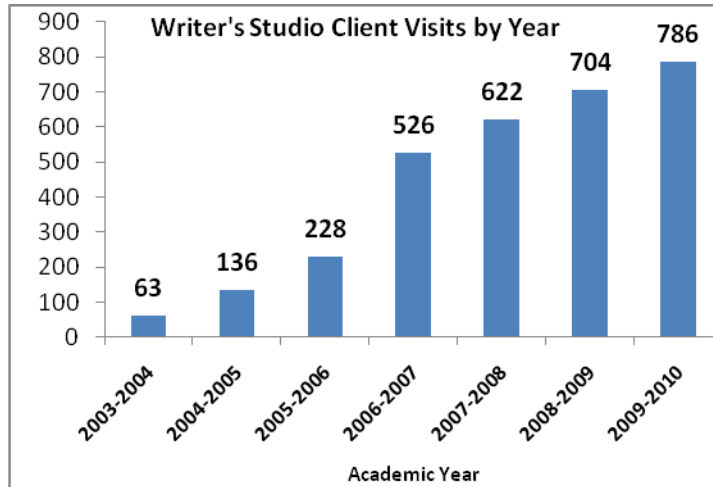
In October 2005, the QEP Steering Committee piloted an assessment of student written works submitted to "iceBox," an electronic portfolio system created for the QEP. The original assessment protocol was based on portfolios from 30 students from each class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and each program (day, evening) for a total of 120 students. A portfolio for each student was constructed by selecting 2 written works the student had submitted to iceBox in the previous semester. A group of 11 Coker College faculty and two English teachers from the local high school rated the student portfolios using a standardized rubric. Analysis of the results showed clearly that the protocol would not be an effective means to assess changes in student writing skills college-wide. Not only did reviewers seldom have expertise in the fields related to the written works they evaluated, but reviewers did not have information about the assignment upon which any given writing sample was based. As a result, the committee decided instead to have the faculty develop program-specific assessments of effective writing; i.e., evaluations of student writing based on rubrics established by the faculty teaching in the respective programs.

In the fall of 2006, five faculty in disparate disciplines were appointed as "Divisional Writing Directors." Their responsibilities included leading the development of the writing assessment protocols in the program areas most closely allied with their respective areas of expertise. The QEP steering Committee supplied considerable direction and resources to the Divisional Writing Directors, (e.g., routine meetings, suggested protocols, a \$2000 stipend and \$1800 operating budget for each director). The Divisional Writing Directors were instrumental in the establishment of program-specific assessments of writing in some, but not all, majors. Further progress in establishing writing assessment protocols in most program areas was made when the chairs of the academic departments were charged with the oversight of their development in the 2007-08 academic year. The QEP Steering Committee provided chairs with a written guide on how to develop appropriate assessment procedures. As originally intended, the results of these assessments have been used to improve the teaching of writing in those

programs (as evidenced in the assessments of learning outcomes under “Core Skills” in Part III - CS 3.3.1.1 section of the Abbreviated Compliance Certification).

### The Impact of the QEP

**The Supplemental Education Plan** was implemented in fall 2005 and maintained throughout the last five years as originally planned. The introductory English composition class (ENG 100) was much



enhanced through the addition of trained peer tutors, and services provided by the writing center were expanded and extensively promoted. As intended, the writing center (renamed “Writer’s Studio”) has enjoyed dramatically increased utilization since the launch of the QEP. The intended outcome of a 75% increase in student-tutor sessions was far exceeded; there has been nearly a six-fold increase in tutoring sessions since the initiation of the Supplemental Education Plan.

Further, the diversity of students using the Writer’s Studio has increased: more students at class levels beyond the freshman level and more students at off campus locations have been served, as shown on the table below.

2006-2007		CLASS YEAR								
Program	Sessions	%	FR	%	SO	%	JR	%	SR	%
Day	417	79.3%	299	72.0%	66	16.0%	50	12.0%	2	0.0%
Evening	94	17.9%	65	69.0%	2	2.0%	19	20.0%	8	9.0%
Ft. Jackson	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
Lake City	12	2.3%	0	0.0%	1	8.0%	11	92.0%	0	0.0%
Mullins	2	0.4%	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>526</b>		<b>366</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

2009-2010		CLASS YEAR								
Program	Sessions	%	FR	%	SO	%	JR	%	SR	%
Day	551	70.1%	376	72.3%	116	88.5%	56	62.9%	3	6.5%
Evening	181	23.0%	117	22.5%	10	7.6%	23	25.8%	31	67.4%
Lake City	8	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	7	15.2%
Mullins	14	1.8%	0	0.0%	5	3.8%	9	10.1%	0	0.0%
NETC	32	4.1%	27	5.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	10.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>786</b>		<b>520</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5.9%</b>

On the other hand, the implementation of the Supplemental Education Plan has not consistently resulted in the intended outcome of a 50% reduction in the failure rate of students enrolling in ENG 100.

Although there was a greater than 50% reduction in the 2005-06 academic year, the annual reductions in failure rates have been more modest since then.

<b>ENG 100 Failure Rates by Academic Year</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>Failed</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>% Failed</b>
<b>03-04</b>	33	5	28	15%
<b>04-05</b>	39	8	31	21%
<b>05-06</b>	46	2	44	4%
<b>06-07</b>	43	6	37	14%
<b>07-08</b>	63	11	52	17%
<b>08-09</b>	40	7	33	18%
<b>09-10</b>	45	8	37	18%

Another intended outcome of the Supplemental Education Plan was a greater congruence between the placement of students in English composition classes and the classes in which they actually enrolled. This outcome has been achieved. Since the revision of the ENG 100 course, there have been very few exceptions in which students have enrolled in English classes other than those in which they have placed. For example, all 86 students who placed in ENG 100 between fall 2007 and fall 2009 successfully completed ENG 100 or withdrew from the College prior to enrolling in ENG 101.

**The High School-College Partnership** has been implemented in a number of ways. The intended outcome of obtaining information about the kinds and level of writing skills developed in high school has been accomplished through:

- Annual assessment surveys of Coker students;
- Three focus group discussions between members of the QEP Steering Committee members and faculty members from the local high school (2/20/06, 4/5/07 and 1/15/09);
- A focus group discussion with students enrolled in the introductory composition classes (3/11/10);
- The serving of a high school English faculty representative on the QEP Steering Committee (2005);
- And the participation of high school English teachers with Coker College faculty in the development and use of a standardized rubric to evaluate college student writing (9/30/05).

In addition, a Coker College faculty member in English investigated the gap in the teaching and learning of writing skills at the high school level by making extended observations of high school English classes and interviewing English teachers at four local high schools during 2007 and 2008. Her findings revealed significant gaps between writing skills instruction in high school and expectations of student writing skills at the college level. She subsequently made three presentations of her research to the Coker College faculty on September 20, 2007, March 25, 2008 and August 13, 2008. All of these presentations were attended by a majority of the faculty (attendance at the latter presentation was required as part of the opening of school workshops for faculty) and were described as informative by those in attendance.

Another intended outcome of the High School-College Partnership was to provide our partner high schools with information about the writing skills needed for success in college. This was accomplished not only through the exchange of information at the high school and college faculty focus group discussions mentioned above, but through presentations about college-level writing skills made by Coker faculty and students to high school students and teachers. The Coker College English faculty

member whose research on high school writing instruction was described above made presentations of her findings in high school classes, as well as at in-service training sessions for high school faculty for the entire school district in fall 2009. Information about college-level writing expectations was also provided to our high school partners through presentations made by Coker's Writer's Studio tutors to English classes at two of the local high schools in spring 2009.

**Professional Development and Promotion** has also been implemented with a diversity of approaches. Every academic year since the inception of the QEP, the QEP Steering Committee has sponsored one or two major workshops or presentations by experts in composition or in a related field. Some of the presenters were members of the Coker faculty and/or staff and others from outside the Coker community. See the table below for details.

<b>Professional Development Workshops and Presentations</b>			
<b>Oct 7, 2004</b>	Toby Fulwiler	Professor of English University of Vermont	Full day workshop on "Teaching with Writing"
<b>April 8, 2005</b>	QEP Steering Committee	Coker College	Moderated discussion of how Fulwiler ideas had been implemented by faculty
<b>Aug 10, 2005</b>	Chris Anson	Professor of English N C State University	Presentation and discussion on "Supporting Student Writing"
<b>Jan 17, 2006</b>	Elizabeth Tebeaux	Professor of English Texas A& M University	Half day workshop on technical writing
<b>April 5, 2006</b>	Student Writing Center Tutors	Coker College	2 hr workshop on the services provided by the tutors and the structuring of writing assignments
<b>Sept 20, 2007</b>	2 English faculty and Director of Writer's Studio	Coker College	2 hr workshop on two topics: writing skills of incoming students and the connection between writing and critical thinking
<b>March 25, 2008</b>	Julia Klimek	Associate Professor of English, Coker College	2 hr workshop based on Dr. Klimek's research on the teaching of writing at the high school level
<b>Aug 13, 2008</b>	Provost, English, Education, and Biology Faculty	Coker College	2 hr workshop on the overall objectives of the QEP, the writing skills of incoming students, and teaching effective writing in a variety of disciplines
<b>March 13, 2009</b>	QEP Steering Committee	Coker College	2 hr workshop on improving the quality and efficiency with which faculty evaluate student writing
<b>March 17, 2009</b>	Mark Richardson	Professor of English Georgia Southern University	2 hr workshop on "Writing is not a Basic Skill"
<b>March 9, 2010</b>	2 English faculty and Director of Writer's Studio	Coker College	2 hr workshop on the impact of technology on student writing skills

The objectives of these workshops were to contribute to the professional development of the faculty in respect to their ability to teach writing skills and to promote the importance of teaching writing. Most of the presentations were structured to allow for open discussion and exchange of ideas among the faculty about the teaching of writing skills and many presentations provided information about the resources available at the College to help in the teaching or assessing of writing. With one exception, attendance at the presentations has been voluntary, but faculty members have been remarkably compliant in capitalizing on these professional development opportunities. All but one of the presentations were attended by at least half of the faculty and most by two-thirds or more. Both formal and informal assessments of the presentations indicated that the faculty generally found them very useful. For example, in their assessments of the technical writing workshop given by Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux in January 2006, faculty wrote the following comments when asked, "What skills did you learn that can be applied to your teaching or pedagogical pursuits immediately? What about in the future?"

- Some helpful hints on integrating pragmatic writing skills into daily practice...
- I liked her ideas about having preparatory planning work sheets for written assignments. I also liked her ideas for written progress reports when we assign group work. But then she never said what we should do when the group can't agree to the content of the progress report...
- I will use technical writing to help my education students write to varied constituencies.
- I got some good ideas for teaching classes.
- ...may change some assignments to have students write things like memo [sic] instead of reporting in paragraphs...
- Her suggestions concerning real-world problems will be useful.
- Explaining the need to think about audience and who students are writing for was valuable. Progress reports were a pretty good idea.
- ...using assignment specifications and proposals...
- ...how to make people more accountable in group assignments...
- ...new ideas...
- Having students prepare assignments for different audiences was a particularly useful idea for me for immediate application. For longer term, I plan to revise my assignment expectations and grading for presentations, etc., using some of the written tools she suggested.
- ...too many to mention...
- I will assign more proposals, progress reports, and informal reports.
- Don't know if I have these immediate skills. Don't know if the workshop can create those skills so quickly.
- There can be added value to including technical writing to our classes, no matter the subject matter.

Another intended outcome of the Professional Development and Promotion component of the QEP was to increase the awareness of faculty and students about the importance of writing skills as a means to support the faculty in all disciplines in their efforts to teach writing skills. The promotion of writing and writing instruction has taken many forms. The QEP Steering Committee sponsors the "Dean's *Write On!* Award," which recognizes outstanding written work by one student from each class every semester. Since spring 2004, the Director of the Writer's Studio has asked faculty to nominate exemplary student writing produced as part of that semester's coursework. The submissions are judged by a panel of 4 or 5 faculty. The student winners in each class receive a \$300 prize and their work is published in the Dean's *Write On!* Award magazine. The magazine has been published every two years (2006, 2008, 2010) and has been widely distributed to students, faculty, Board of Trustees members, and friends of the College. Award winners have also been recognized at the Opening Convocation each academic year. The QEP Steering Committee has also sponsored a variety of campus events and distributed promotional materials (bookmarks, pens, coffee cups, balloons, water bottles, mouse pads, etc.) during the events that advertise the QEP and its objectives. Examples of sponsored events include three major annual events: the Coker College Undergraduate Research Symposium, the Student International Dinner, and the Coker College Humanities Conference.

A major reason that the teaching of writing skills was chosen as an objective of the QEP was the finding in 2003 that faculty lacked confidence in their ability to teach writing skills. In 2006 and 2010, the faculty were surveyed to determine if the Professional Development and Promotion component of the QEP had succeeded in improving the faculty's confidence about their ability to teach writing, as well as whether they were giving more writing assignments, and if they regarded it important to teach writing skills. The survey results presented below indicate that the confidence of the faculty in teaching writing is generally positive but unchanged from 2006 to 2010. However, the results also indicate that the faculty's agreement with the goals of the QEP has remained strong. Further, the results indicate that the faculty are giving more writing assignments and that they have an even more positive attitude towards the importance of teaching writing skills in 2010 than they had in 2006.

Survey of Faculty Attitudes										
1. Students possess sufficient writing skills when they enter as freshmen.					6. I would welcome opportunities for further professional development in the teaching of writing skills.					
2. Students possess sufficient writing skills when they graduate.					7. I give two or more writing assignments that require 2 or more hours to complete in most of my classes.					
3. I am confident about my ability to teach writing skills.					8. Students should be given writing assignments that require 2 or more hours to complete in most of their classes.					
4. I am familiar with the goals of the <i>Write On!</i> Initiative.					9. I think it is important for me to teach writing skills in my classes.					
5. I fully support the goals of the <i>Write On!</i> Initiative.										
Scale for Responses: 1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neutral 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree										
Question #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	N
<b>2006</b>										
Mean	4	2.9	2.3	1.6	1.7	2.5	2.2	2.1	2.2	35
sd	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.3	
<b>2010</b>										
Mean	4.2	3	2.3	1.7	1.6	2.5	2	1.7	1.9	38
sd	0.6	0.9	1	0.8	0.6	1	1.2	0.8	1.1	

The NSSE survey results presented below corroborate the finding that faculty are assigning more written work. Coker students responding to the 2010 survey indicate as Coker students did in 2008 and 2004 that they are given fewer short written assignments than students in the comparison groups. However, the 2010 NSSE results clearly indicate that Coker students, particularly seniors, are being given significantly more mid-length and longer written assignments than students in other comparison groups.

	COKER				Southeast Private			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2010			
	Class	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
<b>2010</b>														
<i>During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done? 1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20</i>														
Number papers or reports of 20 pages or more	FY	<b>1.51</b>	1.36		.18			.15			1.32		.25	
	SR	<b>1.92</b>	1.75		.20		*	.30			1.65	**	.32	
Number papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	FY	<b>2.31</b>	2.37		-.07			.04			2.27		.04	
	SR	<b>2.76</b>	2.73		.03		*	.20			2.55	*	.22	
Number papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	FY	<b>3.01</b>	3.17		-.15			-.06			3.03		-.02	
	SR	<b>2.75</b>	3.07	**	-.27		**	-.24			3.00	*	-.22	
<b>2008</b>														
Number papers or reports of 20 pages or more	FY	<b>1.34</b>	1.32		.04			.02			1.28		.10	
	SR	<b>1.70</b>	1.73		-.03			.03			1.64		.08	
Number papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	FY	<b>2.20</b>	2.40	**	-.23			-.07			2.29		-.10	
	SR	<b>2.50</b>	2.74	*	-.26			-.11			2.58		-.09	
Number papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	FY	<b>2.89</b>	3.22	***	-.31			-.16			3.04		-.14	
	SR	<b>2.61</b>	3.08	***	-.40		***	-.36			3.00	**	-.34	
<b>2004</b>														
Number papers or reports of 20 pages or more	FY	<b>1.40</b>									1.25			
	SR	<b>1.66</b>									1.66			
Number papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	FY	<b>2.43</b>									2.40			
	SR	<b>2.70</b>									2.66			
Number papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	FY	<b>3.09</b>					*	-.24			3.25			
	SR	<b>2.72</b>					***	-.44			3.11	**	-.33	

**Impact of the QEP overall** must be based on an assessment of whether student writing skills are improving since the inception of the QEP. As discussed above under “Significant Changes,” the assessments have become more sophisticated than those originally planned. We have maintained throughout a quantitative means to assess student writing skills college-wide—the Faculty Assessment of Core Skills (FACS) scores. FACS scores are based upon each course instructor deciding which of the four core skills found in the College mission will be measured in a given class: analytical thinking, creative thinking, effective speaking, and/or effective writing. The instructor’s course syllabus provides a rubric for each skill to be evaluated at the achievement levels of:

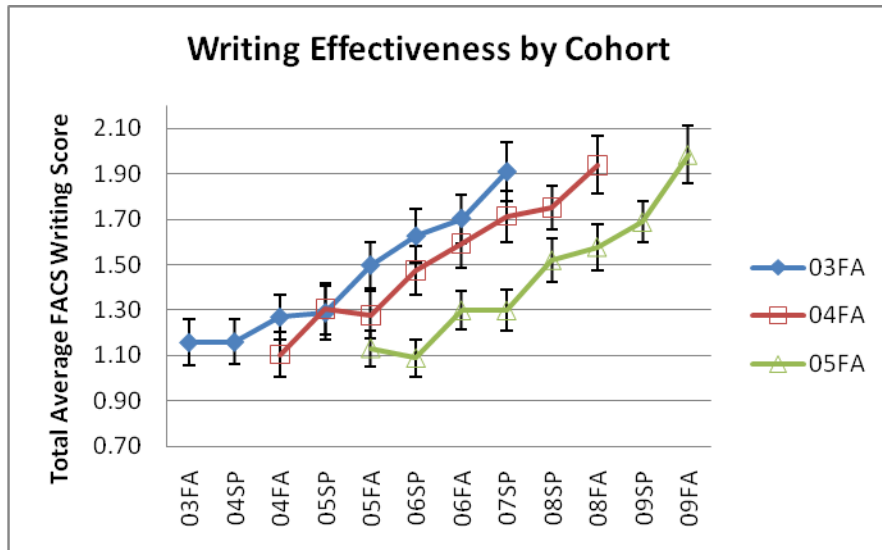
0. Remedial (pre-college level work)
1. Freshman/Sophomore level work
2. Junior/Senior level work
3. Graduate (the quality is what we expect of our graduates)

Because this scale compares the student’s demonstrated ability against the expectations of a normal college career, it provides a more powerful perspective than the more usual “under-achieve/over-achieve” scales typically found on such rubrics.

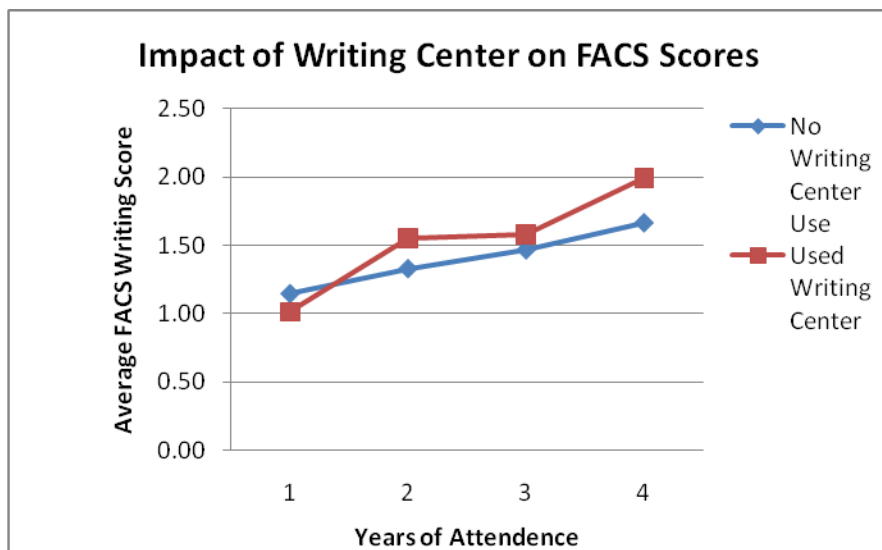
Near the end of the semester, the instructor reports the skill level of each student via a web-based interface. Average skill levels per student are used by academic advisors to advise individual students and averages for groups of students in a given major are used by major program faculty to assess the efficacy of their program in teaching the core skills (see section 3.3.1.1 for those).

FACS scores have been collected since spring 2003 at the College; we now have over 30,000 scores. The FACS methodology has been the subject of numerous tests of validity. For example, students who are highly rated writers according to FACS scores also tend to be heavier library users, have higher overall grade averages, and respond to NSSE questions on writing that indicates they are more engaged and proficient with this skill. Reliability tests for the instrument have consistently shown good agreement between raters, with a better than 50% chance of an exact match for a given student in a given semester. The FACS methodology has been the subject of numerous national presentations, a peer-reviewed article, and three book chapters, including *Handbook of Research on Assessment Technologies, Methods, and Applications in Higher Education* edited by Christopher Schreiner, 2009. The FACS methodology has also been successfully reproduced at another university.

Average effective writing FACS scores for all students can be used to assess the impact of the QEP on the writing skills of students. The graph below shows the change in average writing FACS scores over time by displaying three cohorts, controlled for survivorship. Sample sizes are based on 66, 89, and 106 students entering in fall 2003, 2004, and 2005 respectively, and the error bars show two standard errors in average writing score for a given semester. The gap (not shown) between the average best score and average worst score assigned to a student is very stable at about .5 across all eight semesters. Obviously, these results support the conclusion that the QEP is succeeding in making students better writers as they progress through their Coker College careers.



Support for the validity of these results in respect to the QEP overall, as well as further indication of the success of the Supplemental Education Program component of the QEP, is provided by examining the relationship between student use of the writing center (“Writer’s Studio”) and the improvement in average writing FACS scores over four years.



The weight of validity and reliability research behind the numbers makes it hard to dismiss the argument that students really are becoming better writers, and we believe that the assessment methods shown here are ground-breaking, and can be easily replicated at other institutions. Some modesty is called for, however. Despite the many thousands of data points, there is no scientific way to factor out what part of the upward slope of the cohort graph above is due to the QEP in isolation. Without randomized design with controls (non-QEP students in parallel with QEP students), there is no legitimate way to conclude that the QEP has been the major cause in the improvement of student writing. Despite that, we emphatically believe that the program has been successful in each of its aims. Further, the College is well-positioned to continue the work done so far because the emphasis on writing and its assessment have been deeply institutionalized.