

Bethune-Cookman launches the Wildcats Write! QEP

The creation of a campus-wide undertaking that is improving the writing skills and talents of the student body of Bethune-Cookman University has been launched. Known as Wildcats Write!, the initiative is a direct outgrowth of the school's on-going efforts to improve the best practices and educational standards of its academic programs. The goal is to improve writing skills of students through a coordinated and comprehensive delivery of services, teaching, mentoring, and intense writing activities. Wildcats Write! augments and enhances learning already taking place in B-CU classrooms to ensure students develop and hone the kinds of writing skills that promote academic success and prepare them for the demands of their professions.

Wildcats Write! is the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) at Bethune-Cookman University.

What is the QEP?

The QEP is a focused plan – a five-year strategy – that addresses a well defined issue that needs improvement. It is aligned with educational best practices and educational standards. The QEP engages the entire Bethune-Cookman University – faculty, students, staff, and administrators – in addressing the matter of improved writing skills and talent, and it is contributing to university improvement through strengthening student learning. It is based on the scholarship and research and has clear outcomes for student learning and assessment.

The QEP is a response to the University's decision to recommit itself to the writing legacy of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the University's founder, and a prolific writer, educator, and human rights activist. It is the University's commitment to make writing a fundamental value and tool for matriculating students and graduates as life-long learners.

The plan includes resources for implementation. The University is committed to both implementing and sustaining the plan as evidenced in a comprehensive budget and the allocation of other

university resources. A full-time QEP Project Director and Mentoring Coordinator/Lab Manager for a new QEP writing center will be hired in the spring of 2010.

Why does Bethune-Cookman University need a QEP?

Bethune-Cookman University is engaged in preparing for our 2010 reaffirmation of accreditation by The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), a regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. In order to maintain B-CU's accreditation, which it has held continuously since 1945, we must document that B-CU meets compliance standards. Additionally, and new to the reaccreditation process, we must create a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a five-year plan for enhancing student learning.

Bethune-Cookman University has developed a QEP that grows directly out of the University's historical mission, which is to serve in the Christian tradition the diverse educational, social, and cultural needs of its students and to develop in them the desire and capacity for continuous intellectual and professional growth, leadership and service to others.

After a significant review of assessment data, course exit reviews, surveys, and input from multiple focus groups, Bethune-Cookman reached the conclusion that improved writing skills would enhance the overall academic development, self esteem, and long-term academic and personal success of its students. Bethune-Cookman has developed its plan through the broad-based participation of various constituency groups, including students, staff, faculty, administrators, and members of the University's Board of Trustees. In addition, development of the QEP included the establishment of a QEP Steering Committee, composed of deans, faculty, staff, and students.

Where does the QEP begin and what is the Wildcats Write Center?

The QEP to improve the writing skills and talents of its students begins with freshmen enrolled in the developmental English courses, Wildcats Write 121 and 122. These courses are designed to support students who demonstrate the need for additional learning and tools to enhance their writing skills. Specific measures have been put into place to ensure success in writing beyond these two courses. The term "Wildcats Write" has been adopted by the University in place of "developmental" as it puts a more

positive branding on the plan and removes it from the stigma associated with “developmental” at the college level.

The QEP will improve writing skills through the establishment of a newly developed Wildcats Write Center that focuses on three key components: 1. writing intensive activities and immediate feedback; 2. mentorship and peer tutoring to promote self-esteem and positive attitudes toward writing; and 3. a portal for faculty development with a focus on best practices in teaching, motivating, and innovative pedagogy needs for pre-college English students who are enrolled in Wildcats Write! English courses. The mentoring and peer tutoring component of the Wildcats Write Center will support the QEP goal by helping students develop positive self-esteem and attitudes as they relate to writing and others who write well.

The Wildcats Write! QEP is transforming the culture of the University into one where students, who enter as a cohort in need of developmental studies, are engaged in intensive writing that positively impacts their educational experience and potential for success in their careers.

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