



The **Write** Attitude

**A Quality Enhancement Plan for
Savannah State University**



The Write Attitude:

Enhancing Student Learning by Fostering Positive Attitudes toward Writing

Savannah State University, the oldest public historically black university in the State of Georgia, develops productive members of a global society through high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service and community involvement. The University fosters engaged learning and personal growth in a student-centered environment that celebrates the African American legacy while nurturing a diverse student body. Savannah State University offers graduate and undergraduate studies including nationally accredited programs in the liberal arts, the sciences and the professions.

Reflective of our institutional commitments, our signature university-wide writing initiative, *The Write Attitude*, is built on the following tenets:

Writing skills are essential for success and should evolve throughout our lifetime:

- Writing is a valuable tool for improving ourselves, our campus, our careers, and our communities.
- Writing skills must be attentively developed and reinforced, no matter what level of proficiency.
- Writing must be nurtured both inside and outside of the classroom to reinforce the practical role that writing will play in students' future professions.

Writing is foundational for the improvement of cognitive capacities:

- Writing contributes to critical thinking, reading comprehension, and mastery of academic content.
- Writing includes many forms that foster discovery, reflection, idea development, and expression.
- Writing is most effective when it is created in a process that includes actionable feedback.

Writing attitudes can impact learning performance:

- Writing ability and feelings of self-efficacy are mutually reinforcing.
- Writing perceptions increase or inhibit our voluntary exposure to learning opportunities.

From these beliefs, we have built a writing program that provides assistance to all of our campus stakeholders:

- We support students so that they may develop the various types of writing they do.
- We support faculty so that they may provide effective writing instruction and present their research on the topic.
- We support staff and faculty so that they may improve and share their own writing.

Ultimately, Savannah State University's cross-campus utilization of writing as a tool for education allows us to matriculate graduates of higher learning that are equipped to contribute creative and critical thought through written communication to the global community and marketplace.



**The Write
Attitude**



SSU Quality Enhancement Plan



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The Write Attitude: A Quality Enhancement Plan for Savannah State University

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional accreditation body for degree-granting institutions of higher education in the Southeastern United States. The Commission's mission is to assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions.

The concept of quality enhancement is at the center of the Commission's philosophy. As such, each institution seeking accreditation reaffirmation is required to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). A QEP must engage a wide academic community and address one or more issues that support institutional improvement of a clearly defined topic through a carefully designed plan of implementation.

In 2011, Savannah State University developed *The Write Attitude: Enhancing Student Learning by Fostering Positive Attitudes toward Writing* as our first QEP. This campus-wide initiative is committed to ensuring that students are prepared for the rigors of the classroom, success in the workplace, and an orientation toward life-long learning. Our QEP focuses not only on student learning outcomes but also on environmental factors to create a positive writing culture across the university.

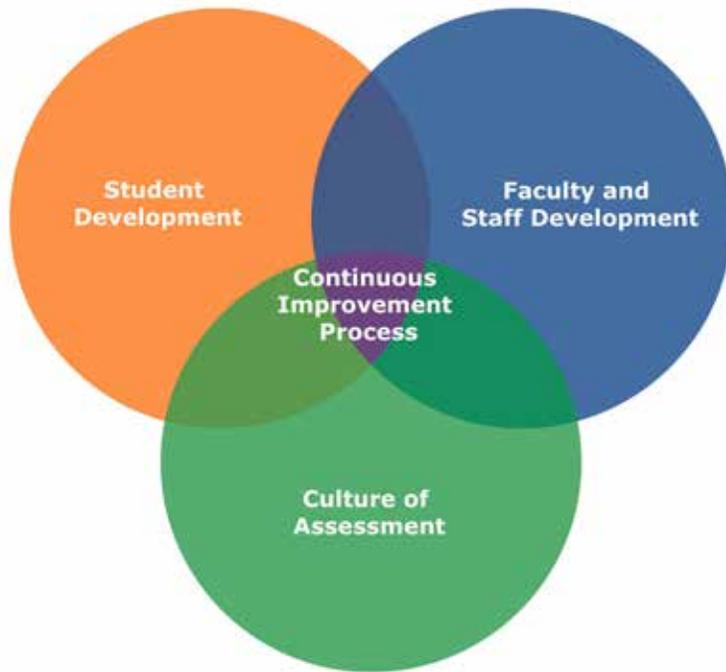


The mission of The Write Attitude is to increase positive attitudes about the activity and value of writing in Savannah State University's students, faculty and staff.

THE WRITE ATTITUDE

OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES

The Write Attitude program is an important catalyst for an enhanced educational setting on campus. We support thoughtful teaching, assessment, and learning.



Decision-making driven by assessment data is the cornerstone of *The Write Attitude*.

Educational research on our student population informs the main contours of our program.

Our significant initial findings indicate:

- Students who report writing enjoyment also report higher rates of writing quality.
- Students do not sufficiently acknowledge awareness and/or use of the writing process.
- Students value writing most when it is evidently related to their future careers.

These features are reflected in our programmatic emphases on attitude improvement, instruction that reinforces writing as a process, and writing in/for the professions.

The QEP institutional assessments focus on two student learning outcomes:

Affective Domain

Students will express favorable attitudes toward writing in a context that includes increased opportunities to engage in the writing process.

Cognitive Domain

Students will produce competent college-level writing that demonstrates an awareness of purpose and audience, an understanding of content, the ability to select appropriate support for idea development, and exhibits appropriate style or disciplinary conventions, in a variety of academic contexts.

Specifically, we aim to enhance student learning by providing:

Cross-curricular requirements and initiatives for increased writing opportunities and improved writing instruction.

Co-curricular activities to emphasize training in writing skills and competencies.

These impacts occur in three main ways:

| Writing-Supportive Curriculum | Department- and College-wide Initiatives | Co-Curricular Activities |
|--|---|---|
| Core Course Writing Requirements in General Education | Use of Common Writing Assignments Across Multiple Course Sections | Student Workshops on Grammar, Essay-Writing, Technical Writing, Academic Research and the Ethics of Writing, Writing for the Disciplines, and Writing for the Professions |
| Introductory Course Writing Requirements in Degree Programs | Student Writing Showcases | Presentations on Writing by Accomplished Authors |
| Upper Division Course Writing Requirements in Degree Programs | Essay Writing Contests | Lunch and Learn "Real World Writing" Series Featuring Professional Community Practitioners and Alumni |
| Graduate Courses on Effective Academic Writing | Adoption of Technology-based Writing Resources | Faculty Development Workshops on Best Practices in Writing Instruction |
| The Write Attitude Faculty Development Seminar | Student Writing Fellows Program | Staff Development Workshops on Improving Workplace Writing |
| Classroom Writing Pedagogy Pilots: Low Stakes Writing, Scaffolded Writing Assignment Designs, and Interactive Writing Feedback | Faculty Writing Fellows Program | Community Educational Partnerships with Local K-12 Schools |

To stay true to our QEP mission, to productively employ our strategic approaches, and to achieve our learning outcomes, we prioritize student, faculty, and staff development.

THE WRITE ATTITUDE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Programs and activities are designed specifically to support students in the various kinds of writing they engage in, personally and academically.

Each experience strives to improve written communication skills and promote positive attitudes about writing.



LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

■ Student Ambassadors

QEP Student Ambassadors are volunteers that assist in facilitating campus initiatives and events that influence the larger student population to participate in and embody “the write attitude.” Ambassadors have an opportunity to engage in peer-mentoring, collaborate with SSU administrators, and meet and network with high profile corporate executives, government leaders, celebrities, authors, and academic scholars who visit our campus in support of the QEP.

■ Student Writing Fellows

Student Writing Fellows are a part of the Writing Fellows Program at the SSU Writing Center. These skilled student employees are paired with interested professors to assist with writing in their courses. These students represent disciplines across campus and their main duties involve: designing in- and out-of-class sessions on writing to benefit the course curriculum; holding one-on-one and small group consultations with students regarding drafts and feedback; and managing distribution of writing materials and reminders to students via our online course management system.

■ Peer Writing Tutors

Peer Writing Tutors are talented students who work 20 hours per week in the SSU Writing Center assisting other students with their writing projects. Tutors have a junior, senior, or graduate student rank, are nominated by faculty, and have completed the Peer Writing Tutor Seminar (ENGL 3800).

CURRICULAR OFFERINGS



■ Graduate Academic Writing

In this course, in addition to weekly lessons on effective academic writing, graduate students will choose a major writing project to develop throughout the semester. The project is crafted and work-shopped on a regular basis over the duration of the course. Students will develop skills in drafting and revision techniques, writing for their specific academic audience, and giving and receiving effective criticism. Appropriate writing tasks may include thesis chapters, internship/practicum reports, capstone writing projects, papers for publication or conference presentation, or other similar assignments.

■ Writing Requirements in the Programs

By enacting minimum writing requirements for the core General Education courses, as well as introductory and upper-division courses per discipline, we have increased the frequency of writing across campus. More importantly, we have also increased the quality of writing instruction through classroom-based pilot programs across the curriculum to introduce and assess the effectiveness of low-stakes writing in the learning process, the benefits of scaffolded writing assignment design, and the efficacy of interactive writing feedback during the writing process.

CO-CURRICULAR WORKSHOPS

■ Grammar Extravaganza Series

These workshops help students master language mechanics, usage, and syntax to improve their writing attitudes. The grammar areas include: sentence structure, parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, prepositional phrases, transitions, commonly misspelled and misused words, correct usage of quotation marks, commas, semi-colons, colons, dashes, and parentheses.

■ Essay-Writing Improvement Series

The Essay-Writing Improvement Series is designed to strengthen students' essay writing skills, teach about the writing process, lessen their apprehension about writing assignments, and enhance their attitudes toward writing. Workshops include topics such as: finding and using reliable sources, reviewing different essay formats, creating effective thesis statements, understanding proper use of citations, peer reviewing, revising, editing, and proofreading.

■ Technical Writing Series

This set of workshops focus upon the types of writing that are most often expected in the workplace. Attention to resumes, applications, cover letters, memos, emails, reports, proposals, and professional writing etiquette is given.

■ Academic Research and the Ethics of Writing Series

Workshops in this series emphasize the writing-related principles of information literacy. Accessing and evaluating information, employing credible research, the concept of intellectual property, understanding and avoiding plagiarism, are some of the themes considered.

■ Writing for the Disciplines Series

Students are exposed to differing disciplinary conventions and expectations in these workshops. For instance, there are sessions dedicated to argumentative writing, lab report writing, writing for poster presentations, and detailed presentations on MLA/APA documentation styles.

■ Writing for the Professions Series

This series emphasizes the importance of proper professional writing by giving students a hands-on opportunity to engage in the kinds of writing tasks they will be expected to complete in their future careers. These authentic writing opportunities are presented and reviewed by experts in their fields of interest.



ADDITIONAL CAMPUS EVENTS

■ Lunch and Learn “Real World Writing” Series

These monthly events give students an opportunity to learn and network with community leaders, local employers and SSU alumni, so they can see how important writing is in the workplace. This is accomplished by inviting a community practitioner to campus to discuss the writing styles specific to their job. Lunch is also provided to all student participants.

■ Write for Change

Write for Change is an on-the-spot writing platform for students to address issues of interest occurring on campus and within the greater community. Students are asked to identify issues and come up with practical solutions in their own words. Prizes are awarded to winning entries. The judging criteria include creativity, descriptive exposition, innovative problem-solving, grammar, and mechanics.

■ Essay Contests and Writing Showcases

Students are encouraged to write by participating in rewarding writing experiences. Prior events have featured our students’ work at poetry readings in downtown art galleries, on-campus visits with renowned authors, and many essay contests on different themes. Winning entries are showcased in specific campus and/or community events, and awards are given.

■ Student Conferences

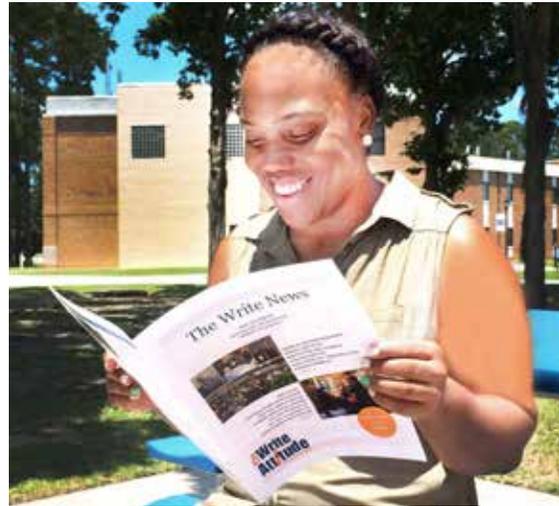
Annual student conferences exhibit research projects in discipline-specific formats. Audiences view cross-disciplinary poster presentations at the yearly SSU Research Day; listen to papers delivered at the Liberal Arts Annual Conference; and review team PowerPoint presentations at the Global Logistics and International Business Education and Research (G-LIBER) Annual Symposium. The QEP Office helps students write and present their best work by conducting conference-specific development sessions on: effective development of ideas and arguments, strengthening writing for oral delivery, and improvement of rhetorical speech and communication. Prizes are given to the best student presenters at all campus conferences.

■ Collaborations with Student Organizations

Every semester we partner with student organizations on campus to provide programming that gets students writing about their interests, in creative ways. We have hosted activities like open mic events featuring student writing, movie discussions grounded in written responses, writing game nights, and cultural events to bring awareness through writing.



STUDENT WRITING RESOURCES



■ **SSU Writing Center**

The Savannah State University Writing Center offers individual and group tutoring to assist students with all their writing needs. Professional writing tutors conduct individual sessions (by appointment or walk-in), host writing workshops, and conduct in-class writing skills presentations.

■ **Smarthinking**

Smarthinking is an online tutoring service to help students become stronger writers. Students have the option of submitting their writing assignments to e-tutors for review and to receive feedback with a 24 hour period. Many faculty members assign this resource to reinforce the writing process in their courses.

■ **Center for Academic Success**

Writing is included in the peer tutoring options offered through University College.

■ **Asa H. Gordon Library**

The Asa H. Gordon Library promotes writing through its outreach programs for students and faculty, library instruction sessions, and its commitment to promoting information literacy.

■ **Career Services**

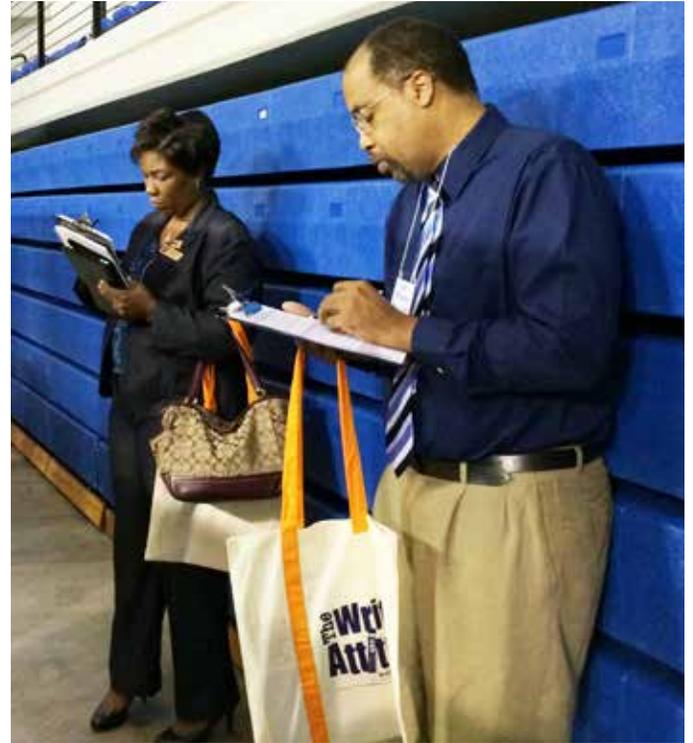
As a liaison between employers, academic programs, and students, Career Services provides assistance to all students and alumni seeking employment, graduate school information, cooperative education and internship opportunities. Their work with resumes, cover letters, and applications supports student writing for the workplace.

■ **The Write News for Students**

The Write News for Students is a newsletter produced every semester by the QEP. Its main goals are to promote the importance of writing in academic and professional lives, recognize students' performance in writing-related activities, and publicize writing-related events on and off-campus. In addition, students develop their writing skills, by contributing to *The Write News* issues with their original articles, essays, and poems.

THE WRITE ATTITUDE

FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT



Faculty and staff play an essential role in the process of creating a culture of positive attitudes toward writing among Savannah State University students. As mentors and models, professors are best suited to inspire involvement and engagement with writing. Likewise, in their daily contact with students, staff members also have influence and an ability to shape student perceptions of writing. This is why faculty and staff development are a crucial aspect of our plan.

FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

■ Faculty Development Seminar

The Seminar is an 8-week instructional program designed to teach the best practices in pedagogy and writing instruction across the curriculum. Areas covered include: motivating students' critical thinking and knowledge comprehension through writing, generating scaffolded high- and low-stake writing assignments, creating writing tasks that practically align with writing done in professional fields, and learning how to give effective student feedback. Faculty participate in surveys, implement new writing assignments in their respective classrooms and give a university-wide presentation on their teaching experiences.

■ Faculty Writing Fellows

Faculty Writing Fellows primarily serve with students who need help with writing in the faculty member's area of disciplinary expertise; however, they are available to help any Savannah State University member in need. Participating faculty members log 75 hours per term in the SSU Writing Center as Faculty Writing Fellows. They also conduct research on best practices in pedagogy and writing instruction in their discipline, and then present their findings at a QEP Faculty Development Workshop.

■ Faculty Development Workshops Series

This series of informational sessions keep faculty members current on the latest pedagogical innovations in writing instruction and writing to learn techniques. The workshops allow faculty to learn from one another, interact with others in differing disciplines, and share experiences and suggestions.

■ Staff Professional Writing Workshops

The workshops are designed for staff members interested in improving their written communication skills at a professional level for application in their work. Topics include: electronic communications, office correspondence, professional writing etiquette, report and proposal writing, and writing effective evaluations and performance reviews.



WRITING ASSESSMENT TRAININGS

■ Calibration Norming Sessions

This faculty development activity involves participants coming to consensus regarding standards of proficiency exhibited in student writing, tied to a specific writing assignment at a specific course level. Faculty members collectively examine and rate sample pieces of student writing using a rubric, then discuss their scoring until a shared view of the skills shown are agreed upon. This helps to ensure consistency in assessment of student work and helps to unify course- and program-level expectations.

■ Curriculum Mapping

Program faculty engage in structured discussions to identify where writing is introduced, reinforced, and mastered in the coursework to ensure that the student learning outcomes related to writing are properly aligned.

■ Common Writing Assignments

Many general education courses have developed and adopted a common writing assignment across multiple sections so that students experience uniformity with writing scale and evaluation. A series of guided conversations and collaborations regarding college-level writing expectations have led to the production of these shared assignments.



FACULTY AND STAFF WRITING RESOURCES

■ **SSU Writing Center**

The Writing Center offers services to all SSU faculty and staff. In addition to providing personalized workshops for classes, Faculty Writing Fellows and professional tutors can assist with crafting student writing assignments, pieces for publication, and other professional documents.

■ **Writing-related Travel**

Faculty and staff members interested in traveling to attend or present at conferences related to writing may be assisted with their expenses by the Office of the QEP.

■ **The Write News for Faculty and Staff**

The Write News for Faculty and Staff is a newsletter produced each semester by the QEP. Its goals are to promote the importance of writing, publicize writing-related programs and activities on and off-campus for both faculty and staff, to announce QEP results and important accomplishments, spotlight faculty and staff publications and participation in writing-related academic conferences, and bring awareness to additional writing-related resources.



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