



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Garrey Carruthers", written over a horizontal line.

8/22/17

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

Date

Garrey Carruthers, Chancellor and President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

New Mexico State University

Name of Institution

Las Cruces, NM

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted by August 31 of Year 9. HLC recommends that institutions with comprehensive evaluations in the first half of Year 10 submit their report at least six months prior to their Assurance System lock date. Submit the report as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: August 22, 2017

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Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

In Fall 2013 NMSU launched its four-year Quality Initiative (QI) project to improve undergraduate student writing in the disciplines. Intended to address ongoing concerns about student writing, the proposal called for a comprehensive review of undergraduate student writing. Ten core questions guided data collection, and were addressed using no less than 15 unique sources, including locally developed and nationally standardized instruments.

The QI brought a cohesive institutional focus to a critical area of student learning that transcends disciplinary divisions; created opportunities to engage in meaningful and comprehensive institution-level assessment of student learning (specifically writing); and provided an evidence-based response to improve student writing - a pervasive institutional and national challenge.

The QI was successful in engaging and developing faculty expertise in student writing. Professional development opportunities for faculty on student writing included one-time and ongoing workshops by national and local writing experts, open forum discussions, sponsored individual and team attendance at conferences and retreats, and a campus Conference that focused on student writing.

- Three cohorts participated in a pilot three-year faculty development Writing-to-Learn (W2L) program. Participants have implemented curricular changes to incorporate/increase writing in their courses.
- Faculty assessed writing at the department level and across the general education (GE) core, and considered institutional data in open forums and faculty meetings.
- A new website (<https://accrreditation.nmsu.edu/nmsu-write/qi/>) provides documentary videos, information and resources for student writing.
- The QI Team published its work in two scholarly journals.
- One faculty member published research documenting the positive effect on student success (and particularly for at-risk students) of using Socratic note-taking assignments in large introductory courses.

To strengthen the research aspect of the QI, we triangulated data from multiple sources. Triangulation is a powerful technique that utilizes multiple research methods to study the same phenomenon from various perspectives. Results from independent sources are validated through cross-verification. Triangulated data from our QI revealed remarkably consistent findings. Compelling data from a rigorous two-phase (published) research study on faculty beliefs about writing was central to designing our intervention strategy. An independent review of the NMSU main campus' English department, which included the Writing Center (WC), was consistent with QI findings, and recommendations were incorporated into the QI.

Based on our findings, NMSU arrived at three core actions to improve student writing:

1. The pilot W2L program is being scaled for departmental cohort participation as “Writing-to-Think!” beginning Fall 2017.
2. The NMSU-Grants branch community college campus established a WC, supported by Title V funding.
3. A proposal is under consideration to transition the current main campus WC (in the English Department) into a University Writing Center (UWC) that is centrally funded and centrally located in a visible, high-traffic area of the campus.

Basic tenets of the proposed QI remained constant over time, though specific aspects evolved in response to changing institutional conditions. For example, data collection in Year 1 was delayed, but assessment of writing occurred as planned in Year 2; syllabi collection occurred as scheduled, but coding took longer to complete than anticipated; the W2L program was internally (rather than externally) funded; initial expectations for widespread integral involvement at the institution-level were replaced by expectations for integral involvement at more localized levels. The latter is more reasonable because improving student writing is ultimately dependent on individual faculty and departmental approaches to include writing in the curriculum.

We had anticipated implementing institutional changes with time to assess the direct impact on student writing. However, institution-level data led us in a different direction than expected. Some of the changes we anticipated making during the course of the QI were not pursued. Instead, focus was increasingly directed toward impacting individual faculty. As such, assessment of the impact of the QI happened primarily at the course-level. Long-term impact of the QI will be forthcoming. Based on preliminary results, we anticipate interventions will be far more impactful than the changes that we initially anticipated would result from the QI.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative’s hypotheses and findings.)

The QI was developed with a primary purpose to address ongoing concern about undergraduate student writing (across all disciplines), with the intent of initiating comprehensive actions to improve writing. The QI was also envisioned as an opportunity for the institution to develop effective processes for assessing comprehensive institutional undergraduate student learning outcomes, which NMSU identifies as the Baccalaureate Experience (BE) learning outcomes. The QI addresses the BE outcome “effective communication,” and specifically written communication.

Inclusive of both overarching purposes, the QI achieved three goals: 1) NMSU was united in focusing on a critical area of student learning that transcends disciplinary divisions; 2) NMSU engaged in a meaningful and comprehensive institutional assessment of a BE learning outcome; and 3) NMSU enacted changes, based on assessment and research data, to improve student learning (in this case writing).

Goal 1: The QI engaged the campus community in focusing on a common area of student learning - writing. Numerous and diverse faculty development activities fostered informed conversations about student writing. Related accomplishments, in addition to those listed in Question 1 above, include:

- The QI was launched with workshops led by the nationally recognized writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) expert, Dr. John Bean.
- Nine writing-in-the-discipline (WID) workshops were provided by the English department in year 1; No less than 35 additional (unduplicated with those listed below) workshops, open forums and related meetings occurred over the duration of the QI.
- Four iterations of a weeklong WAC seminar were offered.
- A semester-long W2L program was offered for graduate teaching assistants.
- A system-wide Conference on Assessment (2015) featured WAC and WID experts, as well as over 25 NMSU faculty and team presentations and posters on W2L and assessment.
- Over 45 faculty members were sponsored to attend the New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention (NMHEAR) annual conference to present their work and experiences, and/or to gain better understanding of assessment practices.
- To date, seven W2L mini-grant program participants, representing all six academic colleges, have presented on-campus forums/presentations in the NMSU Teaching Academy, and at the state-level NMHEAR annual conference.
- NMSU-Grants faculty collaborated to create campus-wide “Word of the Week” activities as a way to expand vocabulary across disciplines.

Goal 2: Faculty across campus engaged in hands-on assessment activities, including at the course-, department/program-, and institution-level, to provide a complete picture of student writing at NMSU.

- Fourteen college and departmental teams participated in summer retreats to develop writing assessment tools and processes.
- Four colleges (Arts and Sciences; Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences; Business; and Engineering) developed college-wide writing rubrics that were adopted and applied (sometimes with adaptations) across departments.
- Fifty-one academic departments/programs assessed undergraduate student writing; many implemented actions - e.g. curricular changes, course changes, pedagogy, etc. - to improve student writing.
- Cross-disciplinary faculty assessed student writing as part of the lower-level GE core assessment.
- W2L program participants assessed the impact of writing-related curricular and pedagogical changes on student learning in their courses.
- Institution-level data on student writing were used to foster discussions and decisions among faculty members and administrators about improving student writing.

Goal 3: The institution - from individual faculty, to departments, to the university at large - used data to inform decisions and actions to improve student writing. Ten core questions guided institutional data collection:

- How frequently do students write?
- How much do students write?
- What types of writing are required of students?
- How much writing instruction do we provide?
- What writing resources do we provide?
- How clearly do we communicate writing expectations?
- How much feedback on writing do we give?

- How important do we believe writing is?
- How well do students write?
- How do faculty think about and approach writing?

These questions were addressed by analyzing data and information from over 15 unique sources, including from locally developed and nationally standardized instruments, and approaches based on nationally recognized WAC data models:

- Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
- GE writing assessment
- Departmental writing assessment
- Syllabi analysis study
- National Survey of Student Engagement
- National Survey of Student Engagement - Topical Module: Writing
- Evaluation Kit student survey
- Baccalaureate Experience (BE) student survey
- Student focus groups
- NMSU policy, practice and catalog review
- Peer institution data – Power of 5 Team
- NMSU IDEA Grant
- Two faculty surveys
- Video interviews of NMSU faculty
- W2L Mini-grant participants' annual reports

Arguably one of the strongest aspects of our QI, triangulated data were remarkably consistent across sources. For example, strengths and weaknesses identified on the nationally standardized CLA were the same as those identified by our locally developed GE assessment; a local analysis of over 300 NMSU course syllabi corroborated what students reported on the NSSE Writing Module, and on our local surveys, about their course-level writing experiences. Having multiple data sources with consistent findings focused conversations on the findings and potential actions to improve writing, and prevented conversations from migrating to perceived limitations of any one data source.

One particular aspect of the study evolved into a research project, and became the most unique accomplishment of the QI: Because existing research is clear that the only way to improve writing is to write, we determined that a primary outcome of the QI should be to ensure NMSU students have frequent, multiple and varied writing experiences. Since faculty own the curriculum, we realized that we would need to convince faculty to increase the amount of writing (and in many cases adjust the types of writing) they assign to students. To effectively influence faculty to assign more (and more effective) writing, we recognized that we would need to understand what most influences faculty decisions to assign - or not assign - writing. A rigorous and carefully planned two-phase (and now published) research study ensued. Findings of the studies (discussed in more detail in #3 below) became the mainstay for our proposed intervention to influence faculty to assign writing. The intervention specifically addresses effective strategies for assigning writing so that it 1) is manageable for the faculty member; 2) provides valuable benefits to the student; and 3) results in a more rewarding experience for both the faculty member and the student.

Ultimately, aggregated and triangulated institutional data and findings were presented in an open

forum to the NMSU community. Discussion and feedback from this session, as well as from similar meetings with faculty and administrators across campus, were used to identify and prioritize potential actions to improve student writing. Based on feedback, a proposal for action was drafted and approved by the deans and provost, and a second proposal is in process.

NMSU's goal to engage campus constituents in an extended conversation about student writing was achieved; NMSU's goal to engage the campus community in comprehensive assessment of institutional learning outcomes (the BE), was achieved; NMSU's goal to use data to guide institutional actions to improve student writing was achieved; goals to implement actions within the timeframe of the QI were partially achieved and are ongoing.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

The intended impact of the QI shifted over time. We started with an eye to broad-sweeping institutional change, and settled decisively on targeted faculty development. For example, at the beginning of the QI attention was focused, and rightly so, on assessing student writing. Colleges and departments invested in developing writing rubrics and aligned assignments. This naturally revealed the need to communicate more clearly and consistently to students about writing expectations. Discussions ensued about which aspects of writing are most important - those that demonstrate content knowledge, critical thinking and metacognition, or those that demonstrate knowledge and skillful application of grammar and mechanics. Faculty began to discover that while they really wanted the former, they often graded on the latter.

Through these conversations and other data it began to be evident that faculty beliefs and assumptions about student writing were not consistent with faculties' own personal experiences with writing. For example, we discovered that faculty tend to think about their own writing in terms of process (formulating ideas, clarifying thinking, iterative, and audience driven), and student writing in terms of product (fixed, final, and without a specified audience beyond the course instructor). We also observed that, in the context of student writing, faculty are inclined to view writing as a unique discipline divorced from their own discipline - even though they are clearly experts in their field, they do not recognize themselves as "writing experts" in their discipline. As a result, many are hesitant to assign, or provide substantive feedback to students about, writing. Ironically, faculty reflections on their own experiences with writing are far more consistent with the literature and research on writing, than are their reflections about student writing.

As our project unfolded, our research on faculty beliefs and perceptions about writing revealed that what most influences faculty to assign (or not assign) writing is the perceived benefit it has on students. The second most influential reason for assigning writing (or not) is the faculty member's belief about how difficult it is (i.e. time and grading) to assign writing. From this we began to hypothesize that the most effective and lasting way to impact student writing was to change faculty beliefs about student writing and assigning writing.

Our pilot W2L program was already structured to address best practices for assigning writing, and preliminary results suggest this was an effective and powerful method to influence faculty beliefs and behaviors related to writing. Based on our study and observations of W2L participants, our hypothesis was strengthened, and we felt increasingly confident that faculty at NMSU assign writing

when they know - particularly through personal experience - how students benefit. Changes in the pilot W2L participants' approaches to writing had already resulted in improved student performance in content knowledge, critical thinking and reflection, course engagement and writing. We recognized that in order for faculty to have such experiences, ongoing training, support and a community of like-minded peers are essential. This realization has perhaps had the greatest impact on the QI. We determined that convincing faculty that writing benefits students, and dispelling misconceptions about student writing, assigning writing, grading writing, what constitutes quality writing, and what it takes for students to become strong writers, was likely the most impactful action that the institution could take to improve student writing.

This information as well as data from our collective studies and resources was used to successfully engage the university community in conversations about how to best improve student writing. While there were numerous potential changes the institution could have made to demonstrate that we were taking action to improve writing (and many of them far more visible and flashy), we maintained our focus on what the data was telling us, and on identifying THE thing that had the most potential to have a sustainable impact on student writing. What started out as two subcomponents of the QI have provided the most valuable information to inform our intervention strategy.

The resulting intervention shows tremendous promise: Beginning Fall 2017, the W2L program will be scaled for departmental cohort participation, and will be known as Writing-to-Think! (W2T). This approach is based on our own research findings that assigning writing increases with a faculty member's increased belief that students benefit from writing, and on longstanding research showing that writing increases engagement, fosters critical thinking, and improves meta-analysis and self-reflection (i.e. learning). An additional research study will confirm whether or not this intervention (W2T) changes beliefs about assigning writing, and whether or not changed beliefs do in fact impact whether, the amount, and type of writing that is assigned. Sustainability components of this program include ongoing oversight by the current QI Team leader, support and facilitation from W2L experts, and 'give-back' components designed into the program. For example, participants are required to share their experiences with faculty in their department, mentor other faculty in W2T techniques, present at the NMSU Teaching Academy and the planned NMSU Conference on Student Writing, and encouraged to present, at a minimum, at a state conference on assessment.

In addition, data, conversations, and feedback from the meetings described above were coupled with findings from a recent review of the main campus English Department to develop another institutional action proposal: The QI team collaborated with the WC, English Department and the College of Arts and Sciences to propose transitioning our current WC (operated and located within the English Department) into a University Writing Center (UWC) that will be staffed and administratively overseen by the English Department, but will be centrally funded and located. A central and high-profile resource will help maintain momentum gained through the QI and provide a long-lasting foundation for the importance of writing across all disciplines, and at all levels. Centralizing and fortifying a UWC has potential to further impact the culture and understanding of writing across the institution.

At the same time, the NMSU-Grants campus was awarded a Title V federal grant that 1) provided for the establishment of a campus WC, and 2) targeted courses with low pass rates for instructional redesign. All targeted courses included writing performance as an improvement goal. As an

instructional strategy, NMSU-Grants' QI team members paired with course instructors to infuse effective writing strategies into those courses.

Quantifying the impact of the QI at the more local level is more challenging. In some cases, QI-related accomplishments have been reported in annual assessment reports, but in other cases they have not. The following exemplifies a significant effort by one department to improve student writing that was not included in the annual departmental assessment report. The department surveyed frequent employers of their graduates, and found that writing skills were an area for improvement. As a result, they have redesigned one course to specifically focus on disciplinary writing. Department faculty collaborated in scaling the W2L program into the W2T program, and this fall the department will be one of the pilot departments participating in the scaled W2T program. They anticipate long-term results because faculty teaching courses in various levels of the curriculum will be intentionally and effectively incorporating writing in courses. At the same time, participating faculty members will play a role in facilitating departmental discussions about the impact of writing in their courses, and sharing techniques for simple, informal writing that can be used to improve course content learning. This major effort to improve student writing should have figured prominently in learning assessment reports of the department, but did not. Instead, assessment reports focused on discipline-specific programmatic learning outcomes. We are working with departments to improve their assessment reporting on essential skills, such as writing.

Another example is the NMSU-Grants' "Word of the Week" initiative, created to use vocabulary building as a method to enrich student writing. All faculty participated in introducing common new words into courses and conversations across campus; definitions, history, and applications were made visible on posters and electronic boards. A board in a commons area invited student feedback. No negative feedback was posted. Sample comments include:

- "Happiness is a good vocabulary."
- "I like to impress friends & family with my new vocabulary!"
- "Learning new words enhances my writing skills ☺ COOL IDEA!"
- "Words are Awesome"
- "This board makes me smarter."
- "Fun way to keep students learning"
- "Learning these new words expands my vocabulary so I can express myself better."

When questioned, many faculty members will demonstrate little knowledge or awareness of NMSU's "Quality Initiative"; however, they will tell you that yes, their department has been focusing on improving student writing in recent years. Thus, while there is evidence of actions to improve student writing, there may not be association of those actions with the QI. From our perspective this is not problematic, and in fact is a testament to the authenticity of this initiative to engage faculty in improving student writing, rather than in gaining notoriety about an "initiative" on student writing.

Examples of additional, periphery impact include:

- Creation of an online syllabus development website: Review of syllabi highlighted the need for more standardization, and was the initial impetus for the website tool. While not directly related to student writing, the tool is intended to better meet student needs for consistency

and clarity in syllabi across courses and colleges.

- Though the official period of the QI is completed, there is ongoing research to continue to evaluate the impact of W2T program on student writing. Two follow up studies are already underway. One is an empirical study to determine whether or not the pilot W2L program impacted faculty beliefs about the benefits of writing to students, and the amount and types of writing assigned. Another will determine whether the ensuing program (W2T) does the same.
- The QI has penetrated discussions at the institution- and state-level about GE reform, with some suggesting writing should be a consistent component across GE courses.
- Revised curriculum is being implemented Fall 2017 in NMSU's first-year writing course (and in 200-level writing courses in subsequent semesters) to challenge students to explore writing as a daily activity with multiple purposes and goals, including to understand self (including their own learning) and the communities and activities in which they interact. This approach and increased focus on inquiry-based writing further expands W2L concepts across GE curricula, and across the university.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

Several colleges and departments developed and adopted standard writing rubrics that are introduced and applied in various courses throughout a student's tenure at NMSU. An "I Love to Write" collage project at NMSU-Grants was successful in helping students reflect on their freshman composition writing experience and enhancing their awareness of their own learning.

Our website makes available a number of self-explanatory tools, data and other information collected for and gained from our QI, including:

- Reports from our various studies, including summaries of triangulated data
- Video documentaries of faculty personal experiences with writing
- Highlights from annual reports by our W2L participants
- A collection of prompts for "One-Minute-Papers"
- Writing resources
- Links to related faculty publications

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

The original QI plan was quite aggressive, and intentionally so. Changing institutional dynamics were not necessarily surprising, but did create both challenges and opportunities. For example, the QI was developed while the institution was under interim leadership in the President and Provost's offices; the proposal was approved for submission to HLC as the current permanent President and Provost were beginning their terms at NMSU; across the four years of the QI, NMSU hired eight new academic deans; transitions in leadership of the English department and the Writing program occurred; two of the five original QI Team members retired, and two took on new positions at the institution; the Director of Assessment who served as the QI Team leader transitioned to a new position, but to ensure continuity the QI stayed under her purview; and naturally at an institution this size, there were changes in program and departmental leadership. As a result, even though the QI had the strong support of the Provost, President, and current deans, sustaining an ongoing institutional conversation about writing was a challenge. Still, critical conversations occurred that

fed the institutional narrative. Moreover, compilation of institutional data was successful, despite the difficulties associated with collecting and aggregating individual and departmental data.

Another challenge was the number of other institutional initiatives that emerged during this period - many due to increased attention to enrollment and retention. Institutional initiatives completed concurrently with the QI included: A move to centralized advising; development of meta-majors; creation of the Aggie Pathway to the Baccalaureate; adoption of a residential requirement for first-year students; changed admission standards; implementation of 6-week early grade reports; comprehensive revision of institutional policies, rules and the student catalog; institutional transforming exercises (efficiency and effectiveness reorganization); adoption of new online/distance education policies; reduction in the minimum number of required credit hours for undergraduate degrees; and discussions about revising institutional and state GE requirements. Sometimes competing and sometimes complementary, these projects necessitated revised expectations. Initially, we anticipated more faculty members formally joining the QI team; however, the QI Team remained small even though faculty members from outside the team made significant contributions within their departmental communities and even at the institution level. Given the changed directional focus of our initiative over time (from broad-sweeping institutional aspects of writing to recognizing faculty as the key to improving writing), we see this was a strength, not a weakness of our QI.

An unanticipated opportunity that presented itself was in the timing, findings and recommendations of the English Department program review, completed in Spring 2017. External reviewers highlighted significant challenges with the English Department WC and made strong recommendations for moving to a university supported WC. Data from the QI supported that recommendation. New leadership in the college of Arts and Sciences, English department and WC capitalized on the timing and complementary data and findings, moving quickly to forward a proposal for a University Writing Center (UWC).

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

A number of constituents and constituent groups were involved in this initiative. They are listed below, with a brief description of their involvement and the perceived value and impact of the QI.

Membership of the QI Team evolved over time, but the team consistently moved the QI forward. The QI Team feels positive about the accomplishments of the QI to bring a sustained and long-term solution to improve student writing.

Institutional leadership (Provost and Deans) has consistently supported the QI. It was through their support that the W2L program was scaled to the ongoing, institutionalized departmental Writing-to-Think! program. Some would have supported a more sweeping mandate for writing-intensive courses across all disciplines, but accepted the more intensive faculty development approach as a promising option. The deans will have a strong influence on whether or not the institution moves to a centrally supported UWC. The Provost and Dean of Arts and Sciences have already expressed support, and we anticipate support from other deans as well.

Concerns about student writing by department heads, program directors and faculty at-large are what instigated the focus on student writing. Departments across the institution have engaged in assessment of student writing and have taken multiple approaches to improve student writing. W2L participants represent every college, and these individuals have been quite successful in their efforts. Faculty who have engaged in various aspects of the initiative have expressed appreciation for the effort, and likely have variable perspectives about the impact of the QI. Those who have been most involved in the QI at the institution-level and in the W2L (and WAC) program are most enthusiastic about the QI in general, and particularly about the observed real, and potential impact on student thinking and writing. These individuals experienced firsthand the impact of extended faculty development in the area of writing and assigning writing - citing improved student engagement, critical thinking/problem solving, and reflection - all of which they contend makes for more rewarding teaching experiences.

The Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning in General Education (CASL-GE) facilitated assessment of writing across the GE core. They would likely express appreciation for the focus on writing and the opportunity the QI provided to 'close the loop' to improve student outcomes. Some committee members have been involved in institution and state level actions to reform GE curriculum, and have advocated for increased writing in GE courses to foster critical thinking and inquiry.

The former Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning across the Baccalaureate Experience (CASL-BE) facilitated surveys of NMSU students about the BE generally, and about their writing experiences at NMSU more specifically. Committee members were enthusiastic about gaining better understanding of the student perspective and experience, and were surprised by some of the findings of the survey (as were others across the institution).

Graduate assistants and undergraduate students engaged in various aspects of the QI (from offering workshops to facilitating and participating in undergraduate student focus groups and surveys) consistently expressed appreciation for the activities and attention to student issues.

The new Writing Program Director is excited about the institutional response to improve student writing, and continues to see many opportunities for which the QI has opened the door.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

Learning occurred at multiple levels. Because of the widespread involvement, it is impossible to account for all that was learned, but below is a summary of highlights from various perspectives.

As an institution, we learned how students experience and perceive writing:

- Nationally standardized and locally developed measures conclude our students are “average” in their writing ability and show that students are strongest in grammar and mechanics and weaker in organizing, problem-solving and effective rhetoric to argue a position.
- The quantity of student writing at NMSU is fairly consistent with peer-designated institutions but varies widely by college and discipline.
- NMSU's framework for writing instruction is similar to that of our peer institutions, but has fewer required credit hours, and the policies and practices around that framework may

disadvantage writing success for some of our students, particularly for our large population of students (roughly 20-24%) who are domestic English Language Learners (English is not the first language).

- While we have structured writing support services for international students, we have limited support services for our significant population of domestic English Language Learners.
- Students point to courses as the primary place where writing takes place, and maintain very strong associations between the amount of required writing and the perceived importance of writing in the respective discipline.
- NMSU has ample and identifiable opportunities to strengthen our communication to students about writing expectations and the importance of writing.
- Students identify formative feedback and clarity of expectations as having the most significant impact on their success in writing.

As researchers, we learned that in order to impact systemic change, we must impact individual change. Specifically, we learned that:

- What most influences faculty to assign or not assign writing in their courses is their perception of the value it holds for the student; their second consideration is how difficult it will be for them to assign (i.e. grade) writing.
- Faculty tend to view their own writing in terms of 'process,' and student writing in terms of 'product.' This may mean that the value they experience for themselves through the writing process (which is upheld by research), is not perceived as equally valuable to students. It may be that the focus on student writing as a product is what drives this perception.
- Faculty have many misconceptions about what is required (time and effort) to effectively assign student writing.
- Faculty experience significant discomfort about grading student writing - many faculty do not see themselves as equipped to provide valuable feedback to students on their writing.
- Faculty are largely unaware of best practices associated with assigning writing.
- Addressing faculty obstacles to incorporating writing is a time-intensive and ongoing process.
- Faculty value and need a supportive community (and appreciate a cross-discipline community) in which they can discuss and garner feedback on their efforts at assigning writing in various contexts.

As QI Team members, we learned that:

- Grass-roots movements resonate with and inspire faculty; still, visible and tangible support by upper-administrators is critical to successful implementation.
- Faculty are invested in doing what is best for their students, but may not have the expertise necessary to make effective pedagogical and curricular changes.
- Communication is essential - communication must be frequent and consistent; it does not always have to be complete - it is important to communicate a vision and progress, even when all of the details may not be worked out.

Flexibility is essential, and a readiness to capitalize on unforeseen opportunities - each challenge presents new opportunities as long as you are willing to seize them.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

Approximately \$400,000 over four years was committed to the QI. Funding supported three graduate assistants, faculty stipends, external speakers/presenters, faculty mini-grant awards, travel and conference/retreat attendance by faculty, and event hospitality. Significant human resources were invested in the initiative - time commitments by the QI Team leader and members; faculty participation in assessment activities; committee, staff and student investment in putting together a campus Conference on Assessment that highlighted the QI; website development; facilitation of the W2L program (including review of applications and selection by the Teaching Academy Board of Directors); facilitation of student focus groups; and faculty projects and subsequent presentations at local and state conferences only scratch the surface of the resources devoted to this effort.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

Two primary projects for ongoing work to improve student writing include the scaled W2T program, and transitioning to a UWC. The Provost has committed to ongoing leadership by the current QI Team leader to oversee the W2T program and ensure continued movement on the UWC proposal.

Other plans build on the existing work of the QI. Ongoing research will continue to determine if our intervention achieves the intended impact. New direction from the WC administration is already considering opportunities to further impact faculty development and writing expertise across disciplines. NMSU will continue to foster increased understanding that writing is a shared responsibility, and the university must structure curriculum and a culture that values, through its actions, writing expertise. The following highlight a few ways in which the QI Team will continue to promote improved student writing.

1. Workshops and discussion opportunities to address faculty anxieties about assigning writing.
2. Improved and more consistent communication to students about writing expectations (e.g. college-level writing rubrics)
3. Enhanced communication and clarity about what students gain from introductory English composition courses, and from the WC.
4. Sustained interdisciplinary faculty communities centered around W2L, WAC and WID.
5. Continued GE reform conversations that consider W2L techniques to foster critical thinking, learning and inquiry.
6. Campus Conference on Writing, planned for Spring 2018.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

The W2L and W2T programs are year-long faculty development programs to help faculty gain an

understanding about the unique value that writing has for helping students think deeply, process information, clarify thinking, and reflect on their own learning. Faculty members focus on developing low- stakes, formative writing assignments, and in some cases about scaffolding larger writing assignments, when writing is a core component of the course. The scaled W2T program requires multiple faculty members from departments to participate simultaneously, creating greater departmental support for participants and opportunities to use the program to scaffold the departmental curriculum to systematically incorporate writing across courses. Project proposal and reporting forms are available on our website and we are available to discuss the three-year program components and monthly meeting structure for the first year, as requested.

Faculty surveys of attitudes and perceptions were a core part of the QI. Data from these studies are published, and we anticipate additional publications as our research continues. We are happy to share details of the studies.

The syllabi analysis tools and process was adapted from the work of WAC expert Roger Graves from the University of Alberta. Dr. Graves has done extensive research in this area. Contact information is available upon request. We intend to publish results from this study in the future.

Writing rubrics are available on our website, but most were adapted from the LEAP rubrics, which are already publically available.

As a practice, the research-based approach of this QI is highly recommended. Triangulated data from multiple sources alleviated faculty tendencies to dismiss the data, and propelled discussions to identifying solutions. This was an unanticipated consequence of the intensive data driven approach of this QI.