**GEAC 2012-13 Assessment Summit**

**January 2013**

**Written Communication within the Major**

**Summary and Recommendations**

The raters responded well to the calibration process and proceeded to rate the 53 portfolios with only four that required a third reader. Thus, it was a relatively rigorous calibration and a valid assessment process. More than half of the raters scored the first four SLO as “Meets Standard” or “Exceeds Standard” while a third or more rated the same four SLO as “Approaches Standard” or Needs Attention.” The reverse was true for SLO 5, Control of Syntax and Mechanics, with more than half of the papers rated as “Approaches Standard” or “Needs Attention.” Clearly work is needed to improve the basic mechanical writing skills of students while some work is also needed to improve writing skills in writing-intensive courses in general across all SLO.

Faculty expect students to transition from “learning to write” in their English composition courses (ENGL 110 and ENGL 211 / 221 / 231) to “writing to learn” in their upper-division major courses, including W courses. Faculty teaching upper-division courses can work with students to use the literature of the discipline and cite it appropriately. And they can encourage critical thinking in the discipline as students develop their papers. However, they may not be prepared to teach syntax and mechanics.

What is causing the writing problems in the transition from English composition courses to major courses in the upper division? Some thoughts for further exploration are:

* Do the problems vary by College?
* Are faculty teaching courses leading to the W courses assigning and grading enough writing?
* What is the expectation for writing in W courses beyond the requirement of 51% of the grade based on writing?
* Are faculty using a common writing rubric?
* How committed and skilled are faculty in the disciplines to teaching writing as part of their courses?

The recommendations of the raters cited above should help faculty to help students improve writing in writing-intensive courses. In addition:

* GEAC will convene a Faculty Institute on Quality, Competency, and Liberal Education in January to discuss writing and critical thinking with faculty from each college.
* GEAC will distribute the Writing Rubric for W Courses to all faculty and encourage them to use it to grade writing AND share it with their students.

**Questions or More Information**

Dr. J. Worth Pickering

Assistant Vice President

Office of Assessment

2201 Spong Hall

757-683-3158

[jpickeri@odu.edu](mailto:jpickeri@odu.edu)