

***Rhetorica*: The Art of Writing and Speaking at Young Harris College**

Young Harris College has developed a narrowly focused program within the academic curriculum to improve students' written and spoken communication. The program's title, taken from the Latin term for rhetoric, not only emphasizes the program's encompassment of both writing and speaking, but also signals the program's ties to the classical foundation of the liberal arts. The *Rhetorica* Program has two main components: Writing and Speaking Intensive courses and the Center for Writing and Speaking.

Writing and Speaking Intensive courses develop students' communication skills through writing, presentations, and class discussion. Student learning outcomes have been identified for each area of emphasis, and rubrics have been developed to assess student learning. Professors who volunteer to teach WI/SI versions of their courses participate in orientations, workshops, other forms of faculty development focused on effective writing and speaking pedagogy. Each student who enters Young Harris College in the 2011 fall term or later is required to complete a certain number and type of WI/SI courses, depending on the degree being pursued.

The Center for Writing and Speaking helps students develop their communication skills by providing assistance with written and spoken assignments. The center opened in the 2010 fall term to coincide with the program's pilot year. It is housed in a dedicated building and open five days per week. The center employs fourteen student tutors. Each tutor is carefully selected and thoroughly trained by the center's co-directors.

Identification and Development

The QEP topic was selected following a comprehensive identification process that took place during the 2008-09 academic year. This process, coordinated by the QEP Identification Team, educated College constituencies about the QEP process, solicited input from those constituencies, reviewed internal and external research on student learning, and selected a topic that best addresses the needs of Young Harris College students. During the 2009-10 academic year, the Young Harris College QEP Development Team designed a program to implement the approved topic. The program design was informed by a study of best practices in writing and speaking instruction and by input from the College faculty. The program was thoroughly reviewed by the faculty, staff, and administration prior to approval and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. To further aid in its development, a pilot of the QEP was conducted during the 2010-11 academic year.

Administration and Assessment

The program is administered by a Directorial Committee comprised of the Program Director and the co-directors of the Center for Writing and Speaking. Each is a tenured or tenure-track member of the English or Communication Studies faculty, and each receives a stipend and a reduced teaching load. The committee implements the program's comprehensive assessment plan, which utilizes qualitative and quantitative measures to assess student learning outcomes and the program's overall effectiveness. The assessment plan guides the use of assessment results to effect changes and improvements in the program and in the assessment plan itself.

For additional information, please contact Mark Rollins, Associate Professor of English and *Rhetorica* Program Director, at mrollins@yhc.edu.