

Writing Ourselves In (WOI), NOVA's Quality Enhancement Plan, achieved significant milestones in Year 3 (2024-25), demonstrating the power of faculty collaboration and innovative teaching practices to improve student success and belonging.

Professional Learning

Faculty professional learning has remained a cornerstone of WOI's success. Since August 2022, 169 teaching, professional, and administrative faculty have participated in WOI's professional learning program. Survey responses and focus group interviews indicate that faculty want to connect and collaborate. Participating in WOI's professional learning program has facilitated idea sharing, ameliorated feelings of isolation—particularly for part-time faculty—and increased faculty engagement. In May 2025, WOI made strong strides in our goal to expand the professional learning program to teaching faculty from other disciplines: 28 faculty representing 12 different humanities and business courses attended our summer institute.

Student Success and Belonging

In terms of WOI's impact on student success, results are encouraging. Since WOI began, we have seen an 11% increase in overall average course success in College Composition I (ENG 111), from 61% in Fall 2021 to 72% in Fall 2024. Gains for students in our equity gap populations have been even greater. In Fall 2024, part-time students succeeded at a rate of 69%, a 12% increase from Fall 2021. Likewise, students who self-identify as Black/African American succeeded at a rate of 68%, a 14% increase, and students who self-identify as Hispanic/Latine succeeded at a rate of 69%, a 14% increase from Fall 2021.

Our assessment work has made clear how teaching choices impact student outcomes. For example, the overall average success rate for Fall 2024 ENG111/EDE 11 students was 63%. However, students whose instructors aligned assignments more closely to the ENG 111 course content summary succeeded at 75%, an 8% increase. In 2025-26, WOI efforts will focus on helping instructors to develop assignments that align with the course content summary in order to improve outcomes for developmental writers.

A central WOI goal is to improve students' sense of belonging in College Composition I (ENG 111), which is critical not only for classroom success but also for college success. WOI's pedagogical framework, the foundation of our professional learning program, was chosen specifically because there is evidence that each of the three teaching practices contributes to students' belonging. To measure levels of belonging, the WOI team created a survey, which has consistently indicated that while students have positive interactions with their instructors and understand the work they do in FYC is highly transferable, they need help making connections with their peers.

In order to investigate further, the WOI team has conducted a student focus group interview every year. ENG 111 students have consistently revealed their need for more in-class opportunities to connect with their classmates. Participants also shared that when they have

positive experiences with collaborative learning and group work, they feel more comfortable in their classes and are more likely to seek out friendly relationships with classmates both in and out of the classroom. As a result, the WOI team has included more professional learning about team-based learning and how to form “good groups.”

Achievements

Finally, this year, we made a concerted effort to share the successes of Writing Ourselves In with colleagues in the higher education community. In Spring 2025, several members of the WOI team presented at multiple conferences, including NOVA's Wonder Conference, the AAC&U CLASS Conference, and VCCS's New Horizons Conference. We were also honored that Dr. Kress was selected as a finalist for the American Association of Community Colleges Award for Advancing Institutional Equity and Belonging for Writing Ourselves In.

The QEP team continues to be strong and motivated. In Spring 2025, we were thrilled to welcome three new team members.

- Jen Daniels, AVP-Academic Affairs and QEP Advisor (Annandale)
- Karen Sutter Doheney, Co-Coordinator (Loudoun)
- Amy Flessert, Co-Coordinator Annandale)
- Megan Reynolds, Administrative Assistant and CATE Liaison (Annandale)
- Jo Houston, Professional Learning Community (PLC) Lead (Woodbridge)
- Chvonne Parker, Asynchronous Institute and Assessment Lead, ENG Faculty (Annandale)
- Elizabeth Harlan, Campus Lead (Annandale)
- Holly Abbe, Campus Lead (Loudoun)
- Scott Buswell, Campus Lead (Alexandria)
- Phil Ciarniello, Campus Lead (Manassas)
- Bradford Bucknum, Campus Lead (Loudoun)
- Casey Krall, Campus Lead (Manassas)
- Cathy Gaiser, Emeritus Asynchronous Institute and Professional Learning Community (PLC) Lead
- Kim Grewe (NOL), Instructional Designer, Canvas and Online ENG 111 Liaison
- Indigo Eriksen, Director of Faculty Professional Development, *WOI* Liaison