Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Committee
Wednesday, November 18, 2009 – 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Present: Rick Davis, Craig Gibson, Jennifer Korjus, Paula Salamoun, Minu Ramanan, Brian Mark, Kathy Alligood, Padhu Seshaiyer, Rachel Bergman, Matt Cronin, Cathy Tompkins, Mills Kelly, Linda Schwartzstein, Tim Born, Kim Eby, and Shannon Jacobsen

QEP Conversations & Outreach
- Craig and Brian spoke at VSITE’s fall faculty meeting, which happens once each semester
  - 90% had heard about the QEP before
  - There were questions after the meeting about applying for funding to participate in projects
  - Folks seemed even more interested in the QEP after hearing the presentation
  - The school understands the importance of accreditation
  - Would like to have a follow-up meeting with department chairs or those who are closely involved with undergraduates
- Kim and Rose spoke at the University Life Senior Staff meeting – about 15 people
  - UL is very excited and enthusiastic about the QEP
  - They are planning a half-day retreat in January to review what they’re currently doing to map those existing activities onto our learning outcomes
- Minu and Tim spoke to students Biochemistry I and II
  - Students expressed the need to have more advice about courses and activities
    - Suggested the possible creation of a website that would be by students for students about courses, professors, and experiences
    - Would establish a stronger sense of community among students
  - Brainstormed about possible definitions of scholarship
  - Suggested having research days with free parking
- Paula and Rick spoke to Student Government
  - It was a great meeting, though some students needed more convincing than others
  - How do we form the QEP so that students are asked to think more open-endedly early on in their academic career?
  - How do we teach students (and faculty) to answer the “why” questions?
  - Advising was mentioned as an issue – this is clearly tied to scholarship because advising influences the courses that students take and the activities that they engage in
    - We’ll need to be sure to include the advisors in this!
  - There is a need to create meaning for the students and to help them understand why they are doing the things that they’re doing
  - Class advising vs. career counseling
    - We’ll need to do promotion of QEP activities to advisors so that they can inform and encourage students to participate
    - Students need to be able to connect with folks in the field who can provide career advice
- Faculty Senate conversation
  - Discussed how the university places folks in competition with each other – we are going to have to address the barriers and challenges of working across academic units
  - Emphasis that the QEP has to be something that sets us apart from other institutions
  - Scholarship and inquiry need to be brought together
    - Intro classes need to be geared toward opening students’ minds
- Distinguished faculty discussion
  - Interest in the creation of a project database for faculty and students
This would address faculty members’ concerns about having research opportunities, but not being able to locate students to participate

- Big theme of the conversation: teaching students how to evaluate and critically think about various sources
- There was agreement on having an optional team-taught one-credit course
  - Could have speakers come in to talk about different kinds of literacy
  - Discussion about visual literacy and its importance across all disciplines
- Students need to be able to critically view and solve problems from different perspectives

Brainstorming & Looking Ahead...

- The institutional culture is not going to change through the addition of a class – it can only change through relationships and community building
  - There is a need to impact and influence students when they first arrive and there is only a small window of time when it is possible to do this
  - We need to be aware of the role of parental influence on students
  - There is a perception among students that majors lock you in to particular professions
- Could we incorporate something into orientation, where professionals are invited to come and speak to students about their prior education and current profession?
- We need to get students to think about their options (not specific careers) during their first year
  - The first year is about inquiry and second is more about career possibilities
  - It is a developmental process
- Students are interested in mentors and faculty who are invested in their success
- Students need to identify what’s interesting to them and the QEP is a way for them to explore these possibilities
- Need to keep multiple audiences in mind as we roll this out and market it (e.g., parents)
- Career Services is an underutilized resource – professionals who will help students get jobs
- There are concerns that students wouldn’t take a one-credit course if it is not required
  - There seems to be more of a need for students to have mentors
  - The course could be a place where students could be paired with potential mentors
  - Would show students how advanced thinkers across the disciplines view material
- There needs to be some kind of structure to get students paired with mentors – these individuals need to be willing to return emails and phone calls
- We could offer a series of “encounters” between faculty mentors & students throughout the year
  - Students must attend a certain number of events or participate in a certain number of activities → this is similar to the Global Proficiency Certificate
  - Could be a four-year Scholarship Certificate
  - Institutionally, we know how to do this on a small scale (e.g., the University Scholars program) – how to make it impact more students?
- Mentors don’t have to be faculty members, they could be grad students
  - How to create these connections and bridge this gap between the two populations?
  - This goes back to UH’s pyramid model – are there ways to pair these students?
  - Possibility of creating a special space for forming these bonds? → in the new library’s research commons?
- Orientation is proposing adding another day to the sessions – is there a way to bring faculty members into these discussions?
- Need to make known what already exists on campus in terms of scholarship and creative activity
- Mason currently operates off of a business model with student as customer – there is a need to change this mindset
• Need to think about individuals in departments who want to participate in the QEP and apply for funding, but whose departments will not support them
  o Individuals who want to be part of the QEP without their departments
  o Problems with complacency – students are satisfied with the way things are so why do we need to change them?
• Need to look to similar schools that do this well – how many students do they impact?
  o University of Michigan; Indiana University; Miami University; University of San Diego; University of Houston
• Incentives for departments that engage the most people in this?
• Need to be careful of those who apply for funds who are only motivated by the money – will not do quality work

Definitions of Creative Activity
• What is the role of creativity in scholarship?
• What does it mean to think creatively?
• Was our title an acknowledgement of other disciplines or does it mean creative scholarship?
• Creativity as going beyond where the rules can take you
  o There needs to be some kind of skill applied to these activities and then the work needs to be communicated with others
• You can’t engage in scholarship without creativity
  o Folks around the university (faculty and students) generally seem to equate scholarship with research
  o We need to portray that scholarship and creativity are the same thing
  o We need to clearly define what we mean by these words, if we want to eventually get proposals for projects that are outside the traditional conception of research

Draft Learning Outcomes
• Our fourth learning outcome resounds strongly with students, who have talked about the need for internships
  o We’ll need to highlight resources offered by Career Services with this
  o There is a concern about unpaid and not-for-credit internships
  o Various units/programs need to offer variable credit for internships and for study abroad
  o Could we establish an internship coordinator within each department/major?

For next meeting (December 1st):
• Please review our draft learning outcomes before the meeting – we’ll discuss these first
  o A note: Creative activity does not show up explicitly in these draft outcomes…
• We need to identify who else we need to talk to and what other information we need to move forward
• We need to identify a structure for moving forward