Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Committee  
Tuesday, December 1, 2009 – 2:00-4:00 p.m.


Discussion about February CUR Institute
• We need to think about the best search terms for finding models in the humanities
  o Example: for history it would be “historical methods” rather than undergraduate research, scholarship, or creative activities
• Committee members who are not a part of the team that attends the Institute could keep in touch during the meetings through email or Twitter for input/ideas
• We’ll want to come back to U.S. News & World Report’s list of best colleges and universities for undergraduate research and creative projects as resource moving forward
  o Link to complete list: http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/undergrad-research-programs
    ▪ Their list includes the University of Maryland, Duke, JMU, Carnegie Mellon, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Stanford, University of California (Berkeley, Irvine, and Los Angeles), Washington University, Cornell, and the University of Michigan
    ▪ Are there site visits that would be inexpensive to undertake?
  o For the curious – a link to an interesting article about how their rankings are determined: http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/undergrad-research-programs

Suggestions for Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
• All of our activities must be both in support of and supported by our SLOs
• See Karen’s recommendations – she has integrated language from Bloom’s Taxonomy to get at higher order thinking/learning processes and has also revised the original outcomes to ensure their measurability
• We might choose a subset of outcomes for the report, e.g., students will be able to meet 3 or 4 outcomes of the 9 that are listed
  o For assessment purposes, we may narrow this pool of 9 down after we research best practices, but we are not ready to limit ourselves at this point in the process
• Should we develop an outcome about students initiating their own projects to get at the creative piece of this QEP?
  o It would help distinguish this group of students from those who are working on more traditional faculty-led projects
  o We need to be sure not to lose the “creative activity” piece of this QEP topic – the current outcomes are anchored in the traditional, more research-based framework of student scholarship
• Is there a difference between classroom projects and outside of the classroom projects?
  o Right now, Karen’s edited outcomes could apply to either, but assessment for these two things might look different
• In our draft and report, we’ll want to have a list of more broad goals and expectations – how the institution will benefit and how faculty members will be involved
• SLOs are about the specific benefits to students
  • We will want to include a formal statement about the need for faculty development as part of this and make the distinction between faculty who can do research vs. faculty who can teach research
• Before listing the SLOs, we will want to state all of the conditions under which these outcomes could happen (team projects, individual, etc.)
• We’ll need to be sure that creative work and social entrepreneurship are kept distinct and separate from scholarship
  • Current learning outcomes seem to lean toward traditional academic research
  • We need stronger and more explicit statements about community-engaged learning
  • Could we categorize the learning outcomes to reflect these distinctions?
    ▪ A few will apply to all students and then others can be divided into subcategories
• Do we want to include a learning outcome about being able to work individually and as part of a team?
• Is there a way to add something about students participating in advocacy in our nation’s capital?
  • We don’t want to forget about our strategic location in this
  • Communication can happen through advocacy with organizational leaders, poster presentations, celebrations of achievement, etc.
    ▪ We need to be sure that we give examples of myriad ways to do this – importance of articulating this and being inclusive
    ▪ Students will need to participate in more than one of these activities because they each involve different kinds of communication
• Narrowing it down to 4-5 outcomes as a committee vs. allowing departments to do it themselves
  • For the departmental option, we could require two or three and then allow flexibility on the “elective” outcomes
    ▪ Would help with buy-in
  • The longer the list is, the more buy-in is likely to occur because everyone needs to be able to see themselves in this

Committee Revisions for SLOs

Note: numbering and italicized text of the outcomes referenced here are from Karen’s edited document…
• **Outcome 1:** Choose the appropriate research methodologies in their discipline for specific projects.
  • Are we assuming that oral or written expression will be the primary outcome of this work?
  • Change “research methodologies” to “discovery process”
• **Outcome 2:** Write competently within their discipline.
  • Questions/concerns about whether we would be able to tag this outcome as something that the QEP has had an influence on a few years down the road
    ▪ In our plan, we may choose to explain why an outcome about writing is not included (because of the Writing Center and WAC)
  • Suggested text: students will be able to communicate effectively to different audiences (from least sophisticated to most).
    ▪ Includes the ability to communicate about your work to individuals at various ranges of understanding (expert and non-expert audiences)
    ▪ Communicate about their scholarship to individuals outside their discipline
    ▪ Decision: delete outcome #2 and put these as bullet points under communication
• **Outcome 3:** Identify, locate, evaluate, and manage information resources in their field.
  • All approve
• **Outcome 4:** Apply the ideas of their discipline/field to communities outside their classrooms.
o Replace “ideas of their discipline/field” with “concepts, practices, or results of their work/scholarship”
o Students could achieve this outcome through an internship in an NGO, working in the community, or advocacy
  ▪ Example: ICAR’s mediation work with FCPS (http://news.gmu.edu/articles/1255)
o Involving the community vs. applying to a community
o The results don’t have to be the students’ own results – they can be from someone else
o Applying something to a community is more of a process than an outcome and it is more about results than it is about education
o Given different disciplinary frameworks this might not end up as a “core” outcome
o This outcome is about wanting to demonstrate mastery by applying it to something
  ▪ This is a common criticism of Mason on student exit surveys
• **Outcome 5:** Create an original work demonstrating evidence of critical review and analysis.
  o No comments yet...
• **Outcome 6:** Argue a position through the use of rhetoric, source materials, and conventions of citation (for those whose scholarship lends itself to this type of critical thinking).
  o Questions about the use of “argue”, but it gets at the critical thinking aspects of our topic
• **Outcome 7:** Communicate about their scholarly or creative work through
  ▪ collaboration with other student authors.
  ▪ collaboration with and/or outreach to groups or communities outside the university.
o Add a bullet reflecting that students will be able to communicate about their scholarly or creative work to communities outside of their discipline
o Add a bullet reflecting our changes to outcome 2
  ▪ Communicate their scholarly and creative work effectively to a variety of appropriate audiences
  o We could add a couple more bullets about communication under this outcome
o Questions about whether this outcome is about dissemination, communication, or collaboration
o Do we need to address the differences between written, oral, expressive, and demonstrative communication?
  ▪ This could be one way of ensuring that we are inclusive of both scholarly and creative projects
• **Outcome 8:** Integrate cross-disciplinary information.
  o As it is, this outcome may not work for certain disciplines (i.e., math)
  o There has been a lot of interest from folks in our focus group discussions about breaking disciplinary boundaries and moving outside of departmental silos
  o What will students be integrating this information into?
    ▪ Add “…into specific projects.”
• **Outcome 9:** Identify and assess the validity of key assumptions and ethical dimensions of a research/creative project in their field/discipline.
  o No comments yet...

**Moving Forward**
• We’ll want to reach out to Undergraduate Coordinators in the spring
• Rose and Minu will be having two meetings in the spring – one with fraternities and sororities and another with student leaders of international student organizations
• We’ll break into three different working groups that will each have budget and assessment consultants:
Curricular
Co-curricular
Individual/group mentoring

- Each working group’s report can be written in bullet format – in the spring, we will be interested in consolidating information so that the summer writing team can move forward with writing actual sections of our plan
  - Working groups will not be thinking about audience or solidifying the exact language of the writing – this will be one of the writing team’s tasks
  - The goal will be to gather expectations, feedback, & concrete activities for the writing team
- Leaders of each group can share key principles or insights with other groups
  - Members are also welcome to serve in more than one
  - Will keep all on track and moving in the same direction
    - Will be gathering information and trying to reign it all in
    - Bethany, Kim, and Shannon will also provide support to all groups
- Need to look at macro piece – norms, values, and attitudes for fostering this culture
  - We’ll brainstorm about these individually over the break and come together to discuss on January 13th
  - What would you walk around campus and expect to see?

For January Meeting:
- Think about possible subcommittee(s) that you would like to serve on
- Think about the norms, values, and attitudes that are vital to fostering a culture of student scholarship and creative activity at Mason
  - We’ll be doing a brainstorming exercise in preparation for our January 13th meeting and will follow up with specific questions/prompts before the holiday break