Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Committee
Tuesday, February 23, 2010 – 9:30-11:30 a.m.


Update from Meeting with Academic Advisors
• We’ll want to target research centers on campus as a place for undergraduates to do research
  o Link to complete listing of centers by college: http://research.gmu.edu/centers/
  o These centers need to be made more visible – not a lot is known about them
• Interest in establishing a database with research opportunities to match students with faculty
  o We’ll need to think about who will maintain this database
• Questions were asked about budget, scope, and structure of the QEP
  o How many students will be impacted by the QEP and how will we account for those who do not want to be involved?
  o We need student buy-in the most – how are we engaging them in the planning stages?
  o Possibilities for creating a course to teach students basic research skills?
  o How to infuse scholarship into the curriculum?
  o How will we know that we’ve been successful? What is our overall goal for the QEP?

Discussion about CUR Institute & Team’s Ideas
• [Note: this section refers to the CUR team’s Goal & SLO outline which was distributed during the meeting. Please see that handout for additional details…]
• Institute was more oriented toward PUIs (Primarily Undergraduate Institutions) so much of the information was not entirely applicable to Mason
• Because our QEP document must include a goal statement, the team worked to determine the overall goal of the QEP and the structures that need to be in place to support the Committee’s smaller goals
• The team tweaked the definition of student scholarship that appeared in the original white paper to both expand and limit the kinds of activities that will be included as part of this
  o Added the piece about communicating results to a variety of audiences
  o Added a lower-level SLO to the top of our draft outcomes
• Team felt like they were putting their finger on goals that were really important and that were going to be challenging to meet
• Brainstormed pros and cons about holding a scholarship day or week on campus – there are many resources that we can go to, particularly at other institutions to see what works
• Ideas for partnering with NOVA
  o Mesa Community College has offered to serve as a mentor to us if we would like to move forward to establish a partnership with NOVA
  o Mesa CC has gen ed courses that are tagged as research courses so that Arizona State University knows the level of experience students have had before being admitted
  o Possibilities for reaching out to Allison at NOVA?
• We’ll want to consider our needs for computational technologies, facilities, and software – there are structural barriers for many students to do work
  o We’ll want to add a piece to goal three to make sure that these barriers do not impede our efforts
• University Relations, GMU-TV, and LSS are working with faculty to help undergraduate researchers engage in the kinds of work mentioned under goal one on the handout
• Possibilities for establishing a one-credit add-on for scholarship courses that would appear on the student’s transcript (see goal two)
  o This credit would appear as “intensive research” and could be repeated
• Team wanted to easily inject something scholarship-related into the gen ed curriculum
  o We could pilot this in a couple of ENGL 101 courses, for example, by making them more inquiry-based and then track the students to see where they go from there
    ▪ Would need to reframe and define student scholarship for these pilot courses
  o These pilot courses could carry a premium credit for the department chair
  o We should think of the structure of gen ed as less of an impediment and as more of a resource
    ▪ Keene State in New Hampshire “flipped” their gen ed program a few years ago (for more information see: http://keenestateinfo.com/changes/?page_id=6)
  o How can we make this work in courses that are being taught with fewer sections and more students?
• Interest in having Mason set up an infrastructure that is a natural pipeline to the community (local public schools, agencies, and organizations)
  o Establish a Local Research Center for folks in the community to visit and submit requests for research projects
  o Students would play a role in these kinds of projects
• Scholarship as having an undeserved connotation as being slightly “dusty,” while research has a connotation of being more active
  o Scholarship vs. research
  o Whichever term we decide to use, we’ll always need to include “creative activities” or “creativity” to remain inclusive of all disciplines
• Mentorship is what generates scholarship – we need to be sure to include language about faculty activity in our goals
• We need to think about student learning outcomes, as well as other learning outcomes, as we move forward

Establishing an Undergraduate Publication
• GM Review includes undergraduate writing across the curriculum
  o See: http://gmreview.gmu.edu/
  o The journal is edited by MFA GAs
  o Undergraduates can submit their papers (10-12 pages max) to be published
  o Publication is sold for $5.00 in the bookstore
• Other Mason journals that include student work: Volition (formerly Apathy), Diversity at Mason, and Mosaic
  o Common link to some of our student journals is Student Media
• Whoever is responsible for each journal could pull out interesting pieces that could be combined to create one “collection”
• Need to think about outlets for undergraduates to publish their work
  o What is the best structural support to provide for this?
  o Should this be centralized or should it cluster associated disciplines?
  o If the “themes” of journals are close to what students are majoring in, they’ll be more likely to submit their work to that publication
We’ll want to provide general interest, but high-level outlets for students who are thinking “transdisciplinarily.”

These journals could provide an opportunity for collaboration across disciplines and be a way to involve grad students.

• Creating an online publication can lower the costs associated with printing and distribution
  o Our journal could be called the Mason Online Publication of Undergraduate Scholarship or OPUS (thank you, Mentoring subcommittee!)
  o Link to an open source journal publishing platform used by a number of online journals: http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs, including the following undergraduate publications:
    • Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal (VURJ)
    • Columbia Undergraduate Science Journal (CUSJ)

Subcommittee Matrices

• Curricular Innovations team
  o Six subcommittee members filled out the matrix and the numbers denote how many members thought a particular activity aligned with each SLO
  o Need to establish a 1-12 credit research option for students, but must consider possibilities for staffing this
    ▪ Credit range should stay flexible to account for any exceptional situations that may arise down the road
    ▪ Difference between what falls under “scholarship” and what does not
      • Ex: service-learning projects → where to draw the line between volunteering and scholarship?
  o February 1, 2011 is the deadline for any revisions to the catalog
    ▪ Any addition to the catalog needs to first be approved by the appropriate Curriculum Committee

• Co-curricular Activities team
  o Potential connection between Joint Project Partnerships and Curricular team’s focus on a broad scholarship topic/theme that would be the focus of the university (e.g., going green)
  o Team was trying to tackle the issue of communication about existing activities by establishing UL Liaisons for academic units
  o In thinking about the student learning outcomes – do we only want folks who are involved in the activities and programs to benefit from them?

• Individual/Group Mentoring team
  o First few activities are focused on retention of students from their sophomore to junior years
  o Collaborative student project is based on a capstone project that is already in place in the Engineering Department

Next Steps

• Flesh out ideas and look to other institutions for examples
• Need to determine who we will need to have conversations with about how these things can be put in place (Registrar, Faculty Senate, etc.)
• Create a Wiki for the subcommittees to do their work online