Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Committee
Tuesday, September 8, 2009—2:00-4:00 p.m.


For next meeting, please review:
- Reinventing Undergraduate Education: Engaging College Students in Research & Creative Activities
  - Book distributed at our meeting on August 26th and also available online (link: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/117902226/PDFSTART)
  - AAC&U article: “It Takes a Curriculum: Preparing Students for Research & Creative Work” (link: http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-su08/le-su08_ITTakes.cfm)

Feedback from last meeting
- Need to think about how to leverage the QEP topic with faculty research
- Importance of maintaining focus and not trying to fix all institutional concerns with this one QEP
  - Can’t be all things to all people
- Questions about faculty and student involvement in an incentive-poor environment
  - Role of adjuncts and part-time faculty?
- Deans are interested and excited– we want to ensure we keep that level of excitement up
  - Want to schedule meetings with Deans later in the semester (one with Deans with undergrad profiles and one with those with graduate profiles)
- Let’s not overlook alumni - Possibility of linking students with interested alumni?
- Discussed ways to incorporate scholarship into classroom learning by getting faculty involved in learning about and implementing strategies for classroom teaching that incorporate scholarship and move away from straight lecture-style
- What communication mechanisms do we want/need among QEP Committee members? (e.g., Committee blog, wiki, Bb community, email list…)
- QEP t-shirts for Committee members?

Scope of the QEP Remains Critical Issue to Address
- Student learning outcomes will drive the planning of our QEP
- Scope depends a lot on budget and other resources
- Last committee wanted this topic to span across students’ four years at Mason with different activities taking place each year
  - Importance of touching transfer students
- Clear involvement of UAP – what kind of growth is possible and/or desirable?
  - 40% of last year’s UAP participants were transfer students
  - Transfer outreach by UAP includes various listservs, newsletters, brochures, events, etc.
- Honors College involvement seems obvious - how to expand beyond gen ed honors curriculum and University Scholars?
  - HC is currently discussing different entry points for students to come into the college
- To what extent do we want university-wide vs. college- and/or departmental initiatives?
  - Georgia State’s Critical Thinking through Writing (CTW) QEP – each department across the institution adopted a designated CTW course
Lessons from SACS

• Focus on issues emerging from institutional assessment
  o We have a lot of student-generated data – will need to focus on other methods
• Student learning outcomes must be central
• Incentives for involvement in the QEP
  o Mandates vs. actual interest
• Strategies for outreach to our large number of adjunct faculty
• We must capture the data and move forward in ways that will allow us to maintain momentum and excitement (while not going too fast for SACS process)

Compelling/important ideas in white paper

• Non-classroom teaching and learning opportunities that revolve around scholarship
• Using the QEP to break through the idea that a class/learning only takes place in the classroom
• Keep student learning outcome #6 about students being able to communicate about their work through experiences that encourage collaboration with other students
• Have co-curricular events that get different disciplines involved and collaborating together
• Need to ensure that students have a sense of accomplishment through participation
  o Not necessarily a paper and it doesn’t need to happen in the classroom
  o Students want to make a difference and impact
  o Need for something concrete – space for outside of the classroom recognition
    ▪ University scholarship day?
      • A day without classes that would send a message that this work is important and that faculty care about student projects
      • We could do it on pi day (3/14)? At the end students throw pies at faculty...
    ▪ Incorporate student scholarship into Family Weekend?

Discussion about possible scholarship course or first-year experience

• Interest in the idea of creating a unifying experience for all incoming students – both first-years and transfers
  o Would help us touch a large segment of the population
• Would serve as an introduction to the idea of scholarship in its many different forms (in the arts, sciences, humanities, etc.)
  o Should this be a broad course (it would be the same, regardless of major) or a more discipline-focused course?
  o Culture of scholarship courses vs. research techniques courses
  o Could invite guest speakers (alumni?) to come in and talk about research in their fields
  o Could be large courses of 500 students that would break apart one day a week to discuss various topics in smaller, more interactive groups
  o Students could also be taken out of the classroom and given the opportunity to conduct their own research or to shadow others in their fields
• Where would these courses go in the curriculum, particularly for students who don’t know what they’re majoring in yet?
  o Build the course into UNIV 100? – about 800 students currently take these courses each year
  o We may face opposition if we try to add another course to the gen ed requirements
    ▪ Who will teach these courses?
      • Concerns about quality-control in the many different sections of the course
  o VSITE has a capstone course where students work in interdisciplinary teams that are supervised by faculty members that is successful and leads to interesting products
• Scholarship courses could be decentralized so that each department manages their own courses and has symposia that are run by upper-level students
• We’ll want to remember UH’s pyramid graphic – everyone will be aware of all of the scholarship that is taking place on campus, but only those at the top will be totally immersed in it
  o Link to UH’s QEP and executive summary: http://uh.edu/discovery/QEP_Report.html
• We could create courses that are focused around real world problems, topics, and themes
  o One course could incorporate different gen ed requirements
  o They would be team-taught with faculty from different disciplines
  o Students would be guided through research from a multidisciplinary perspective
  o Would touch many students
  o How would this be supported from an FTE-perspective?

Questions about white paper
• Questions about the cause of 2006 seniors reporting a significantly lower level of academic challenge on the NSSE than 2003 seniors
  o Increase in class size not likely a cause in the difference between students’ perceptions of academic challenge
  o Is there a difference between upper-level and lower-level courses, in terms of the number of students enrolled and the amount of interaction between students and faculty?
• How do you get students engaged in their learning?
  o Even in a large class, there will need to be opportunities for engagement
• Ways to deal with HSRB procedures/policies?

Future agenda items
• We’ll need to address why students should care about scholarship
  o Need for curiosity and exploration
  o Learning how to use resources and the library
  o We will want to target different student populations for focus groups
  o We will need to address why it is important to be a student scholar and how this initiative could be meaningful
• We’ll need to address faculty engagement/involvement and rewards
• Who are our peer institutions? (see: http://irr.gmu.edu/PeerList/peerlist2007.cfm)
• Question for UH: How did they begin their QEP – was it top-down or bottom-up?

Models we may look to...
• University of Oklahoma Business School has an introduction to scholarship course where students are divided into teams to work with community agencies and businesses
  o Alumni might provide these connections
• A community college in Palo Alto has an ethnomusicology course with “menus” of activities that students can participate in
• Link to University of Michigan’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP): http://www.lsa.umich.edu/urop/