

I. Executive Summary

Pathways to Achieve Writing Success at Barton College

The faculty, administration, and staff of Barton College held a series of meetings from 2005 to 2007 and determined that improving students' communication skills should be a priority at Barton College. Based on the results of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and faculty observations, the Quality Enhancement Plan Leadership Team (QEPLT) decided that the most immediate communication need was to improve student writing. To address this concern, Barton College will implement a series of writing-intensive (WI) courses throughout the academic experience.

The QEPLT developed the QEP proposal, and an assembly of Barton College faculty and staff approved the plan in fall 2007. The QEPLT will collect further data on current student writing skills during spring 2008 and academic year 2008-09. Selected faculty will experiment with WI courses and the Pathways of Writing Rubric (PoWR: pronounced "power") in fall 2008. Training for the WI courses began in April 2008, and all WI faculty will receive training before teaching a designated course. The full program will be implemented in fall 2009, and the QEP Director and the QEPLT will collect data from the QEP designated WI courses each semester thereafter. The first full assessment of the effectiveness of the QEP will be possible in spring 2013 when fall 2009 freshmen begin to graduate. Evaluations will continue annually.

Barton College will use a number of tools to assess the effectiveness of the QEP. Among these tools is the CLA, a national standardized writing and critical thinking test, allowing comparison to peer institutions. Further, at least one assignment from each student in all WI courses will be archived, along with the PoWR scores, in an electronic database. This collection of data will allow comparison among WI courses and student cohorts while also assessing the improvement in writing skills for individual students. Timely student surveys will assist in confirming adherence to course standards.

The QEP Director supported by the QEPLT will use the QEP data to assess achievement of the following student learning outcomes (SLO):

- By academic 2012-2013, Barton College seniors will score 10% above the CLA predicted score on the Analytic Writing Task portion of the assessment.
- In the Senior Summit, a capstone WI course in each major, 95% of students will score at least 3 (scale of 1-4) on the Pathways of Writing Rubric.
- Individual students who have completed the entire QEP format will achieve, on average, a score increase of 0.5 (scale of 1-4) from ENG 102 to the Senior Summit on the Pathways of Writing Rubric.

Faculty teaching the WI courses will be integral to the success of this program, and a number of resources will complement the faculty's efforts. A QEP Director, supported by the QEPLT consisting of faculty and staff, will insure that the QEP is implemented and systematically administered. The Director of Institutional Research will provide expertise in data analysis while the Barton College Senior Staff will continue to subscribe to the CLA. Furthermore, the Senior Staff will maintain its commitment to improving student writing by providing sufficient funding and facilities.