The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

David K. Knox
Director
Office for Institutional Assessment
Clemson University

SACS Core Requirement 2.12

- The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution.

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2

- The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.

Why a QEP?

- The QEP is a demonstration of the commitment of the institution to increase overall quality and to promote student learning.

- The QEP is a vehicle by which institutions can increase their overall quality and effectiveness by focusing on one specific aspect of the student learning environment/experience.

- The QEP is a transformative, creative campus process that brings together diverse constituencies and ideas in the pursuit of the goal of improving student learning.

Strategic Planning and the QEP

- The QEP should be rooted in the results of institutional assessment, current research, best practices, and the institution's mission.

- The development of a QEP is not an isolated process. The QEP should be derived from and integrated with the institution's strategic planning.

- The QEP should be an ongoing project that profoundly affects the student learning outcomes and is a catalyst for further improvements.

Strategic Planning and the QEP

- Planning for the QEP must begin with the belief that the student learning experience can be improved.

- The QEP should be tightly focused on improving a specific area of the learning experience. Too big or too diffuse a topic is a recipe for failure.

- The QEP can help identify other areas that need improvement.

- The QEP process can improve faculty and staff morale and bring excitement to a campus.

- You cannot solve all of the institution's problems with a QEP.

The Steps in the Development of the QEP

- Step One: Selecting the Topic
- Step Two: Defining the Student Learning Outcomes
- Step Three: Researching the Topic
- Step Four: Identifying the Actions to be Implemented
- Step Five: Establishing the Timeline for Implementation
- Step Six: Organizing for Success
- Step Seven: Identifying Necessary Resources
- Step Eight: Assessing the Success of the QEP
- Step Nine: Preparing the QEP for Submission

QEP Development Phases

- Pre-planning
  - Who should be involved?
- Topic identification
  - Topic identification—ensure broad input into identification and selection of topic
- Plan development
  - Conduct research, identify activities, and write the plan
  - Engage experts and develop a "champion"
- QEP implementation
  - Pre-implementation—baseline data and initial structures
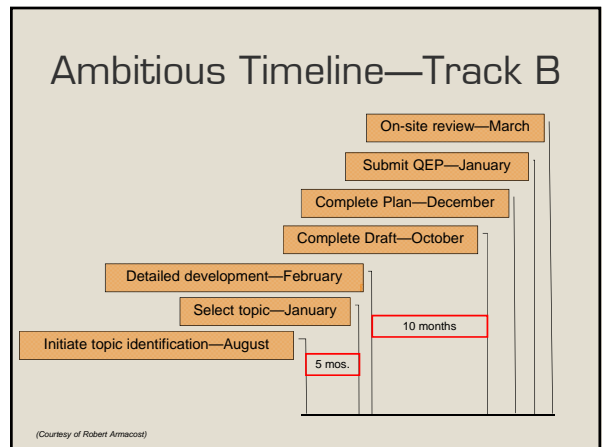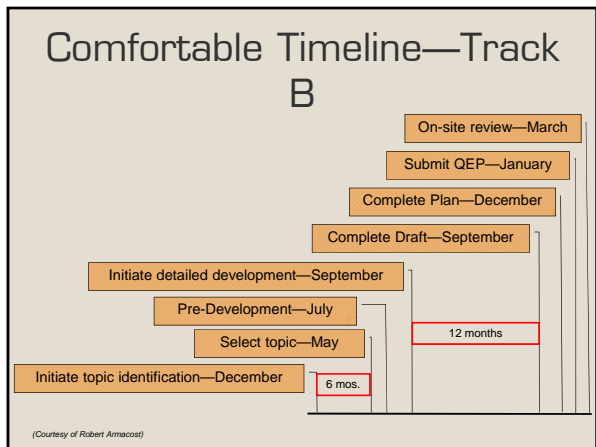 - Implementation—manage the project and allocate resources

QEP Pre-Planning

- Understand requirements
  - Review SACS-COC materials
  - Attend SACS-COC conferences and institutes
- Identify who should be involved
- Identify key decision makers
- Identify key decision points
- Review other universities' QEP processes
- Obtain resource support commitments

QEP Planning Timeline

Allow at least one semester to identify the topic. Faculty involvement is essential.

- Ambitious (18 months prior to visit)
- Comfortable (27 months prior to visit)
- Need 10-12 months to develop the plan

Comfortable Timeline—Track B

On-site review—March
Submit QEP—January
Complete Plan—December
Complete Draft—September
Initiate detailed development—September
Pre-Development—July
Select topic—May
12 months
Initiate topic identification—December
6 mos.

(Courtesy of Robert Armacost)

Ambitious Timeline—Track B

On-site review—March
Submit QEP—January
Complete Plan—December
Complete Draft—October
Detailed development—February
Select topic—January
10 months
Initiate topic identification—August
5 mos.

(Courtesy of Robert Armacost)

6/29/2011

Clemson QEP and Reaffirmation Timeline*

Planning Activities	Starting Readiness Audit Process	Formation and Training of Leadership Team	Start Preparation of Compliance Certification Narratives and Supporting Documentation	Orientation of Leadership Teams in Atlanta	Work on Compliance Certification	Continue Work on Compliance Certification	Compliance Certification Due	Off-Site Peer Review Conducted	Quality Enhancement Plan and Focused Reports Due	On-Site Peer Review Conducted	Review by the Commission on Colleges
June, or earlier if possible	August	December	April-June	June	July-Dec	Jan - Aug	Sept	Sept-Nov	Six weeks in advance of on-site visit	Feb-April	December
2010 Three Years Prior to Reaffirmation			2011 Two Years Prior to Reaffirmation			2012 One Year Prior to Reaffirmation			2013 Year of Reaffirmation		

*NOTE: Timeline(s) will be revised regularly. For updates, visit
http://www.clemson.edu/assessment/accreditation/index.html .

QEP Topic Identification Phase

- Use a process that obtains institutional input into the identification, selection, and acceptance of the QEP topic

- Process should have breadth of coverage
  - Involve all constituencies
  - Emerge from institutional assessment
  - Include expertise in student learning

- Topic should have some relationship to strategic plan

Generating QEP Topics

- Topic Identification Phase tasks
  - Look at strategic plan
  - Look at institutional survey results
  - Look at program review results
  - Look at what other universities are doing
- Team members are the primary contact with the faculty
- Open topic solicitation—online suggestion box
- Proactive engagement with ongoing committees/meetings
- Synthesize topics into master list of evolving themes and get feedback
- Seek more developed ideas—substantive proposals from faculty, staff, and students

Select Broad Topic

- Topic must be important to institution
  - Faculty involvement

- Allow specifics to surface in development phase

- Must be viable
  - Potential for adequate resources
  - Focus on student learning
  - Assessable

- Commitment by administration

Topic Selection Tips

- Do not pick topic too quickly—encourage alternatives
- Ensure broad faculty input
- Do not lose sight of a good topic
  - Assign justification responsibility if no one comes forward
- Beware of excessive breadth
- Advertise and Promote the project
- *Don't lose sight of learning outcomes requirement, even if you are focusing on the learning environment*
- *Don't end up with a "solution looking for a problem"*

What do Peer Reviewers Look For?

- Broad Based Involvement in Topic Selection

- Focus

- Assessment

- Institutional Capacity

- Broad Based Involvement in Implementation

QEP Review Process

- On-site review team is the first outside entity to see the QEP

- Institution may nominate QEP "Lead Evaluator"
  - Should be familiar with topic area

- Expect revisions following the site visit

- The Committee Chair and the SACSCOC VP will continue to review revisions

The QEP Document

- Limit of 75 pages plus 25 page appendix

- Include concise summary of QEP that can be used by the On-site Review Team in its report

- The document has to "make the case" by providing evidence

- Include summary statements of evidence supporting each of the five evaluation criteria

- Format
  - Structural
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Creative

Some Recent QEPs

- Anderson University—*Global Engagement: Anderson University Abroad*

- College of Charleston—*Going Further Faster: The College of Charleston First-Year Experience*

- Furman University—*First Year Writing Seminars*

- Lander University—*The Lander EYE (Experience Your Education)*

- University of Georgia—*First Year Odyssey*

- University of Texas at Austin—*Signature Courses*

- University of Virginia—*Enhancing Student-Faculty Engagement*

- Vanderbilt University—*Building a Bridge to the Commons: Vanderbilt Visions and Student Learning at a Research University*

Some Recent QEPs

- **Lander University—*The Lander EYE*—**The EYE Program is an experiential learning program at Lander University designed to provide students with the opportunity to use academic knowledge to address real world challenges in an authentic context. The program includes internships, co-ops, service learning, course-embedded projects, and study abroad experiences. Earning EYE Program credit is a great way to show a potential employer that you have real world skills and experience that may make you more competitive in the job market. [EYE credit is not a graduation requirement and does not affect a student's degree requirements for graduation. Students will receive certificates for EYE credit earned each semester and students earning 120 EYE credits during their degree program will receive an award at graduation.] [Active Learning]

- **University of Texas at Austin—*Signature Courses*** is an effort to strengthen the core curriculum while establishing a shared intellectual experience for students at UT Austin. Signature Courses will achieve this through closely related means: first, by increasing the accessibility of distinguished faculty to first-year students; second, by teaching certain skills—oral communication, writing, reasoning, and the interpretation of data—necessary for our students to make good use of the instructional resources of the university, so that, on graduation, they may compete well in the global market; third, by introducing first-year students to the unique resources of the university, such as libraries, research facilities, and museums; fourth, by providing first-year students with a broad understanding of inquiry across disciplines that may be new to them; fifth, by giving students course content that has real-world transferability; and, sixth, by enhancing the intellectual climate on campus through first-year attendance at, and discussion of, a common series of lectures. [First Year Experience]

- **University of Virginia—*Enhancing Student-Faculty Engagement*** creates new opportunities for student-faculty engagement to enhance student learning. The University specifically seeks to effect student learning profoundly in two specific areas: making research a fundamental part of the student experience, and incorporating thoughtful public service into the curriculum. [Undergraduate Research, Active/Service Learning]

- **Vanderbilt University—*Building a Bridge to the Commons*** is a core program aimed at acculturating first-year students to a research university. The program creates small groups of first-year students, faculty facilitators, and student facilitators, whose purpose is to introduce incoming students to the goals and values of a research university through discussion and collaborative experiences. Vanderbilt Visions will soon be integrated into the Commons—a first-year campus and living-learning community of students, faculty, and educational professionals that will be launched in the fall of 2008. The Commons will intensify the acculturative learning processes that will begin in Vanderbilt Visions, thus serving an integral part in the university's strategic plan to develop a broader learning environment. [Undergraduate Research, LLC]

- Source: SACS COC website [www.sacscoc.org] accessed on August 9, 2010

Links

- SACS/COC QEP Abstract Pages
  - http://www.sacscoc.org/2007TrackBQEPSummaries.asp
  - http://www.sacscoc.org/2008TrackBQEPSummaries.asp
  - http://www.sacscoc.org/2009TrackBQEPSummaries.asp

- SACS/COC Documents
  - http://www.sacscoc.org/principles.asp
  - http://www.sacscoc.org/handbooks.asp

- University of Houston Learning through Discovery QEP
  - http://www.uh.edu/discovery

Credits

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