FGCU Scholars
Advancing Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy

Florida Gulf Coast University
Quality Enhancement Plan
Definitions, Models, and Proposals
Part I: Background

- Definition of a Quality Enhancement Plan
- Outline of the Process for Gathering QEP Topics
- Outline of the Selected Topic for the QEP
- Description of the QEP Steering Committee
- Outline of the QEP Working Groups

Part II: Proposals and Ideas for Discussion
The Quality Enhancement Plan

- Mandated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)
- Focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning
- Includes broad-based involvement in the development and implementation
- Identifies goals and a plan to assess achievement
- Appropriates required resources for implementation.
The Quality Enhancement Plan

FGCU’s First QEP
- Developing an Ecological Perspective and Fostering Community Involvement
- Five Year Implementation and Assessment: 2005-2010

FGCU’s Second QEP
- Development of Topic, Focus, and Plan: 2011-2014
- Five Year Implementation and Assessment: 2015-2020
Phase One: Gathering topics from the FGCU community
- Began Fall 2011
- At the end of Phase One, four topics were selected for further development

Phase Two: Development of Four Topics
- Technology, Undergraduate Research, Student Engagement, and Writing/Critical Thinking/Literacy
- At the end of Phase Two, two topics were forwarded to the Provost and one was selected
FGCU’s QEP Topic

Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy

- To improve writing, critical thinking, and information literacy
- Across the curriculum and in all levels of instruction, including Composition courses and the General Education Program along with the majors
- To develop a robust, university-wide understanding of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy
- To develop ambitious and standardized assessment of these outcomes
QEP Steering Committee

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>College/Affiliation</th>
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<td>Kevin Aho</td>
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<td>Sarah Davis</td>
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<td>Kris De Welde</td>
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<td>Anna Haney-Withrow</td>
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<td>Dean of Undergraduate Studies</td>
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<td>Anne Young</td>
<td>Advisor, College of Health Professions and Social Work</td>
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QEP Working Groups

Curriculum Design Working Group
- Linda Serro, facilitator (College of Education, Director TLAI)
- Jackie Greene, College of Education
- Anne-Marie Bouché, College of Arts and Sciences

Writing Working Group
- Carol Bledsoe and Linda Rowland, facilitators (College of Arts and Sciences)
- Carrie Kerekes, College of Business
- billY Gunnels, College of Arts and Sciences
- Kristoph Kinzli, College of Engineering
- Mary Romanowski, College of Arts and Sciences
- Anna Haney-Withrow, College of Arts and Sciences
- Matt Jacobs and Megan Just, Students
QEP Working Groups

Critical Thinking Working Group
- Kevin Aho, facilitator (College of Arts and Sciences)
- Mohamad Al-Hakim, Brandon Hollingshead, Anne-Marie Bouche, College of Arts and Sciences
- Tanya Kunberger, Whitaker College of Engineering
- Tom Bevins, Karen Landy, Anne Young, College of Health Professions and Social Work
- Sarah Davis, Undergraduate Studies

Information Literacy Working Group
- Anna Carlin (Library) and Jackie Greene (College of Education), facilitators
- Heather Snapp, Library
- Frances Davey, College of Arts and Sciences
FGCU’s QEP Process

- Spring 2013 – Steering Committee completes research, gathers feedback, narrows the plan
- Fall 2013 – Steering Committee writes draft focus for the plan with implementation strategies and budget and gathers further feedback from the faculty
- Spring 2014 – Steering Committee finalizes the plan
- Fall 2015 – Spring 2020 – FGCU’s QEP implemented
Part II: Proposals for a Plan

Discussion of Guiding Principles
Discussion of Ideas for FGCU’s QEP

FGCU Scholars
Advancing Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy
Create a QEP that:

- Is owned across the university in all undergraduate programs and the General Education Program;
- Is integrated vertically (across all four years) and horizontally (in multiple first year courses, second year courses, etc.);
- Includes meaningful and sustainable assessments;
- Offers added value to faculty and programs;
Guiding Principles

- Includes strong coordination and support;
- Balances coordination with faculty and program responsibility;
- Builds on work that is in progress;
- Leverages the existing talent and expertise of faculty, programs, and centers/initiatives; and
- Creates opportunities and possibilities for cross-disciplinary collaboration.
To integrate a common understanding of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy across all four years

To build a foundation for writing, critical thinking, and information literacy in General Education

To advance student learning in these areas in the majors so that students become “scholars” in their disciplines

To assess student learning across four years of study and in every major.
Based on an Undergraduate Research Model

“An inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.”

Research model expanded using Boyer’s Scholarship Reconsidered

Scholarship defined as “A variety of creative work carried on in a variety of places . . . its integrity measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn.”

Includes four functions: scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching.
Supports two university-required Learning Goals
Facilitates participation in the development and use of a common language relating to Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy
Facilitates participation in the development of a shared process for teaching and assessing Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy
Provides students with a learning experience that is coherent across four years.
FGCU Scholars: Writing

Best Practice: Writing in the Disciplines

- Give students practical writing tasks, often formal papers, that allow them to practice writing skills
- Focus is on learning and practicing the writing conventions within a particular area of study
- Advances both critical thinking and information literacy, from within the discipline.
Recommendations from Best Practice:

- Begins in Composition II courses
- Expands in General Education courses
- Fully developed in Undergraduate Majors

- Development of reading, researching, and writing within targeted courses in the major
- Leads to a major project in capstone course
Best Practice: Definition of Critical Thinking

- Thinking about how we think: identifying background assumptions that may influence our thoughts;
- Critically assessing whether or not these assumptions are valid;
- Engaging these assumptions from multiple perspectives; and
- Remaining open to revision and self-correction.
Three Models from Review of Best Practice:

- **The Solo Approach** leads to the development of a stand alone critical thinking course.
- **The Integrative Approach** connects critical thinking to writing and information literacy.
- **The Pedagogical Methods Approach** would parallel the use of writing assignments and lead to the development of a suite of model assignments and classroom activities that foster critical thinking skills.
Best Practice: Association of College and Research Libraries Definition of Information Literacy

Information Literacy is the ability to “recognize when information is needed and … locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”
Recommendations from Best Practice:

- Integrate IL teaching and assessment throughout the university curriculum
- Assess IL competency through varied means, with focus on authentic performance assessments of research papers or portfolios using rubrics
- Share responsibility of IL teaching and assessment between library and faculty members outside of the library.
Best Practice: Backwards Design Approach

Three Stage Process:

- Identify desired results (what our students will know, be able to do, etc.)
- Determine acceptable evidence and develop a meaningful assessment module
- Plan learning experiences and instruction that will lead to the desired results.
Vertical and Horizontal Design – Lower Level

**Beginning:**
- Composition I and II
- New course on Critical Thinking

**Middle I:**
- General Education Gordon Rule courses
- Mandated Gen Ed courses in one area (humanities, social sciences, etc.)
- New courses in General Education
Vertical and Horizontal Design – Upper Level

Middle II:
- Gateway courses
- Junior level courses in the Major
- University Colloquium: A Sustainable Future
- To build on work that is ongoing

End: Capstone courses
Tiered Writing, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy courses

- W/CT/IL Focused courses – main objective is to teach the skills of W/CT/IL
- W/CT/IL Intensive courses – main objective is to teach specific course content using W/CT/IL as the primary method of student engagement and assessment
- W/CT/IL Enriched courses – main objective is to teach specific course content using W/CT/IL as one major method of student engagement and assessment

- Specific course caps for each type of course
- Learning communities for each type of course
- Teaching/grading assistance, peer mentors, graduate students from a variety of disciplines.
Central Coordination of the QEP
- Office, Initiative, Institute, Center
- Professional Development for Faculty
- Coordination of Assessment
- Work closely with other established entities:
  - Writing Center
  - Library
  - Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship
  - Teaching, Learning, Assessment Initiative
  - Center for Academic Achievement
FGCUScholars: Faculty Scholars

Centrality of Programs and Faculty in their disciplines
- Build on and enhance work that is currently ongoing
- Offer support and development
- Creation of FGCU Faculty Scholars Program
  - Means of building cross-disciplinary teams
  - One (or more) FGCU Faculty Scholar(s) per program
  - Course release, stipend, summer institute
FGCU Scholars: Assessment

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

- Key factors in a successful QEP
- Use of standardized (validated) rubric
  - AAC&U Rubrics
  - Composition I and II Assessments
  - University-wide Writing Assessment
- Use of standardized testing
- SACS, Professional Accrediting Bodies, Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)
Next Steps

More Feedback: QEP Website and QEP Angel Page
Faculty and Program Input and Feedback Reviewed by Steering Committee
Development of a “Focus” for the FGCU QEP
Fall 2013 – Institutional Sharing and Feedback
  Finalize the Plan
  Develop Implementation Plan and Budget
  More Sharing and Feedback
End of Fall 2013 – Send to Administration for Review
Important Websites:

- FGCU’s QEP Website: http://www.fgcu.edu/qep/
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: http://sacscoc.org/
- Council on Undergraduate Research: http://www.cur.org/
- American Association of Colleges and Universities: http://www.aacu.org/
Bibliography

Some Important Resources: