QEP Development Committee

Minutes

February 24, 2015

Attendees: Danielle Buehrer, Jordan Cofer, Gail Dillard, Melanie Partlow, John Shugart, and Jennifer Wallin-Ruschman

Absentees: Cynthia Hall, Hans Schmeisser, Nicholas Urquhart

1. Discuss the two SACSCOC *Principles* that address the QEP.
    a. See hand-outs 1, Core Requirement 2.12 from the SACSCOC *Resource Manual*, & 2, Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 from the SACSCOC *Resource Manual*.
2. Discuss "What is the QEP and How is its Focus to be Determined?
3. Review key concepts of the QEP. See hand-out 3.
    a. Key words in the hand-out are student learning and institutional process for SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.12.
4. Develop action items for the next six months (March- August) on how to receive feedback from students, faculty, and administration.
    a. **Action items**:
        i. Danielle will write instructions for the President's Cabinet to review the College's mission statement and strategic plan and identify five possible QEP themes.
        ii. Gail will get the item above on the agenda for the first Cabinet meeting in March.
        iii. Danielle will email the deans to ask for the committee to be placed on the agenda for their schools' meetings in April. The committee will present to the faculty at these meetings the five QEP themes and ask the faculty to rank the themes according to importance and preference.
        iv. Danielle will email Chris Kinsey, Staff Forum President, to see when the next forum is scheduled to meet. The committee would like to conduct a similar exercise for the staff that will be done for the faculty.
        v. Danielle will email Bernice Hughes about ideas for presenting the five QEP themes to students.

      vi. Danielle will email Jodie Snow to see when the College's Foundation meets again.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 PM.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24, at 4:00 PM.

QEP Development Committee

Agenda

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1. Discuss the two SACSCOC *Principles* that address the QEP.
    a. See hand-outs 1, Core Requirement 2.12 from the SACSCOC *Resource Manual*, & 2, Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 from the SACSCOC *Resource Manual*.
2. Discuss "What is the QEP and How is its Focus to be Determined?
3. Review key concepts of the QEP. See hand-out 3.
    a. Key words in the hand-out are student learning and institutional process for SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.12.
4. Develop action items for the next six months (March- August) on how to receive feedback from students, faculty, and administration.

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. *(Physical resources)*

Rationale and Notes

Adequate physical resources are essential to the educational environment and include well-maintained buildings and grounds that are safe and appropriate for the scope of the institution's programs and services. It is reasonable that the general public and current and prospective students expect the institution to have sufficient physical resources necessary to fulfill its mission as an ongoing concern.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the institution demonstrate that the physical resources of the institution are adequate in quality, scope, and condition to support the mission of its programs and services?
- How does the institution evaluate the appropriateness and sufficiency of physical resources at off-campus instructional sites?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

Documentation of the adequacy and condition of physical resources at all locations

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Facilities master plan
- Financial history and narrative regarding recently completed, present, or planned capital campaigns
- Facilities inventory plan
- Surveys from faculty, staff, and students addressing adequacy of the institution's physical facilities
- Data comparing facility needs to actual facilities available
- Academic master plan or similar document for planned facilities use to support academic programs, if available
- Survey results of benchmark comparisons

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Comprehensive Standard 3.11.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.11.2
Comprehensive Standard 3.11.3

2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan 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. *(Quality Enhancement Plan)*

(Note: This requirement is not addressed by the institution in its Compliance Certification.)

Rationale and Notes

The *Principles of Accreditation* attests to the commitment of the Commission on Colleges to the enhancement of the quality of higher education and to the proposition that student learning is at the heart of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. The Quality Enhancement Plan

(QEP) is a component of the accreditation process that reflects and affirms both of these commitments. Developing a QEP as part of the reaffirmation process is an opportunity and an impetus for an institution to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue or issues the institution considers important to improving student learning.

The QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on enhancing student learning or the environment supporting student learning. Student learning is defined broadly in the context of the QEP and may address a wide range of topics or issues but, in all cases, the goals and evaluation strategies need to be clearly and directly linked to improving the quality of student learning and be consistent with the institution's strategic plan.

Note: The QEP is a course of action that is specific to an institution and its mission. It is intended to be customized and designed to meet the needs of students at a particular institution. It is an opportunity for an institution to be creative in an area related to compliance with the *Principles*. Therefore, although an institution may want to study QEPs completed by other institutions, an institution's QEP should reflect the needs of the institution and be customized to accomplish its goals.

Compliance with Core Requirement 2.12 is applicable to action on reaffirmation.

SACSCOC Executive Council considered the question about whether an institution can use facets of its previous QEP for its next reaffirmation review. The Council determined that an institution could do so under the following conditions: The new QEP (1) should be derived from an assessment of its previous QEP, (2) have distinct goals and institutional outcomes from its first QEP, and (3) continue to focus on student learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and quality enhancement.

Relevant Questions for Consideration in the preparation of the QEP

- Has the institution identified and provided a clear and concise description of a significant issue(s) directly related to student learning or the environment supporting student learning?
- What are the intended benefits of the QEP to the institution and to its student?
- How does the QEP support the mission of the institution?
- What assessment data were used for the selection of the topic?

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Representative sample of research activities

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.7.3

3.3.1.5 Community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

Note: Community/public service within an institution's mission normally includes (1) centers and institutes that focus on community needs and (2) units and formal programs that deliver the outreach mission.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the institution define community/public service?
- Has the institution articulated its community/public service outcomes in relation to its mission?
- How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms?
- What is the evidence of assessment activities for community/public service?
- How are periodic reviews used for improvements?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve community/public service?
- What assessment instruments were used and why were they selected? Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
- If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution's community/public service mission?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

- Definition of institution's community and public service mission
- Documentation of expected outcomes for its community and public service mission
- Documentation of the evaluation of those outcomes
- Documentation of the use of the findings from assessment to improve the institution
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of units, and a (3) case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's community and public service mission

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.4.2

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. *(Quality Enhancement Plan)*

(Note: This requirement is not addressed by the institution in its Compliance Certification.)

Rationale and Notes

In order to ensure that an institution's QEP is successful, the institution should have the capability to provide support for the effort, include the involvement of appropriate constituents, and develop measurable goals with appropriate assessment measures.

Note: At the time of an institution's on-site review, the Commission expects it to have a well-defined plan in place and to include all components that are characteristic to any workable plan: (1) a focused topic (directly related to student learning), (2) clear goals, (3) adequate resources in place to implement the plan, (4) evaluation strategies for determining the achievement of goals, and (5) evidence of the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in the development and implementation of the Plan. The institution should also be mindful of the QEP Impact Report that will be due to the Commission five years in advance of its next reaffirmation review.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What resources (personnel, financial, physical, academic, etc.) are necessary for the successful implementation of the QEP?
- What are the goals of the institution's QEP and how does it plan to assess the achievement of those goals?
- How will the progress of the QEP be monitored? (timelines, administration and oversight of its implementation by qualified individuals, etc.)
- What are the evaluation strategies identified by the institution that will determine the success of the institution's QEP? How will the evaluation findings be used to improve student learning?
- How has the QEP been integrated into the institution's ongoing planning and evaluation processes?
- How will the institution ensure adequate resources and sufficient expertise and experience to guide the implementation and completion of the project?
- Who are the institution's constituencies and how have they been involved in the development of the QEP?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

- Quality Enhancement Plan

Examples of other Types of Documentation

None noted

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.12

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. *(Academic program approval)*

Rationale and Notes

The tradition of shared governance within American higher education recognizes the importance of both faculty and administrative involvement in the approval of educational programs. Approval by the faculty ensures that programs, including programs offered through collaborative arrangements, contain appropriate courses reflecting current knowledge within a discipline and that they are appropriate for the students enrolled. Approval by the administration affirms that educational programs are consistent with the mission of the institution and that the insti-

Hand-out 3

Guidance for QEP Topic Selection and QEP Development

Ed Rugg, Accreditation Consultant & Reports Editor

<u>What is the QEP, and How is its Focus to be Determined?</u>

The *Resource Manual* under CR 2.12, the Core Requirement on the QEP, describes the Quality Enhancement Plan as follows:

> Developing a QEP as part of the reaffirmation process is an opportunity and an impetus for an institution to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue or issues the institution considers important to improving student learning. The QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on enhancing student learning or the environment supporting student learning. Student learning is defined broadly in the context of the QEP and may address a wide range of topics or issues but, in all cases, the goals and evaluation strategies need to be clearly and directly linked to improving the quality of student learning and be consistent with the institution's strategic plan. (p. 31)

Key concepts embedded in this description are:

1) **The QEP is a highly detailed, well-structured and sharply focused institutional plan of action for improving student learning and its associated learning environment over the next five years and for assessing the extent to which that Plan has succeeded in achieving its goals.** QEP topic selection should be completed in the first six months or less so that the institution has a year or more to develop detailed and highly focused goals, action plans, timelines, resource acquisitions, and assessment methods for the successful initiation, implementation and completion of the QEP over the next five years. (A common error is to spend too much time on topic selection, leaving too little time to work out a clearly focused, thorough and complete QEP for that topic.)

2) **The QEP focuses on an issue of improving student learning.** The QEP topic should be clear as to what aspect of student learning is to be improved as a result of the QEP's initiation, full implementation and completion over the course of the next five years.

3) **The goals and initiatives of the QEP need to be clearly and directly linked to improving the quality of student learning.** Although the *Manual* and the core requirement refer to an option (indicated by the use of "or") of improving the environment supporting student learning, the driving force of the QEP needs to focus on improving student learning and learning outcomes. However, to achieve improved student learning, the learning environment must also be improved with goals and strategies for that improvement, but such initiatives alone will not be sufficient for

demonstrating the existence of improved student learning as a result of an enhanced learning environment.

4) **The selected issue of improving student learning must be important to the institution and consistent with the institution's strategic plan.** Institutional buy-in to the full implementation and success of the QEP will be greatest when the selected issue is broadly recognized by campus constituents as important to the university and related to the institution's strategic goals and priorities. When the selected issue is not of that caliber, it often is treated as something extra that must be done for SACSCOC that usually competes poorly for the time, energy and resources devoted to more important institutional initiatives.

5) **QEP topic selection emerges from a process of institutional assessment for identifying key issues of student learning improvement.** The QEP topic selection process should be systematic and broad-based in its identification of important issues of student learning improvement at the institution and involve the assessment of the level of constituent support for those different potential QEP topics. Ideally, the key issues of student learning improvement that are identified as possible QEP topics will have emerged from prior institutional assessments of them that indicated need for improvement.

Satisfactorily addressing key concepts #2 through #5 as listed above ensures compliance with CR 2.12 of the *Principles of Accreditation* which states:

> **2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan 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. (Quality Enhancement Plan)**

Complying with the guidance in key concept # 1 above helps ensure compliance with CS 3.3.2, the Comprehensive Standard on the QEP. Note that if the institution elects in its new QEP to continue the work of its previous QEP, "the new QEP (1) should be derived from an assessment of its previous QEP, (2) have distinct goals and institutional outcomes from its first QEP, and (3) continue to focus on student learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and quality enhancement (*Resource Manual*, p. 31)."

Note also that there are clear advantages to picking a QEP topic in which the institution has a previous track record of successful engagement and assessment, but which also has substantial room for further improvement and advancement to a notable next level of achievement. Building upon related previous achievements makes it easier to present a compelling case for the institution's capability to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP than selecting a topic that constitutes a totally new initiative with which the institution has little or no previous experience.

Common QEP Themes

Advising

Critical Thinking

Distance education (online)

Diversity

Engaged Learning (Usually occurs beyond the classroom through community-service, internships, study abroad opportunities, and research)

First-Year Experience

Information Literacy

Internalization/Global Learning

Literacy

Mathematics

Oral Communications

Reading

Study Abroad

Undergraduate Research

Writing