

Western Carolina University

Quality Enhancement Plan Committee Notes from Meetings with University Constituents

**Updated
Friday, May 13, 2005**



SACS Review and Reaffirmation

Notes from my meeting with the Academic Success Center Directors plus Directors of One-Stop and Advising Center--

Are we to give input from our unit, or for the whole University (yes!) Is the University's mission all that changeable? Shall we discuss the overarching principles for our unit?

Need to create more of a culture of academic integrity, students seeking resources to make them successful; we struggle because we don't have a culture of seeking resources and using them; at least we are working toward drawing those kinds of students. The emphasis on quality is continuing despite the fact that we're growing.

Don't want to lose small classroom; "high touch" idea, want to continue to enhance quality in the face of growth.

High tech also--we are still considered high tech even though we're slipping in living up to that image.

What is and do we want for our institutional reputation? How do we want to be seen by students and parents? Integrity and ethics must be what we sell ourselves as. We note that fewer students (USI and LC classes) are saying that they're here because this is the only school that would take them. People outside the U are saying that we're improved, have better students and higher standards. Students near graduation are hoping we continue to improve our reputation so as to inflate the value of their diploma.

SAT scores are up in the honors college, as well as numbers; also other admissions criteria?

Student service is enhanced, improved; move toward being the best it can but at the same time encourage independence and students helping themselves. On-line services need to be enhanced, more available, procedures streamlined. There are currently too many forms, signatures needed to do business. Want to promote learning how to learn instead of hand-holding.

Want to focus on evolution of the learner, promote responsible learning, independent learning, life-long learning, oral and written communication skills of graduates. Liberal Studies isn't doing this job, is full of "useless courses" and convoluted, unfriendly requirements. **NEED TO ASSESS WHETHER OR NOT WE'RE DOING THE JOB.** Too much change with no opportunity to assess what's going on. Should we ask career services to help assess preparedness of students. The QEP should promote/focus on a culture of assessment (gag! but it's necessary). Not just a matter of doing the assessment; have to accept results and make decisions accordingly. University Planning should set standards for levels of assessment done.

QEP is a good opportunity to look at these issues again and look at long term addressing of the issues over the next 10 yrs.

Admissions**Phil Cauley**

Engagement could serve as a thread that weaves together numerous topics: communication, information exchange, diversity, ethics, collaboration, outreach, service learning, etc. In essence, engagement is the undercurrent that defines how effectively Western establishes, cultivates, and strengthens all relationships. Technology is a tool, but technology is not the end result we seek. Communication is important, but it too is a vehicle that should drive us to strengthened relationships. Infrastructure is essential, but it is a means to end and not an end in itself—how it supports/engages relationships is the crux of the issue. If one considers why communication, technology, ethics, diversity, etc., are important, one could assert that each of these should lead to heightened understanding of, appreciation for, and relationship with others. Engagement as it pertains to the strengthening of all university relationships can serve as a hub for many of the comments that have been made.

Athletics**Jennifer Brown**

- Engagement of students, faculty, staff, and community

- Enhancing and embracing diversity
- Technology enhancement

Possible topics:

- Building a TEAM to excellence: Technology Engaging Academic Minds
- Achieving academic excellence by developing engaged citizens
- Building an engaged community that promotes academic excellence

Auxiliary Services

Mike Stewart

- Other universities pass out surveys when a student makes application for graduation. The WCU Senior Survey, as we think we understand, is presumably distributed at the practice walk for the graduation ceremony. If this in fact is the case, WCU'S graduation-day distribution could very well lead to skewed assessment responses, due to "herd mentality" and lack of time for honest reflection. This survey is a valuable piece in helping to understand quality enhancement from a campus wide perspective.
- The foremost Auxiliary Services quality issue is that we are light-years behind in terms of our dining and bookstore facilities infrastructure. Although we are frequently analyzing the expansion of food choices and new concepts by use of advisory councils, et al, updating/modernizing our 50 year old facilities environments will definitely enhance the quality of the student "learning" environment.
- The campus Print Shop could be a very cost efficient and effective use of departmental and campus wide resources, if our university campus printing and copying policy #40 were followed and enforced. Efficient and effective use of resources would be to use the Print Shop to help fund WCU'S endowment, instead of providing profits for copier and paper vendors. Cost of purchase/lease, and maintenance of departmental copiers (when combined) is staggering; add to this, the cost of paper and waste. Almost every department could save a large amount of their budget for "quality learning enhancement" purposes if copying/printing resources were pooled and economies of scale achieved. Our campus business processes must be carefully considered and policy followed. We must begin to think systematically.
- Continue to develop and improve the CatTran shuttle services. It's a small thing, but it has been very popular with students and widely accepted.
- Auxiliary Service's learning environment quality enhancement boils down to campus facilities and shuttle infrastructure, in addition to operational and systematic minded stewardship on the part of all campus constituents and Administration.

Biology Department

Scott Philvaw

April 13, 2005, 10:00

Several faculty members mentioned engagement.

1. Engagement fits well with their new curricular requirements on student research. It will also facilitate exposing students to the research of others (fellow students and faculty).
2. Faculty members already do a lot of "hands on" work with students in the labs, but are often limited by budgetary constraints.
3. The department is committed to reducing class size to foster a more active learning environment and to better learn their students' abilities and interests.
4. Engagement may also tie in with their interest in emphasizing the biodiversity and ecology of the region through outreach activities such as those available at the Highlands Biological Station. Regional service also enhances student learning.

One faculty member proposed "Student Engagement in a Community Based Environment" as a possible QEP theme. Others supported this concept as it would:

1. Link student learning to faculty research
2. Encourage smaller classes
3. Be applicable across a variety of departments
4. It also ties in well with the concept of Academic neighborhoods within the university.

It was also felt that the QEP should encourage intellectual curiosity among students—that we should engage students in the joy of learning. Ideally, we should foster a climate of life-long learning where students graduate from WCU with the curiosity and the skills to engage in life-long learning.

Finally, it was pointed out that the QEP committee was heavily weighted with administrators and that it was crucial that the faculty voice be heard if we are serious about enhancing student learning.

B-K, Elementary and Middle Grades Education

Carol Burton

April 13, 2005, 10:00 a.m.

- Quality in context; faculty need to be more involved in curriculum, and how and where it is taught
- “Valuing education at all levels” is an important concept; include our resident students, not just distance students in our concerns about our programs
- Trust best practices to faculty; empower faculty to teach using models acceptable according to discipline
- Use technology to enhance, not replace what we do
- Refocus on “professionalism” of student development; autonomous and independent students; need stronger school pride
- Emphasize importance of liberal studies; make it more cohesive; use it to provide benchmark of acceptable skills for all students
- Create an environment where sense of community, professionalism, and decision making are valued and prevalent
- Emphasize *maintaining* quality since we are already known for quality; *enhancing* implies we are not good at what we do
- Promote personal connections with our students; do not lose the human contact that is essential to all good teaching

Additional questions posed by the B-K, Elementary and Middle Grades faculty:

- What defines us?
- What sets us apart?
- Interview faculty and ask what drew them to WCU? Why do they remain?
- Why are we successful and in what areas? What are our shortcomings?
- Have we lost our identity? We used to have one and it was pretty strong.

Capstone Advancement

Brian Railsback

Dear Colleagues:

Capstone Advancement Partners is a consulting firm that has been working with the Office of Advancement at WCU. They recently completed a study and part of it seemed relevant to our QEP topic “search.”

They interviewed trustees, foundation board members, and potential major donors (not for QEP, of course). Some of the findings do give us some feedback from these constituencies that might be useful.

When asked about Western’s strengths, some themes emerged (the number after the theme notes how many times it came up):

1. Bardo (19)
2. Rapidly rising academic standards (6)
3. High touch, personal attention to students (6)

4. Effort to be economic and cultural resource to the region (5)
5. Location (5) [Incidentally, also cited as the #1 weakness by 10 respondents]
6. Quality of students (4)
7. Increased academic standards (3)
8. Facilities are first-rate (3)
9. Size—small enough for personal attention, but large enough to be a real university (3)
10. The Honors College (2)
11. New Curriculum (2)
12. Faculty (2)
13. Technology (2)
14. Excellent staff (2)

Chancellor's Office

Brian Railsback

Engagement should be in our topic and a component of our QEP.

Growth and quality should be tied to educational enhancement

Developing community and personal attention to students are important concepts.

College of Business

David Coffee

1. April 8, 2005 - Sent mailing to all College of Business Faculty Explaining QEP, providing examples of QEPS, and asking for ideas.
2. April 14, 2005 - Attended Management and International Business Departmental meeting and took notes on QEP ideas.
3. April 20, 2005 - Attended Accounting, Finance and Entrepreneurship Departmental meeting and took notes on QEP ideas.
4. April 27, 2005 - Attended Marketing and Business Law Departmental meeting and took notes on QEP ideas.

Summary of Notes on QEP Ideas

1. **Applied learning:** Increase internships and other opportunities for students to apply what they learn in the classroom.
2. **Central advising:** Establish a centralized professional advising system and an academic mentoring system utilizing faculty.
3. **Placement:** Focus efforts on increased placement of students in the area of their major.
4. **Community engagement:** Increase student involvement in community in activities related to the classroom. (Related to 1.)
5. **Increase Hosting of international students:** Improving student quality through increased international exposure.
6. **Reaching out to the military:** Developing joint ventures with the military.
7. **Increased focus on interdisciplinary activities:** More cluster courses and interaction between disciplines.
8. **Increase writing and critical thinking skills:** Assess these qualities and develop plans to improve these skills.
9. **Integrate technology into courses:** Plan to bring state of the art technology into curriculum.
10. **Increase class attendance and participation:** Central plan to improve attendance and student involvement in the classroom.
11. **Assessment through post graduate evaluation:** Learn student needs through assessment after graduation.
12. **Connect students to job market:** Make students more aware of job market while they are in the classroom.

13. **Focus on career planning:** Make students more aware of the relationship of what they are doing in the classroom and their careers. (Related to 12.)
14. **Increase student reading:** Increase use of reading lists as a part of classroom assignments.

Council of Deans

Brian Railsback

Several ideas (engagement is clearly the theme):

Enhance the First-Year Experience

Engagement is a key concept; engagement as it relates to student learning

Engagement through partnerships with international partners (universities)

“Engagement for understanding” (Provost); experiential learning leads to deeper understanding and various communities; engagement from within the university to external constituencies

Enhancing student adaptability; prepare students to adapt to a rapidly changing, unpredictable future

“Growth” as a word or concept in our topic

“Borderless campus”; bridging barriers within the campus community and beyond the boundaries of campus; contact with communities across the spectrum of learners, from high school to adult learners.

Creating an Engaged University Learning Environment (topic)

Enhancing a creative teaching and learning environment

Educational Leadership and Foundations

Nory Prochaska

10:00 a.m., Monday, April 25, 2005

What part does "what we want students to know" play in the topic?

Is the development of the mission statement coupled to the development of the QEP topic? Should it be?

Need to examine how leadership retreat (LR) topics overlap; we're looking at the top of the funnel, someone needs to refine the topics and look at cross-connections to clarify the list as a motivation for a QEP topic

Three people liked the way the first topic on the other college's list pulls together several important concepts: (Wallace State CC) "Innovation for Student Success: Enhancing Student Outcomes through Engagement"--innovation, student success, enhancement, outcomes, engagement.

- Topic must not be so specific as to hobble the departments from what they need to do.
- Learning is primary, needs to be threaded to other topics.
- Need to develop a "working topic" and then revise as the process goes along.
- Need definitions of some of the terms on the LR list--what is "engagement"? community? classroom?

How does technology fit in? A tool, not an end in itself; critical thinking more important; technology should not be the "thing"; we need to use technology "smarter" to further education, not as a focus or objective, just a prominent tool.

How about the challenges of growth? How to continue to engage students, teach critical thinking, maintain quality within the environment of growth; we're going against the trend with growth, need to maintain values of small spaces and places.

Need an understanding of organizational change, dangers of decisions from the top without helping those who are supposed to implement the change.

What is the mechanism for further input? (I invited them to visit the web site, email you or me or Carol with any ideas or input).

English**Brian Gastle**

Strengthening Technology, Academics, the Region, and Students (STARS)

Creating Learning Activities for Western's Students (CLAWS)

Pedagogy and Regional Renewal From Engaging Current Technologies (PRRFECT)

Students' intrinsic motivations for learning (not "how do teachers motivate students," but "what motivates students" and then what do teachers do with that info...)

Writing taught/learned as a tool for thinking and as a product of communication across/within/everywhere in the university

Facilities Management**Mike Stewart**

- Reliable infrastructure – highly aged and inefficient steam plant steam condensate return lines, boilers, and steam plant building; sewer collection system maintenance issues and costs based on increased government regulation and reporting; water plant production capacity and maintenance issues and costs based on increased government regulation and reporting; adequate staffing (and adequate pay for staffing) to support expanding programs and new construction – otherwise campus expectations for cleanliness, maintenance, and grounds will have to be lowered.
- The point of utilities infrastructure failure is too late to act, equating to no steam for heat for hot water or climate, inadequate or no water for food preparation or sanitation, etc. – resulting in no quality enhancement because campus will be shut down by the health department... or mom and dad are irate because any interruption means Johnny and Suzie can not use their meal plan, can not take a hot shower, are freezing in their dorm rooms, or wonder why it has taken a short-handed Facilities staff months to get around to fixing the lock on their child's door.
- Much more than \$12,000 budget funding is required to purchase much needed classroom furnishings, such as desks, white/chalk boards, chairs, projection screens, etc.
- Utilities/Energy Conservation – Increasing cost of fuels, combined with WCU'S extraordinary waste of energy is eating into campus reserves and overall budget (failing steam condensate return lines, lights left on in unoccupied offices and rooms, open exterior windows and doors, etc.). For its FY 04-05 utilities budget, WCU will overspend an estimated \$500,000 on utilities. Energy conservation savings will allow for a much better use of university funds to enhance campus learning.

In a nutshell, Facilities Management's learning environment quality enhancement boils down to campus infrastructure and its support, in addition to operationally holistic minded stewardship on the part of all campus constituents and Administration.

Faculty Center**Heidi Buchanan**

Learning University

In a learning university, employees would evaluate their work by asking themselves, “how does this influence students in their overall educational experience?” A learning university would involve faculty, staff, administration, and students.

Advantages:

- Includes everyone on campus.
- Creates a community and a connection
- Encourages people to look at familiar things in a new way
- Encourages people to add value to their daily work
- Could be assessed in a variety of ways

Graduate Council Notes

Gordon Mercer

In the Graduate Council meeting, “Engagement leading to Learning,” was a priority, along with a focus on life-long learning, including distance learning. The concept of a “borderless campus” was presented in the discussion with a focus on partnerships and creative strategies in implementing the concept of a borderless campus. There needs to be more work on what a borderless campus would be or become according to the discussion.

Engaged learning and what this means was discussed and the emphasis was on active as opposed to passive learning. Research symposiums at the graduate and undergraduate levels were seen as a major strength in active learning.

Health Sciences Department Meeting

Irene Mueller

April 19, 2005 8:00–8:50 am, Moore 102

Present: Christine Stevens (Dept Head), Burt Ogle, Scott Higgins, Peter Whittaker, Mike Hubble, Dan Southern, Irene Mueller, Jay Scifers, Karen White, Mary Teslow, Phil Kneller, Denise Wilfong, Jill Manners, Wayne Billon

I shared the QEP information and process, including Definition, Guidelines, and examples of Topics. The group believed that key words included: technology, humanity, learning, professional education, community, service learning, role model, success, mentoring, changing needs of community, life-long learning. After further discussion, a consensus was reached for the following QEP topic.

Preparing life-long learners for success in professional communities

Additional discussion followed, with the group finally deciding on the following QEP topic.

Preparing professional life-long learners for community engagement

Health and Human Performance

Carol Burton

Thursday, April 14th, 2005 - 3:30 p.m., Reid Gym, 108

Areas we could/need to build on:

- Communication skills, especially writing ability; professional writing
- Library and research skills
- Professional and scholarly development; professional exams
- Verbal skills
- Collaboration skills; cooperative learning
- Address major issues on the division between students (“the haves and the haves not”); lack of appreciation for differences among students by students
- Academic responsibility of students; responsibility for their own learning is not evident; no initiative taken by students to make learning a priority
- Diversity and appreciation of same
- Retention issues of faculty and students

- Faculty evaluations

Strengths:

- Practical work; field experiences and internships
- Experiential learning
- Service learning (just beginning to really take hold on campus?); opportunities becoming more systematic and available
- Mission of individual departments; emphasis on context of majors and departments

**Health Center Wellness and Nutrition
Intramural and Fitness Center**

Julie Walters-Steele

Notes from meeting with Intramural and Fitness Center:

- Millennial Campus and Regional Development
- Developing students that are independent
- Preparing students for a changing market place
- Citizenship
- Diversity
- Developing service oriented students
- Western teaching, learning, making a difference
- Western enhancing teaching and learning, making a difference
- Regional learning, global citizenship
- Changing to meet diverse population

A suggestion was made for the committee to select 5-7 themes then allow everyone to vote on the themes.

Notes from Meeting with Health Center, Wellness & Nutrition

- Engagement
- Outreach to Community (REACH, Hospital, Sheriff, etc)
- Current Outreach stops at County line – have students from other counties too.
- Outreach to grade schools and high schools.
- Assess and respond to student needs
- Experiential Learning
- Parking plan
- Engagement with students, region, industry
- Engaging with Region to meet student needs
- Collaborating with Community Colleges (back off from trying to fulfill Community College role, focus on our students' needs)
- Improving what we already have: Quality not Quantity
- Enhancing quality through growth
- Partnerships with Community Colleges (2+2)
- Academic Integrity/Academic Excellence (Make WCU degree valuable)

Notes from Meeting with Health Center, Wellness & Nutrition

- Wireless Campus
- Technology Enhancement
- Increasing productivity by decreasing bureaucracy
- Allocation of resources should be equal to the idea/program (Limit number of initiatives to fund current initiative that are not complete or need more resources)
- Infrastructure – resources for deferred maintenance
- On-line/distance learning
- Staff development
- Raising the bar without alienating prospective regional students
- Enhancing 2+2 program
- Community involvement/service – getting students involved in the community
- Engaging the community

There were a lot of good ideas from this student group. They felt QEP topics could be related to the following:

- Enhancing student leadership skills; build community
- Enhancing professional skills/experience (strong co-op program, early internships, bigger career center)
- Enhance student learning by increasing research on campus for students and in particular by faculty; the university should put a greater emphasis on faculty research; faculty should connect research to students
- Enhance student learning by promoting more interactions among the disciplines; promote learning by having students apply what they have learned across disciplines

Human Resources, Purchasing and Controller**Mike Stewart**

Purchasing, Controller, and HR focus on providing better support (training, recruitment, advising) and processes (NC policy, budget rules, etc.) for staff and faculty to facilitate business operations and these operations impact students. It's more indirect "enhancement", but still enhancement. Operations support... as operations increase, more support is needed to keep the pace of business flowing.

Student Accounts, as part of the Controller's office, would like to see an "official" student email address implemented so that billings (as of now, hugely inefficient and costly) can be electronically sent, along with other official university notices and information. This would enhance not only our efficiency as a university, but could automate and simplify some "one stop" related business.

University Police enhance the campus learning environment by providing security. Like Facilities Management and Auxiliary Services, the Police need infrastructure improvements and support of it. With a growing campus and growing student population, it is inevitable that crime, drug, and alcohol use will also grow. Infrastructure such as an increased presence of blue light emergency call-box centers, potential surveillance cameras in remote parking and other areas of campus, better lighting in some areas, continuous training on how to engage students, a dedicated detective position to follow-up, investigate, and solve crimes -- especially drug and sex offenses.

Once again, Administration and Finance issues for quality enhancement are directly related to campus growth and the impact on infrastructure and its support; infrastructure that is either currently failing, or its replacement/improvement has been deferred for 40 or more years due to lack of "priority" funding; infrastructure that is necessary for enhancing the quality of the learning environment by virtue of recovering or maintaining any competitive advantage related to student retention (safety, efficiency and training, beauty, building conditions, shuttle, food, friendly service/support, cost effectiveness, electronics support for IT, etc), and most importantly, quality enhancement by virtue of keeping WCU open and operational through providing utilities.

Key words related to growth and enhancement: infrastructure (utilities systems, buildings/grounds, safety, IT), and support (staffing/pay, training, funding, maintenance/repair)

Human Services**Carol Burton****Friday, April 29th, 2005****11:30 a.m., Killian 218**

- Technology issues – make sure that the training and infrastructure support technology initiatives

- Growth – infrastructure does not keep up with student enrollment
- Class size – need to recommit to small sizes across the board, otherwise, it is detrimental to student learning
- Environment does not facilitate student learning; classrooms need to be more appealing; campus needs to be more inviting
- New faculty positions are great but new faculty members do not seem to be systematically acculturated to Western’s mission, culture, etc.
- Need to emphasize clinical and research experiences; practical experiences must continue to receive attention
- Students – academic initiative and responsibility must be stressed and incorporated into our programs; lack commitment to learning and the whole educational experience
- Promote a culture of learning; concept of the professional student
- Language skills (verbal and written) of our students need to be enhanced; assess when they enter the university and establish benchmarks for their progress as well as minimum expectations for matriculation
- Integrate classes more than they are currently; our traditional model no longer serves us well
- Address the mental shift of students; currently, they seem to believe that career rewards supersede service orientation
- Students seem to be more intolerant of other points of view and alternate perspectives
- Research: need to foster inquiry and critical thinking, not just results and outcomes; reflection skills are critical to developing educated, world citizens
- Silence of students; lack interest in education beyond a cursory level; unengaged; limited by their worldview, so let us create a model that helps them to broaden their worldview
- Career training has been superseded by job training; relates to lack of professional support and direction from national and professional organizations
- Concern over the growth of the institution and the “city feel;” depersonalization of relationships between faculty and faculty, student and faculty and student and student; growth hurts these connections
- Accreditation can actually protect the integrity of our academic programs; use this process (QEP) as a way to do just that
- Recruitment efforts not focused according to the kinds of students faculty want to attract
- Student support should be improved at all levels of transition-entering, during, and following completion of programs
- Any model we develop should include/incorporate support for graduate students; they are insufficiently compensated; sometimes removed from the loop of assistance offered to undergraduates

Hunter Library QEP ideas

Heidi Buchanan

Information Literacy – the ability to find and use information effectively

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Becoming an informed citizen
- Using technology to find information
- Integrity – using information ethically (avoiding plagiarism, etc.)
- Accessibility
- Curiosity
- Technology
- Life-long learning
- Experiential learning

SACS QEP discussion, Friday May 6, 2005

A suggestion was shared that the QEP include basic technology competencies much like NC State's LITRE QEP. In a class taught last fall it appeared that about a third of the senior students appeared to not have basic computer competencies. Western needs a program in place to ensure that all students who graduated from WCU have basic computer competencies. The students, their parents and the faculty would all be happier. A suggestion was that we might be able to get Career Services involved with helping us know where to set the competency levels.

Has there been a risk analysis regarding not using technology and assessing the competencies of the faculty, staff and students? How can students graduating without these skills hold up in the work place? There is a need for Western to prepare students for the global economy and technology skills are a necessity.

A suggestion was offered that freshmen receive a course in computer competencies and then another as seniors to ensure that they know about the technology advancements that have taken place during the 4-5 years they spend at WCU. This way they will have the competencies they need to be successful in the workplace. Most users do not reach beyond what they need to know when using technology and this certainly applies to students.

The QEP that we choose for Western would not have to be something new. Staff suggested that we use the renovation projects across campus as a starting point to engage students and faculty across colleges/curriculums to be part of the renovation process. The QEP could be something that we already have in the works such as our infrastructure projects. If we do not have a solid infrastructure then very little will be able to be accomplished and students would not receive a quality educational experience.

As we improve the infrastructure of the hardware on our campus we also need to think about raising the numbers and skills of support staff as well to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the clients. It was noted that in some colleges the Deans are encouraging the faculty to explore and grow in technology.

Students would like their course materials available 24 x 7. Our students are part of a generation where information is available to them all the time. We should possibly look to the QEP to raise the bar in technology for faculty, staff and students. It was suggested that raising the bar is a good idea but that the bar would have to meet the different levels of technology experience. We should look to raise the average bar rather than trying to get all clients to the same level. This would require support at various levels and rewards and/or incentives should be offered to those who participate and then again for those who succeed.

Another comment was shared that most students do not have the confidence to try new things on the computer. Students do not feel that there is support for trying new things especially if they break something in the process. It was noted that the same feeling exists among faculty. They know how to use the software they need on a day-to-day basis but are reluctant to try new software because the support does not seem to be available if they break their computer.

The economic development piece is missing from many of the ideas. How can the resources within the colleges be used to engage the students and the community? As an example, the COB is thinking about using the Call Center as a tool for recruitment for a variety of projects as well as providing students with internships and also a possible income source. The COB is also interested in using curriculum specific software knowledge toward assisting the community with their projects. This would help the local community get the expertise and temporary use of software to help them with their business plans.

Last Minute Productions**Wade Livingston****4/28/05**

Improve what we have instead of making WCU bigger

- better existing facilities
- less construction
- use parking ticket revenue solely for WCU improvement

Easier Access to administration

- less red tape
- better communication

Technology

- more computer labs
- ITS = improve networks
- improve technology
- more wireless “hotspots”

Expand Campus

- more pedestrian friendly campus
- create more residential-type communities

Collaboration

- internal and external (campus and community)
- assess community feel about WCU
- communication

Sharper Focus on Academics

Safety

- Communication (in general)

Learning University

Alan Altany

Subject: RE: QEP is coming to you

WCU develops the goal of becoming a Learning University where the university as a whole is engaged with the region (economically, culturally, etc.), where the university's staff and administrators re-conceive their work for its role in improving student learning, where the university's faculty are engaged in professional and instructional development to create learning opportunities and experiences for students, and where the university's students are strongly engaged in the responsibility for their own significant learning.

I know "engagement" is important for the Chancellor and others, but I think we need to understand engagement as not only the university's impact upon the region, but to see engagement by all staff, faculty, students and administrators in seeing their work as ultimately being for the support and continuous improvement of student learning. Thus, an engaged university needs to have its students deeply engaged in their courses, but also in learning outside the classroom in many other ways. Since the central mission of Western is excellence in teaching and learning, for Western to dedicate itself to structurally, systematically, and comprehensively becoming an authentic Learning University would be to fulfill that mission more profoundly than at any previous time in its history. In a Learning University everyone (from students and faculty to administrators and facilities workers) comes to re-imagine her and his work in the greater context of why the university exists: to develop students into learners with the imagination, skills, knowledge, curiosity, compassion and character to engage themselves with people, work, society and learning for the rest of their lives.

Below is from a letter I sent to Dr. Carter:

I would like to propose for serious consideration which I called in my email today to you, a **Big Idea**. For Western to be a fully and authentically “**engaged university**” in the deepest meaning of that phrase, the great majority of its students need to experience a fully engaged learning process in their courses and during their years at the university. If national statistics and contacts with Western students are some indication, that is not the present situation at Western. New programs may be developed, but it may be that old ways of teaching persist and prevail, ways that decades of research

have shown to be ineffective for higher-order thinking and for learning that lasts beyond exams or the end of courses.

The Big Idea I am about to propose, while not motivated by the current **SACS process**, would seem to be an excellent companion to it, as well as beyond that process. In addition, the Big Idea could lead Western to become a **benchmark university nationally for student learning** which could be the key component in your desire for Western to become a national comprehensive university.

The Big Idea will require a big commitment and a re-imagining, re-conceptualizing of Western's organization and culture so that an organization for learning will result. Organizing for change, even transformation, will be needed. The goal will be for Western (based upon some of Terry O'Banion's ideas for a Learning College) to become a **"Learning University."** Thus, the Big Idea is two-fold:

- Goal: Western as a Learning University
- Process to create such a university

Palomar College's vision statement says the following:

Our new vision statement reflects a subtle but nonetheless profound shift in how we think of the college and what we do. We have shifted from an identification with process to an identification with results. We are no longer content with merely providing quality instruction. We will judge ourselves henceforth on the quality of student learning we produce. And further, we will judge ourselves by our ability to produce ever greater and more sophisticated student learning and meaningful educational success with each passing year, each exciting student, and each graduating class.

In an article, "The Learning College: Both Learner and Learning Centered," O'Banion says that

It is not enough to make students feel good about the environment on the campus or the services they receive. It is not enough to impress students with the dazzling performance of great lecturers. It is not enough to provide all the latest in information technology. If we cannot document expanded or improved learning—however defined and however measured—we cannot say with any assurance that learning has occurred. And it is much more likely that we will be able to document learning when we place high value on learning-centered policies, programs, and practices and when we employ personnel who know how to create learning outcomes, learning options, and learning-centered activities.

Elsewhere, O'Banion states that "the learning college places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners anyway, anyplace, anytime" and that the learning college is based upon six key principles:

- The learning college creates substantive change in individual learners.
- The learning college engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.
- The learning college creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.
- The learning college assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.
- The learning college defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.
- The learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners.

One premise is that students, generally speaking, are not experiencing the kind of learning that the university hopes they are, that employers require, that the society needs, and that eventually those students will wish they had gained during their college years.

Another premise is that the present organizational operation produces the students it does because it is not fully learning-centered, but remains somewhat stuck in a teaching and professor-centered delivery of content with very inadequate, even distorting means of assessing what kinds of learning are occurring, including any higher-order thinking.

Thus, other than getting grades and credits, do we have any real idea if our students are learning in significant and enduring ways beyond absorption/memorization of content? Based upon the present

approach and reward system, authentic assessment of integrated, contextual competency is a hit and miss thing, depending upon those teachers who have risked learning about how people learn and if their own students are learning what they have assumed and wanted them to learn.

A third premise is that the time for tinkering is past and is too incomplete an approach to result in a transformed organization and academic culture. Higher education, nationally and internationally, is in the beginnings of a paradigm shift from teaching to learning. Teaching-centered colleges will continue doing what they do and will continue producing graduates not well enough equipped for their projected careers and for making the greatest contributions to their societies. And they will not be as prepared as possible for life-long learning that will improve the quality and scope of their personal lives.

Thus, the Big Idea is for **Western to become THE engaged university by becoming a Learning University** where every employee (staff, administrator and faculty) reflects upon her or his work and the ways it can contribute to student learning (in and out of the classroom), and how that work is part of a larger whole, the Learning University itself.

As by-products of such a focus, issues of student and faculty retention are addressed (not by addressing this or that symptom, but by a systemic, organizational shift). And the goal of an engaged university become much more genuine when the external engagements with the region, government agencies and private business, is matched by the internal engagement of all employees in the learning process itself. In other words, when students are fully engaged in the Learning University, **the engagement of that university acquires its soul**. It is not just about its buildings, expanded size in area or numbers of students, new programs, but about its very spiritual essence, the learning experiences and outcomes of and by its students.

Finally, although one cannot be sure, the present time may be the most opportune time (*kairos*) Western has ever had for such a transformation of teaching, learning, thinking and organizational attitudes. It seems to me to be the best path for Western to become the national comprehensive university you envision and to be a community that attracts good students, faculty, administrators and staff because of its dynamic, way-making, path-finding approach to teaching and learning, is for it to make a conscious, concerted and persevering commitment to become a Learning University. A three, four or five year strategic plan could be developed and implemented to reach that goal and to yearly reach ever further for it.

Mathematics

Nory Prochaska.

- 1) Interdisciplinary work, such as co-ops need to be emphasized; communication skills w/ other disciplines, working toward a real-world interaction and environment.
- 2) Engagement—need to not get carried away with this concept, attend to student engagement, not be too bound up in community engagement. Use National survey of student engagement as a source; emphasize interaction between students and faculty in and out of classroom; examine how much writing and engaging assignments are used in classes; emphasize time spent with students outside the classroom, emphasize active learning in the classroom, value small classes, avoid the trend toward larger classes.

I've had another thought about the QEP topic process: might we want to do some exploration of the QEP itself, and see if a topic *grows* out of that, rather than nailing down the topic before the actual work starts? I worried that we might find ourselves with a loft-goal topic and then have difficulty making the rest of the plan ***genuinely*** adhere to the topic. Our experience with ***genuinely*** getting the institution to adhere to the liberal studies program comes to mind....

Mountain Heritage Center

Scott Philyaw

April 25th, 2005

WCU should engage students with “real life” experiences—we should translate learning into real work applications. Few jobs will require our graduates to complete academic papers. Employers do require presentations, memos, exhibits, and other forms of clear communication skills.

Applied research projects validate student research—as do public presentations. These projects also validate what students learn in class. For example, students working at the Mountain Heritage Center often assist with the production of text panels for exhibits. This is similar to the revision process in writing.

Other projects require various forms of artwork to be used in educational outreach programs. Some WCU students are well prepared and have the communication skills necessary for these project-oriented tasks. Others do not.

Students need to have a sense of place—not just their home, but where they end up in their career. The QEP should reflect who and where we are as an institution. Students need a sense of place for WCU and the region in terms of history, biology, economy, etc.

Students should use this place (WNC) to learn how to learn about a place and its people. Once students learn how to learn about a place, they can connect with other places when they leave WCU. One example of this is the education program's policy of encouraging their majors to visit the classroom before they do their student teaching. This sort of cultural literacy also validates where each student comes from. It helps them better to understand cultural change and growth.

Students who are connected with the region are more engaged and more open to learning—they are also more prone to complete their studies at WCU. The region also offers a commonality of experience. Mountain Heritage Day and the Tuckasegee River Clean Up help students connect with WCU and the region.

Students need to know WCU'S history. It helps them connect to the institution and builds the university's sense of community and tradition. The Mountain Heritage Center assists with faculty and student orientation to university and the region. We help them make local connects and help students with research projects.

The Mountain Heritage Center works with students on many levels:

- Work-study.
- Internships.
- Service learning.
- Single-session class projects.
- The Center has also worked with classes on semester-long projects. These have been very beneficial and we would like to do more.
- The Center occasionally works with area teenagers not enrolled at WCU.
- The Center helps connect WCU students with other institutions through professional relationships with other regional heritage sites.

Question:

Does the QEP address all students? What about retirees and other life-long learners?

National Residence Hall Honorary

Wade Livingston

4/28/05

Qualified Professors

- experienced teachers
- more academic and less politicized instructors
- vary teaching styles
- inform students of different learning styles

Technology

- program-oriented tech.
- utilize tech. & educate faculty members
- more computer labs dedicated to specific programs/uses

Safety

- lighting
- construction
- step-guards

Consistency

- pricing/costs

Increased Access to Facilities

Resources

- more staff
- more personnel
- more equipment
- better maintenance

Clean-up Campus

Community Feel

More Facilities

Nursing

Irene Mueller

April 11, 2005, 1:30 – 1:55 pm

Mitchell Room, Brown Cafeteria

Present: Vincent Hall (Dept Head), Sharon Jacques, Judy Mallory, Lisa James (Dept Secretary) , Barbara St. John, Bonnie Garner, Sheila Chapman, Lorene Todd, Steve Forst, Liz Simmons-Rowland, Chuck Taylor, Faye Hodgin, Patsy Smyth, Valerie Matthiesen, Ann Hallyburton (Library Liaison)

I shared the QEP information and process, including Definition, Guidelines, and examples of Topics. “Enhancing learning through technology” was the first suggestion. After further discussion, a consensus was reached for the following QEP topic.

Engaging learners through technology and community partnerships

Orientation

Tammy Haskett

Engagement again, service learning, incorporating the millennial campus, making our student marketable – assistance in job market

Instead of the word engagement – imprint or impress

Some orientation counselors have given the following thoughts regarding QEP:

- Issue of cold buildings.
- Residence facilities becoming too private with less opportunity for community building and more possibility of drug usage, exclusion from other students and retention issues.
- More diversity awareness needed.
- Communication skills; writing skills
- More community building needed.
- Better trained advisors in the departments to prevent frequency of bad advisement with students.
- Improve learning communities: don't we need to house them together to really build community? Enhance more social systems for students to get involved with other students.

Possible QEP topics:

- Attracting students from diverse regional connections for global environments.
- Developing responsible citizens through community connections.
- Involving students in collaborative community experiences.
- Preparing responsible citizens through community involvement.

Philosophy**Brian Railsback**

Creating Engaged Citizens at WCU (they define this in terms of developing ethics, critical thinking, history, great books, analytical reading, application of ethics across the disciplines—all in order to create “engaged, thoughtful citizens”).

Physical Therapy Department Meeting**Irene Mueller****April 14, 2005, 1:00 – 1:30 pm, Moore, PT Conf Room**

Present: Karen Lunnen (Dept Chair), Linda Eargle, Kathy Starr, Todd Watson, Kristen Jagger, Lori Schrodt

I shared the QEP information and process, including Definition, Guidelines, and examples of Topics. The group believed that key words included 1) Technology, 2) Engagement, 3) Online, and 4) Support. After further discussion, a consensus was reached for the following QEP topic.

Meeting the Educational Needs of Working Professionals through Distance Education
Additional discussion followed, with the group finally deciding on the following QEP topic.

Engaging Working Professionals in Lifelong Learning through Online Education**Political Science****Gordon Mercer**

The concept of engagement, if used in a QEP, should include faculty becoming engaged teachers, engaged researchers and engaged community citizens. This facilitates students becoming active citizens. External and internal engagement would facilitate learning as well as active citizenship for our academic community.

Engagement of students in the community through service, research and internships facilitates an engaged classroom. Students taking field trips as related to their academic areas should be encouraged in the engaged class. Engaged dialogue and projects involving engagement become important in the engaged class.

Creating contributing and informed citizens for a global community was also mentioned, as this relates closely to our mission statement.

Resident Students Association**Wade Livingston****5/4/05**

More Learning Communities

More Academic Initiative in Residence Halls

- peer mentoring
- classrooms in res. halls
- more faculty in res. halls
- more computer labs in res. halls

Keep “Small School” Feel

Equitable Facilities

- improve all facilities

Increased Support for Peer Education

- peer mentoring

Decrease Student Costs

Increased Funding/Support for Student Organizations and Athletics

- provide means for students to go to conferences
- increase/support additional student activities/attractions

Increased Collaboration between ALL Facets of the University

Build a Sense of Community Campus-wide

Support Organizations that Support Diversity

Social Work

Scott Philvaw

April 20th 2005

- WCU students need to connect with all aspects of the local region (environment, culture, history, workforce, etc.). The Social Work program requires that all of its majors work within the community. They need both involvement and immersion.
- Service Learning helps to foster students' connection with the university and the region.
- At the same time, WCU needs more volunteer opportunities that are not tied to classes. We could accomplish this by broadening what we are doing with service learning. WCU should compare our efforts with those of other area colleges and universities such as Appalachian State, Brevard, and Warren Wilson. Programs at Wake Forest and East Carolina could also be examined.
- WCU also has a lot of urban students—we need to educate them too. One way is to use the local region as a laboratory. By conscientiously learning about this place students gain the tools to learn about other places.
- Any WCU center to coordinate volunteer efforts should be open to the community (retirees, civic organizations, and others). Terry Gibson used to be involved with a local center. While there was a real demand for its services the center closed due to lack of resources.
- Note: Social Work requires that its students volunteer in the community as a pre-requisite for certain courses. Many of these students opt to volunteer in their home communities over academic breaks because of familiarity and established networks. For certain upper level courses the majority of students volunteer in Jackson County because of their volunteer efforts must take place during the semester.
- Social Work majors engage in fieldwork in addition to their community service.
- Community outreach is integral to the Social Work major. The approved MS in Social Work will require more outreach opportunities for outreach.

- Our students and faculty need a better understanding of diversity—not just exposure but understanding. Exchange programs, including short-term exchange programs for faculty would help address this issue.

- We need more support systems for all minority students.

- Set aside one hour per month with no classes for club and committee meetings.

Staff Forum

Carol Burton

April 12, 4:00 p.m.

Variety of divergent thoughts:

- Underlying support and infrastructure need to be addressed, e.g., IT services and facilities
- Real life application of principles; application of concepts
- Active learning with students and faculty involved; heighten student-faculty academic relationships
- Collaboration and student learning; service-to-region; millennial initiative
- Address real needs of distance learners
- Customize academic programs; no longer one model fits all
- Collaborative and facilitative relationships between faculty and staff should be enhanced
- Reward innovative teaching (also helps faculty and student retention)

- Create a climate or culture to support reaching out to students

Student Government Association
4/28/05

Wade Livingston

Technology

Reexamine Learning Styles

- varied teaching styles
- make sure faculty members are qualified
- more dialogue
- interdisciplinary collaboration
- open mindedness

Facilities

- integrate student learning into all facilities
- make facilities more academic minded

Create more Resources

Community

- more residential learning communities
- integration of all campus services

Communication

- make administration more “user-friendly”

School Spirit/Institutional Pride

Marketing

- internal and external

Increased Assessment

- accountability

Programming

- increased investment
- more diversified student activities

Practical

- job placement!/career service oriented
- specialized dept. to handle practical experiences for students
- more practical experience

Recognition

- of student learning
- achievement

Increase Student Awareness

- as to rights
- as to processes

Dialogue

- improve between all university stakeholders

Security

Beautify Campus

- landscaping

Involvement

Collaboration

- in terms of community education

Student Affairs Professional Staff

Bill Haggard

Possible QEP Topics

- Technology: Enhancing Technical Support for Faculty, Staff and Students
- Enhancing Campus Life and Community
- Preparing Students to Live and Work in a Diverse World
- Enhancing Environments for Learning
- Growing with Enhanced Quality
- Responsibility and Accountability: Preparing Productive Members of Society through Character Development
- Fostering a Student-Centered Campus
- Putting Students First
- Preparing Leaders for a Global Society
- Learning through Service and Innovation of Discovery Experiences
- Character Development through Intercultural Collaboration and Connective Learning
- Enhancing Learning through Co-Curricular Experiences
- Engaging Technology for Life-Long Learning
- Enhancing Student Learning through Fostering Positive Student Experiences and Exceptional Student Services
- Enhancing Student Learning Through Involvement, Experiential Learning, and Engagement
- Doing What is Most Important: Prioritizing Learning Activities
- Enhancing Student Learning through a Better Understanding of the Characteristics of Today's Students
- Preparing Students to Succeed in a Global Society
- Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness in the Entire Community
- Building a Sustainable Community that Embraces and Enhances Diversity, Learning and Engagement
- Enhancing Regional Engagement and Student Learning through Maximizing Service Learning Opportunities
- Preparing Students to Become Effective Leaders in a Diverse Global Society through Enhanced Character Development
- Enhancing Student Learning through the Development of a More Seamless and Collaborative University

Student Support Services

Tammy Haskett

May 5, 2005

Focus on ethical behavior. Western Carolina University boasts high quality academics – we need to also promote the importance of ethical behavior in society, academics, interactions with faculty and staff and the way we treat others.

Foster scholarly thinking and behaviors. We seem to be pampering our students to the point that they do not see education as a privilege but as an entitlement. They don't seem to be working hard to go to college.

Improve communication on campus especially given the challenges of communicating with students whose emails are constantly being changed.

April 14, 2005, 8:30 a.m.

Key discussion around staff and faculty relationships; there appears to be a disconnected perception about how **all** university employees affect student learning.

- Emphasize family orientation of the university
- Personal contact with student is critical to any model of enhancing student learning
- Managing the changes accompanying our growth is critical if we are to retain students
- Small class sizes
- Keep our unique focus and mission
- Incorporate issue of declining facilities and infrastructure
- Find a way to encourage and reward collaboration between faculty, staff, students and administration.

➤ How will the Millennial Initiative fit in?