

QEP Forum
2:00 - 3:00 p.m., Monday, October 23, 2006
Hinds UC Theater

Attendees

John Bardo
Jim Miller
Mary Teslow
Beth Lofquist
Kevin Sisson
Leroy Kauffman
Ronda Bryant
Michael Dougherty
Pat Brown
Clifton Metcalf
Allen Lomax
Carol Mellen
Joe Pechmann
Jeff Hughes
Mike Despeaux
Anna McFadden
Larry Hammer
Glenn Bowen
Lori Seischab
Elizabeth Addison
Tammy Frizzell
Fred Hinson
Tracy Zontek
Dianne Lynch
Several Students
Others?

*QEP Committee
Members Present*

Carol Burton
AJ Grube
Brian Railsback
Bob Orr
Scott Philyaw
Newt Smith
Tammy Haskett
Melissa Wargo
Irene Mueller
Cindy Atterholt
Nory Prochaska
Mardy Ashe
Others?

The following questions were raised at the forum regarding the QEP:

1. How do we handle the issue of access to the Briefcase?
2. Define and outline parameters of the Briefcase. What will the Briefcase NOT be used for? What will be the primary purpose of the Briefcase?
3. How will the pilot program work? Do we involve sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the pilot? How will we do that?
4. What are the principles that will guide us to design the Briefcase template (makes students consider the professional, makes it easy for advisors to find information, etc.)?

5. How do we motivate students to be excited about synthesis and our plan? Needs to be clearer in the QEP.
 6. What are the incentives for faculty and staff to put in the time needed to create student reflection via the Briefcase and promote synthesis? How much do we need in the budget?
 7. When should we have a forum with representative of all the key units to be affected by the implementation of the QEP, as Fred suggested?
 8. How and will we include graduate students and non-traditional undergraduate students, including distance students, etc.?
 9. How will academic advisors/career services advisors/advising center advisors, etc., use the Briefcase?
 10. Will the implementation of the Briefcase incur a fee for students?
 11. Will the Briefcase have editing capacity as opposed to just being a repository for storing mounds of information?
 12. How is the “sophomore slump” going to be handled in this plan?
 13. For the structured reflection piece, where is the mentoring framework that will be necessary for this to occur?
 14. Where will the funds come from to support this? It is included in the expansion budget, but what if that isn’t funded? Alternative source of funding?
 15. The Briefcase looks like just a FaceBook. How can we work with that? Is that sufficient? There is more to the Plan than the Briefcase—review the learning outcomes and the implementation plan.
 16. Where are reliability and validity elements in this plan? Don’t we need to be able to demonstrate (to our students and to SACS) that we are effectively meeting our goals? Do we have quantitative measures built in to the assessment of the plan?
 17. The implementation of the plan seems too loose. We need to tie the plan to specific individuals and units, then compensate and evaluate them, to ensure success of the plan.
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Direct feedback received from faculty following the Forum:

1) Programs such as the QEP will work to the extent that the requested activities are formally recognized and rewarded for both students and faculty. If you want the students to do a good job on their briefcase it can't be left up to them to update voluntarily when they feel like it. I agree with my colleague Lori that you'll get two extremes- those who never change it and those who constantly upload everything into it. Perhaps their advisor should have to approve the briefcase once a year. The students might then be required to update and clean up their briefcase once a year, and perhaps write an annual summary.

If WCU wants faculty to supervise independent research and internships, help students synthesize their experiences, read education briefcases, etc... then these activities need to receive a proportionate amount of formal recognition in terms of course loads, promotion and tenure, etc.... The Chancellor mentioned some initiatives in this direction, which was great. My point is that the QEP can't just be good ideas, no matter how good they are. It has to include institutional changes to make sure that implementation is required and rewarded, not just voluntary. You get what you pay for.

My last comment is about students changing their plans and directions. Some of the students who have done research with me have decided that my area is not for them. That was fine. It's part of my job to help students figure out what they don't want to do as well as what they want to do. Some students may not want to write down plans that they think might change, or that are not well thought out. The option of changing fields and directions is one of the strong points of the U.S. education system. I think you should give some thought to radical changes as well as gradual evolution of student plans and syntheses, and provide the students with some direction on WCU's thinking on this topic.

- 2) I appreciate the thought and effort that went into (what I know of) the QEP. There is perhaps nothing more important in undergraduate education than engendering meaningful intellectual synthesis—cross-curricular and extra-curricular.

And I realize that just as not all links can be on the University home Web page, not all considerations can be mentioned high in the QEP document. But there are three areas that I would strongly encourage be given prominence in the QEP plan:

1. Ethics / Integrity

The lack of the above is always news, always bad. And the lack of integrity costs the state, and country, billions – not to mention a general (if difficult to measure) lowering of the quality of life when mistrust and dishonesty are lurking in the background. The articles below refer to a recent national survey of graduate students, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that cheating among undergraduates is no less common.

Has there been any discussion of establishing a meaningful honor code on campus? Note UVA and Washington & Lee in this regard, among others. But honor-code emphasis or not I hope that nurturing integrity occupies a prominent place in the exciting pantheon of university goals.

Cheating rampant among graduate students [with MBAs topping the list] (Sept 2006)
<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/business/15551798.htm>
<http://www.accountancy.com.pk/newsst.asp?newsid=87>
<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/10/2006100307n.htm>

2. Sustainability / Ecological Awareness

At last month's Faculty Assembly meeting in Chapel Hill one of the delegates pointed out to President Bowles that no where in his presentation was "sustainability" mentioned. Further, several campus buildings of recent construction had permanently sealed windows. Bowles acknowledged that this was an unfortunate oversight and pointed out that he has been an advocate of sustainability in the private sector.

Given the state of the planet's declining resources and growing pollution at every turn, even small efforts at recycling are important. Yet, in my experience, students regard much of Western's recycling program as "a joke." Janitorial staff admitted that the office paper faculty segregate from other trash for recycling purposes "just gets thrown in the same dumpster" anyway.

Could we, as a campus community, do better? We do live in one of the most beautiful regions of the country.

See, just for one example, recent articles on sustainability in the Chronicle of Higher Education:

(October 20)

<http://chronicle.com/chronicle/v53/5309guide.htm>

Sustainability, the ultimate liberal art:

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i09/09b02401.htm>

3. Community Engagement / Civics

Glenn Bowen is performing yeoman's work in the realm of service learning. But there are larger issues at hand that—will it sound too grandiose?—impact the ability of this state to function the capacity of Washington to govern. The U.S. has one of the worst voter turnouts in the Western world. A national midterm election is imminent, but we don't hear much about it on campus. All universities—especially public ones—have a responsibility to graduate a curious and educated citizenry. Encouragement to discuss current issues on campus, to register to vote, to VOTE, should be coming from the highest offices of this institution. A flyer from the Young Republicans or a poster created by the Young Democrats simply does not raise this important concern to the level it should occupy in the campus consciousness.

Less grand, perhaps, what does this campus do to encourage student attendance at local government functions? Just because we are in a rural setting does not mean we don't have zoning issues, public library controversies, local governing board flaps, interesting court cases... Could Western subsidize student subscriptions to the (incredibly cheap already) Sylva Herald?

A few years ago I created a 'Civic Awareness' Web page of links. Perhaps Western would like to take this page (WCU is welcome to it), put its own URL on it, and then create a link to it from the WCU home page. Just until the election.

http://paws.wcu.edu/gjones/WCU_COB_Civic_Engagement.htm

Sorry I missed the QEP forum today. I hope it went well.

In light of the questions concerning the Briefcase Scott put together the following submission template. It is not complete, but it does suggest the degree to which the Briefcase would be automatically generated rather than depending on student input.

"I think one of the reasons that others are concerned about student motivation to submit materials is that they are still thinking of an e-portfolio which often does depend much more on student initiated submissions." Scott

Items automatically included in the Education Briefcase:

- * Information on HS activities and interests from each student¹'s application to WCU.
- * Information from Orientation¹'s CatWalk on possible majors and other interests.
- * Data from the Personality Mosaic for those students who complete it as part of orientation.

- * USI instructors would submit student papers or other work indicative of students¹ interests in majors and careers.
- * Career Services would include reports, job descriptions, and other relevant materials for student internships and co-ops.
- * Students Affairs would submit links to students¹ co-curricular transcripts, the Leadership Program, and other activities.
- * Service Learning would submit students¹ reflection essays and job descriptions for service learning activities.
- * The Undergraduate Research conference would include students¹ electronic proposals (and possibly their research papers).
- * Advisors would include notes, questions, feedback and other information for the student. By placing this information in the Briefcase it would always be accessible to the student and the advisor<unlike email messages that are often lost.

In addition:

Students could voluntarily submit other materials germane to their major, minor, or career interests. One student suggested that students might want to submit links to their MySpace account.

Other instructors could submit additional materials germane to the student¹s educational and career goals. These submissions would be subject to the advisor¹s (and student¹s??) approval.

Whereas an e-portfolio focuses on outcomes (materials that a student may submit to a prospective employer or graduate school) and assessable outcomes, the Education Briefcase focuses on the process by providing the advisor and student with information to assist in the formation of a student¹s educational experience. While the Briefcase would provide the raw material necessary for a portfolio, it would focus on those materials more germane to the student¹s educational experience while at Western.

More importantly, the majority of material in the Education Briefcase would be automatically generated. It would not be dependent on student submissions.