The Quality Enhancement Plan is a new SACS requirement. It’s about the future.

It’s the University’s chance to demonstrate its commitment to ongoing quality enhancement.

QEPs must focus on the improvement of student achievement or the improvement of the learning environment.

The QEP itself must be well focused and narrow enough that it can be well managed and evaluated.

The evaluation of the QEP must be based on student achievement of learning outcomes and not just course grades.

Selection of the topic must involve the broader University community; faculty, staff, administrators, students, and alumni.

The QEP must be of significant importance to the University and be tied to its strategic plan.

A&T’s QEP is Critical Thinking.

If our QEP is approved by SACS, we will set out in the next academic year to improve the critical thinking skills of A&T’s marvelous students.

What do we mean by critical thinking? The rubric used to evaluate the Collegiate Learning Assessment is a pretty good characterization of what we mean by critical thinking.

Critical thinking is differentiating the arguments of two authors in literature. It is a critique of a work of art. It is undergraduate market research. It is understanding the proper analysis of levels of data. It is making ethical decisions. It is writing persuasively. It is listening for a premise. It is a design process. Critical thinking is something that is necessary in every major on campus and it includes the basic skills and co-requisites that go along with becoming a critical thinker. We are not dumping this off on University Studies. University Studies is starting us off with Critical Writing and Analytical Reasoning. Instead, those learning outcomes associated with critical thinking will be infused into the department curricula.
The QEP Committee is, itself, very representative of the university, especially with Hap Giberson representing the Staff Senate, Lonnie Cockerham representing alumni, and Tecara Bracey and Fatima Johnson representing students. We have also had the benefit of Denise Iverson-Payne’s membership on the SACS Steering Committee.

For two years, the QEP Committee mined existing University data, such as the high failure rate list, Praxis I scores, and accreditation results.

For two years now, the Committee has gathered input from the University community. We conducted:

Nominal Group sessions with 407 faculty, staff and administrators.

A student survey with 714 students responding.

4 student focus groups with 32 students participating.

1 staff focus group.

Career Services also shared its employer survey with us.

During that time, we had the benefit of training by three different groups of consultants who know the QEP development process well. The last group suggested that we take our collected input and perform an Importance-Performance analysis; a sort of gap analysis.

So we asked you to rate your perception of the Importance of an area of student achievement to improve and then to rate your perception of how well the University is working to improve in that area. Those items in that appear in the upper left quadrant of the chart you see on the screen would be those things that should be most considered for the QEP topic. They are the areas of student achievement that are considered most important and most needed for improvement.

325 faculty, staff and administrators responded.

263 students responded, including the Student Senate.

176 concerned alumni responded thanks to Lonnie and Alumni Affairs.

Based on the QEP Committee’s judgment the top five area of student achievement that would lend themselves well to making a successful QEP based on those criteria mentioned in the beginning were then voted on by the faculty. There was a 40% return rate and the winning topic was Critical Thinking. Counting all input, that’s more than 2100 folks with overlap.
The Wabash Study is existing University data that underscores our opportunity here.

Thanks to Scott Simkins and Karen Hornsby and their undergraduate researchers, the Wabash Researchers, this data was available to the QEP Committee.

The Wabash Study uses the Collegiate Learning Assessment, mainly a test of critical thinking. Among those universities participating, A&T was next to last, but it was only slightly below where we were expected to be based on SAT scores. Our students also grew in critical thinking as much as students at other schools, but they did not catch up to the performance of students at other schools. The Wabash study also showed that our students want to succeed; more so than students at other schools.

What a terrific QEP, Critical Thinking, to design to help our students compete with those students from those other schools when they graduate and face a 21st Century global society.

The Importance-Performance survey pushed the “fleshing out” of the details of the QEP into this past summer. George Stone and I conducted the literature review and put down the basics of a plan for the University community to react to, provide feedback on, and help to improve.

SACS requires meaningful University community input into the writing or development of the actual plan. We had three input sessions this summer and while attendance was low because of the summer, the input was great. I gathered input and rewrote, gathered input and rewrote, and gathered input and rewrote.

By the end of August, George and the QEP Committee and I will have the QEP, so far, spiffed up so that you can all get a good reading of it on the A&T SACS website. Then you and the students and interested alumni can attend any and all of the three additional input sessions scheduled for Stalling Ballroom and listed on your Institute handout. Your group can also call us over for your own special input session.

So far the Chancellor has endorsed it, the basic QEP ideas. The Chancellor’s cabinet, the Deans’ Council, and the Chairs’ retreat have all endorsed it. Because of the timing of the final vote on the topic, the Faculty Senate and the Staff Senate have not yet had a chance to review. Syenne Jasmin, our SGA President, is also going to help and get us an audience with student government groups.
We have to get the word out to the students and others not here today, that A&T’s QEP is Critical Thinking. When SACS visits campus in the spring, the visiting team will expect everyone to know what our QEP is and why it’s important. Help us by teaching a short lesson on it, including it in your syllabi, displaying posters, and attending input sessions.

George Stone conducted student marketing focus groups, and the QEP Marketing Committee, also a very representative group, took their ideas and they evolved into the logo you see on the screen.

University Relations is currently tying the Gibbs quote into the new University advertising campaign, so we put the quote on the logo.

What an awesome quote made during an awesome time in our great university’s heritage.

What an awesome quote to carry forward to the future to underscore the importance of Critical Thinking and the success of our students.

Discussion