

WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Engaging the First Year Student



"Engaged pedagogy is really the only type of teaching that truly generates excitement in the classroom that enables students and professors to feel the joy of learning." bell hooks

**SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
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REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION

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Executive Summary

Commentators, critics, and researchers have argued that universities are training workers rather than creating well-rounded, thoughtful citizens. Universities are not effectively using first year experiences to academically and socially engage the student body. Conversely, students' initial university experiences just create one-dimensional graduates ill equipped to function effectively in their advanced studies, professional careers, and community lives. West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) will dedicate itself to enriching the complete student through a cohesive, thoughtful, and challenging plan to engage the first year student.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) theme, *Engaging the First Year Student* serves as a context through which students will thrive academically, professionally, and culturally. The WTAMU mission challenges us “to educate students to be informed, responsible, creative and articulate decision makers who will exercise good citizenship, appreciate diversity and be professionally competitive.” The QEP provides the impetus through which our faculty, staff, administration and students will meet the challenges inherent in fulfilling this mission. *Engaging the First Year Student* QEP guides our efforts to develop a program of initiatives for first year students that will:

Enhance active and collaborative learning

- Facilitate faculty development, improving classroom instruction in core courses.
- Infuse service-learning and project based learning into the core curriculum.

Enrich educational experiences

- Create unique field experiences to develop first year student civic responsibility.
- Augment cultural awareness on a global level for civic responsibility.

Develop college success skills

- Build successful learning skills.
- Improve problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Cultivate supportive campus relationships

- Connect first year students to peers in the campus community.
- Link faculty to peers in the campus community.
- Foster relationships between first year students and faculty.

These QEP goals are vital to the growth and development of West Texas A&M University.

“All of us in the academy . . . are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions – and society – so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom.”

(bell hooks, 1994)



ENGAGING THE FIRST YEAR STUDENT
Logic Model: A QEP Guide for West Texas A&M University
Adapted from Mercer University

PLAN	OUTCOMES	EVALUATION
<p>Vision QEP exhibits the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model of Excellence ▪ Students, faculty, and staff partnerships ▪ Application of theory to practice ▪ Integrated view of knowledge ▪ Interdisciplinary courses and projects ▪ Classrooms extended beyond the “walls” ▪ Students, faculty & staff involved in community 	<p>QEP Performance Measures</p> <p><i>Effect on Student Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased collaborate & active learning ▪ Increase college success skills ▪ Increased field experiences ▪ Increased community involvement develops civic responsibility ▪ Increase climate of engagement 	<p>Data Sources & Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus groups ▪ CIRP (<i>Cooperative Institutional Research Prog.</i>) ▪ HERI (<i>Higher Education Research Institute</i>) ▪ NSSE (<i>National Survey on Student Engagement</i>) ▪ CIEQ (<i>Course/Instructor Evaluation Question</i>) ▪ CEA (<i>Course Embedded Assessment</i>) ▪ Institutional Research data ▪ YFCY (<i>Your First College Year</i>)
<p>Definition Engagement is a process of connecting first year students more fully, personally and holistically, to their education, to their preparation for careers and to their contributing lives as citizens.</p>	<p><i>Institutional Effort</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of faculty using Teaching Excellence resources ▪ Number of faculty incorporating common reader in courses ▪ Number of student essays submitted ▪ Number of faculty applying for Core Fellows ▪ Number of tenure-track/tenured faculty teaching core courses ▪ Number of student volunteers ▪ Number of volunteer opportunities ▪ Number of service-learning classes ▪ Number of smart classrooms added each year ▪ Number of faculty with smart classroom training ▪ Number of students in leadership program ▪ Number of faculty in mentoring program ▪ Number of students in learning communities ▪ Number of IDS sections needed each semester 	<p>Evaluation focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are QEP activities having a significant impact on student learning? ▪ What lessons has the institution learned through implementing QEP initiatives? ▪ How should the institution modify QEP initiatives to get better results?
<p>Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance active & collaborative learning ▪ Enrich educational experiences ▪ Develop college success skills ▪ Cultivate supportive relationships 		<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students ▪ Parents ▪ Office of Quality Enhancement ▪ QEP Team ▪ Deans and Department Heads ▪ Faculty ▪ President, Provost, Vice-Presidents ▪ Staff
<p>Five Year Plan 2006 - 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Curriculum Reform ▪ Core Curriculum Fellows (<i>Pilot '05</i>) ▪ Readership WT(<i>Pilot '05</i>) ▪ Service-Learning Project “Citizen U.” ▪ Smart Classrooms across Curriculum ▪ Faculty Mentoring Program ▪ WT TV Campus Channel ▪ Student Learning Communities ▪ Engaging Orientation Programs ▪ Thematic Freshman Year Experience Course 		<p>Mechanisms for Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biannual Performance Reports from Office of Quality Enhancement ▪ Annual Evaluation Reports from Office of Planning and Analysis ▪ Annual Planning Retreat for QEP Team ▪ Semester CIEQ Course Embedded Assessment Reports

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A FOCUSED TOPIC

A team of students, faculty, administration, alumni, and community were charged with developing and designing a plan to enhance the quality of learning for West Texas A&M University students starting in August 2003. Although this charge originated from SACS requirements, the WTAMU Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) team was excited about the opportunity to improve the educational experiences provided our students. We viewed the QEP charge as an important time in our university history. In order to develop a QEP that would enhance student learning outcomes, we were compelled to investigate the experiences of students within our institution. In doing so, we used three guiding questions for new program development to guide us through this accreditation journey (Skipper & National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience, 2005). The answer to these questions served as a beacon for our team in defining the focus of our QEP.

- *Who are our students?*

West Texas A&M University (WTAMU), established in 1910 and a member of the Texas A&M University System, is the northernmost senior institution of higher education in the State of Texas. Located in the Texas Panhandle, 12 miles south of Amarillo (pop. 173,627) in the rural community of Canyon (pop. 12,875), the university serves Texas as well as the five-state region, including residents of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. WTAMU began as a Normal School in 1910, and has gone through six name changes during its history. However, West Texas has remained a constant in all the names of the university.

WTAMU has experienced steady enrollment growth over the past decade with our largest enrollments in history for Fall 2004. The figures represent a healthy, thriving university.

<i>Fall Enrollment 2004</i>	<i>Spring Enrollment 2005</i>	<i>Fall Enrollment 2005</i>
7,299	6,901	7,294

Of the 5,668 undergraduate students enrolled in Fall 2005, 1,221 were freshmen. Of these freshman, **790 were beginning their first collegiate experience**. The student body at WTAMU is comprised of 76.3% white, 3.5% black, 14.3% Hispanic, 1.4% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 3.4% International. Admission to the university is determined through selective criteria as evident by the fact that the university only accepts 70% of its total applicants. **The university has more than 50% first-generation college students.**

When evaluating the demographic data on our students, an important finding emerged. **WTAMU lost 421 freshmen** in 2004. The trend continued into 2005, when 37% of first year students did not return. Obviously, first year students warranted serious attention.

To better understand the students entering our university, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program Survey (CIRP) was administered. The CIRP is designed to provide universities a method of collecting comparative data on their entering student characteristics such as economic backgrounds, expectations of college, religious and political perspectives.

Family Income Levels

According to CIRP results, 72.9% of our students come from homes whose combined parental income is \$74k or lower. Of these students, over 50% of those students coming from homes with combined income below \$39k. Our students come from middle to lower socioeconomic backgrounds. **Only 29.5% of their parents have a college degree.** As a result, the majority, 58.9%, have to work 10 hours or more a week, and 54% of our first year students surveyed indicated they would have to get a job to help pay for their education. Yet, only 18% had major concerns about the ability to pay for college. These same students listed being very well off financially (80%) as important.

Religious and Political Perspectives

CIRP data indicates our first year students and their families are quite religious, with the majority of them claiming Baptist and Roman Catholic preferences. Only 3% of our students claim to have no religious affiliation, compared to the 17% national average. **In the past year, 92.7% of our first year students attended religious services.** This religious identity has not carried over to community/volunteer involvement as over 41% indicate zero volunteer hours a week, and another 25% spend less than one hour a week. Only 10% of our first year students dedicate three or more hours a week to helping others. According to CIRP, these are conservative people. Only 10% of our students identified themselves as liberal. These students indicated they expect WTAMU to help them integrate spirituality into their life and education.

Expectation of WTAMU

Our first year students were pointed in their reasons for choosing WTAMU. Only **28.9% chose WTAMU because it had a good academic reputation**, compared to 58% nationally. They did not select WTAMU to gain acceptance in top graduate/professional schools, 6.4% compared to the 29.6% national average. Nor did they select our university because its graduates get good jobs, 22% compared to the national 50% average. Generally, our first year students enrolled at WTAMU because it was affordable (59.2%), small (42%), they were offered financial assistance (34%), and it was close enough to home (29%). **Only 35% of our first year students expected to be satisfied with WTAMU** compared to the 52% national expectation. Almost 13% of our first year students began their collegiate career at WTAMU with the expectation that they would transfer to another institution. They did not have high expectations for their academic success as only 37% expected to make at least a “B” average; whereas, over 60% of their peers nationally held such expectations. A significant number of our first year students expected to change their major, 38% compared to 14% national average. **They did not expect to develop relationships with professors (9.6%)** compared to the national anticipation (31.5%). Only 29% of our first year students were prepared to be involved with student organizations.

CIRP data was important because it helped the QEP Team further understand our students’ financial backgrounds, religious expectations, and perceptions of WTAMU. CIRP found that our first year students do not have confidence in their academic abilities, do not have high expectations of WTAMU as a place that will challenge them, embrace them, and help them become more successful academically or professionally. The survey data served as insightful motivation to develop a QEP that would change student expectations of this university. The QEP Team sought to understand what these first year students were experiencing as brief members of our university family. Thus, we addressed the next question.

▪ ***What is the lived experience of a 1st year student on our campus?***

Evaluating CIRP data helped clarify our focus on the first year student population. WTAMU needed to learn more about our first year students and wanted to recognize their experiences on campus. We developed a research plan to more fully understand the educational environment. Our two-pronged approach used both quantitative and qualitative data.

National Survey of Student Engagement

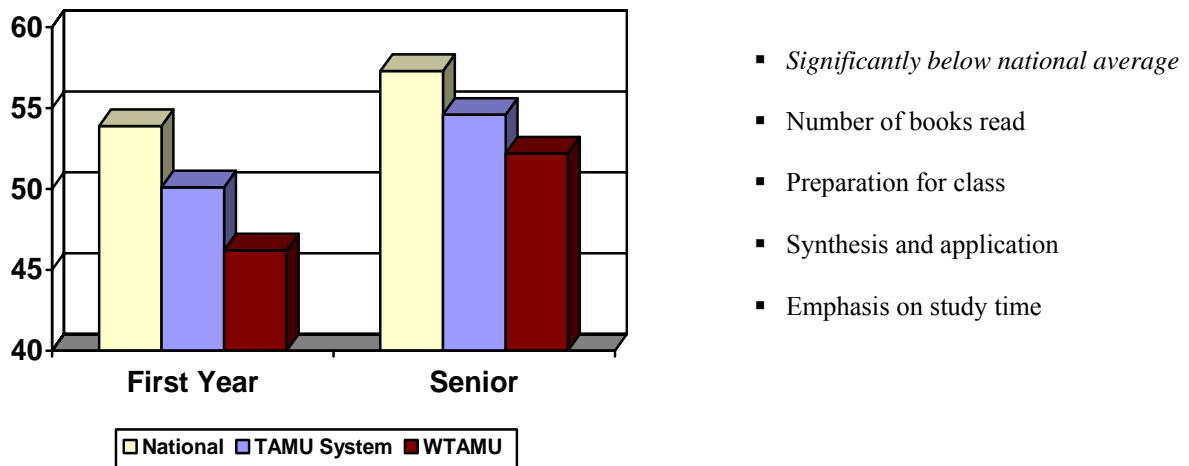
The 2003 results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) helped clarify the central issues concerning our first year student learning experience. NSSE assesses student learning through levels of student participation with, value for, and learning in effective educational practices. The NSSE benchmarks student educational experiences through five areas of practice:

- 1) Level of academic challenge
- 2) Active and collaborative learning
- 3) Student-faculty interactions
- 4) Enriching educational experiences
- 5) Supportive campus environment.

In evaluating our NSSE scores, we gained important insights about student learning in our classrooms and on our campus. In analyzing each area of practice, we have a richer understanding of our students' educational outcomes.

Academic Challenge

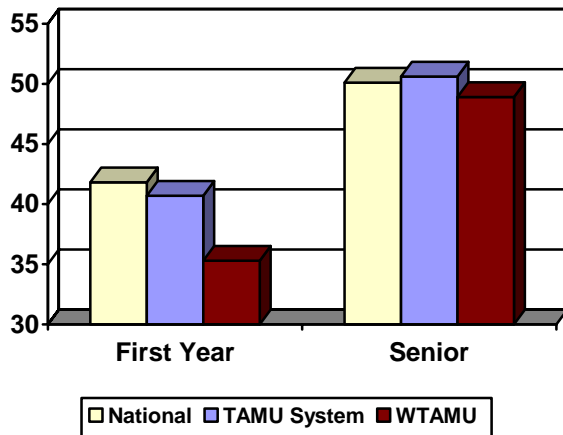
In the area of academic challenge, WTAMU was significantly below the national and system averages for first year students.



Specifically, NSSE indicated our students were not reading books or newspapers. Courses apparently offered discussion on theories and concepts, but students were not able or asked to synthesize or apply this learned information. The NSSE benchmark scores were particularly problematic in the areas of academic challenge in the first year of coursework. We needed to set higher expectations for student performance and promote reading and greater abilities to apply and synthesize ideas, information, or experiences into a more complex knowledge of the world.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Because students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education, the NSSE data in the area of active and collaborative learning was particularly disconcerting for us.

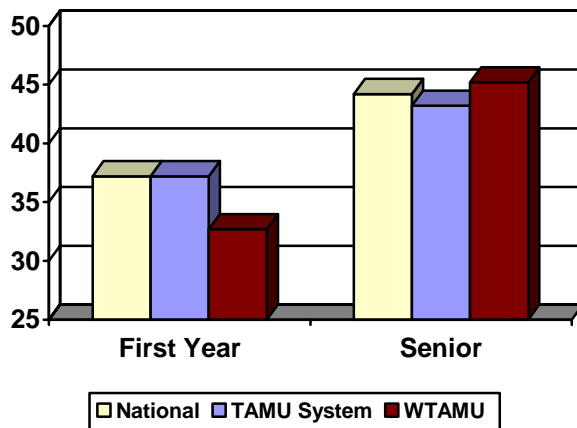


- *Below national average*
- Contribute to class discussion
- Made class presentation
- Class community-based projects
- Tutored or taught other students

NSSE indicates that once our students enter courses in their major, they experience more active learning. However, our first year students are less likely to find the same learning environments in general education core classes usually taken the first two years of enrollment. These students reported fewer class discussions, fewer presentations, and fewer class projects with other students than national averages. Because NSSE reported these students were not asked to engage in community-based learning, they were not as academically involved during the first year.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for life-long learning (NSSE Benchmark Report, 2003).

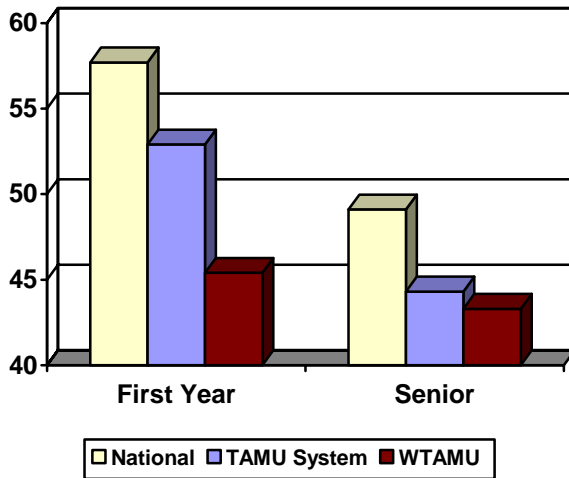


- *First year students do not get the same access to faculty*
- Collaborate with faculty
- Discuss career plans
- Prompt feedback from faculty
- Discuss reading & class with faculty outside of class time

Once our students enter courses for their major, our faculty excels at developing relationships. However, the first year student does not receive those same opportunities. Our first year students are not as likely to discuss grades or assignments with their instructors, evaluate career plans, dialogue about readings, or engage in community-based or problem-based projects with faculty members. Thus, they are not benefiting enough from student-faculty interaction during the first year.

Enriching Educational Experiences

Complementary learning opportunities in and out of class augment academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable lessons about themselves and others. Internships and community service opportunities facilitate student abilities to integrate and to apply knowledge (NSSE Benchmark Report, 2003). Again, our students' lived experience does not reflect the level of enrichment desired by this institution.

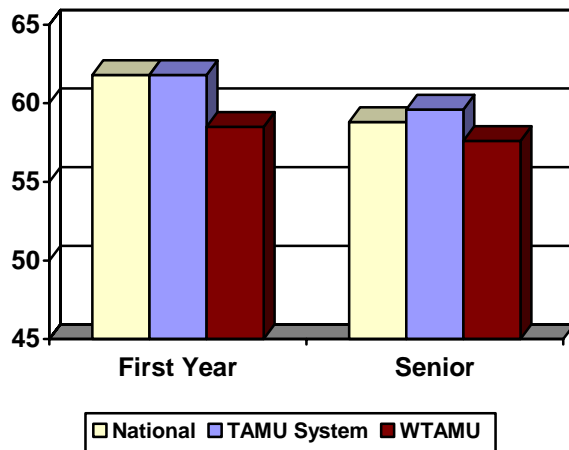


- *Significantly below national average*
- Participate in co-curricular activities
- Field experiences, internships
- Community service
- Racially and religiously diverse relationships

NSSE shows first year students do not have experiences with community service or volunteer work, serious conversations with peers about religious and/or political beliefs, or field experiences. Survey responses indicated that the campus environment does not encourage contact with students from different economic, social, racial or ethnic backgrounds. If we want our first year students to experience greater academic and personal success while enrolled, the university must facilitate a more enriching educational environment that must also carry over into senior level courses.

Support Campus Environment

Students' performance and satisfaction is higher at colleges committed to cultivating positive working and social relationships throughout the campus (NSSE Benchmark Report, 2003). Our students need stronger, more effective relationships with faculty, staff and peers.



- *Below national averages*
- Campus helps with non academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Support to ensure social success
- Quality of relationships with students, faculty, staff, administration

For the QEP to effectively improve learning outcomes for students, we realized these issues of engagement must be addressed. The NSSE data demonstrated a need to focus on first year students' academic engagement. However, NSSE and CIRP numbers alone did not provide the QEP team with a holistic picture of our students' experiences on campus.

Student Engagement Audit Focus Group Results

To further develop our understanding of these engagement issues further, the QEP team utilized focus groups as a means of linking student examples and experiences to the quantitative data previously address. We conducted eight focus groups with one student and one faculty grouping per academic college. At the conclusion of the data collection a total of 54 people participated: 32 students and 22 faculty. These focus group interviews ranged from 52-98 minutes in length. The objective of these focus group interviews was to discover what faculty and students found educationally engaging as a way to develop a more detailed understanding of the NSSE results. Students and faculty were asked to identify classroom experiences that were both engaging and disengaging.

Engaging Academic Experiences for Students

Students were most engaged in classes where they had an invested relationship with the professor, believed the professor challenged them while encouraging them, participated in purposeful interaction and discussion, learned information that was applicable to their lived experiences, and believed the professor was enthusiastic about subject matter and about teaching.

The theme was summarized with the following issues/examples/comments:

- *“Fun doesn’t mean easy, fun means learning”*
- *“Dialogue forces me to make application of material in my life”*
- Personal applicability that extends beyond job training
- Professors get you involved
- Cross-class conversation
- Hands-on material and activities
- No freshman experience
- Interesting classes → Must seem relevant and applicable to our lives and world
- Professor’s positive attitude
- Comes to a “worldly” level
- Demonstrations of material, when students get to “use” the information, not just read it
- Use current information → love the “cutting edge”
- Labs → Even in math
- *“When a professor says the class is going to be hard and a lot of work but tells us he will help us through it and that we will learn and have fun, I get excited about the course.”*
- Doing research that demonstrates the practical, applicable nature of theory
- Clips from movies and TV shows to visually demonstrate class concepts
- Professor engages you in conversation in and out of class
- *“We’d rather get a ‘C’ and learn than get an ‘A’ and not learn”*
- Interest in topic

- Hearing others
- Let students give examples
- Let students help develop course
- “When I have a choice of the class I get to take”
- Problem-based learning
- Activities
- Able to voice opinions
- Topic is difficult
- Works with students

Engaging Academic Experiences for Faculty

Faculty were most engaged in classes where students were motivated and prepared, they were teaching their areas of specialization, the topics were provocative, the classes were small, and they were able to develop more personal relationships with students.

The theme was summarized with the following issues/examples/comments:

- Students come prepared for discussion
- Students learn to own their education, they take responsibility for their learning
- Teaching in area of expertise and passion
- Ability to do what is “cutting-edge”
- Ability to do “multidisciplinary” work
- An institutional culture that encourages creativity
- Dialogue
- Active, awake students
- Teaching a subject that students like
- Ability to have a class where students can feel safe being wrong
- Real-world application
- Group problem solving, problem based learning
- Social motivation

Assignments Students and Faculty Found Engaging:

- Hands-on, community based, problem solving assignments
- Real world application
- Student clear on objectives and reasons for them
- Primary texts
- Books that are worth the money
- “The other ones (books) you read besides the text”
- Relevant group work
- Student choice of topics
- One that the student can understand as a tool for their lives and for their jobs
- Don’t require regurgitation, but actual thought, application, and analysis
- “Non-textbooks” that are updated, practical, applicable, real, interesting

Disengaging Academic Experiences for Students

Focus group data found that students were most disengaged in general education/core classes, where they had no relationships with professors, the courses and material were not applicable, professors were unsupportive or uncaring, and courses were strictly lecture with no interaction.

The theme was summarized with the following issues/examples/comments:

- “When you just learn what the professor wants and you just VOMIT it back up to him.”
- Mere facts that were not applicable or linked to larger concepts or themes
- Only to fulfill a requirement, with no attempt to demonstrate need for it
- “Core classes that aren’t relevant and the professors don’t care and neither do I”
- Atmosphere where people do not care
- Does not “tie together”
- Learning what one “already knows” because it is common sense with no analysis
- Professors who do not want to be in the core
- Classes where I can skip and miss nothing
- Professors who see teaching as a chore
- Professors who make you “feel stupid” if you don’t agree
- “If they just talk, I skip”
- “Black and white” facts
- “I did this in high school”
- “Draw away from major”
- Lecture from book or just reads the book
- Too much structure
- Teacher is bored
- Teacher who stares at podium

Disengaging Academic Experiences for Faculty

Focus group results also found that faculty were most disengaged in general education/core courses, where class sizes were overwhelming, when they were teaching courses and material not in their specialization or area of interest, where students just wanted job training, and when students were not prepared or interested in class.

The theme was summarized with the following issues/examples/comments:

- Lack of preparation
- Students who want “job” certification
- Classes that are far removed from the faculty member
- “Antiquated” core structure and classes
- Not teaching in area of expertise and passion
- Students motivated by grades
- “Getting bashed” on CIEQ (Course Instructor Evaluation Questionnaire)
- Student fear of grades/being wrong
- Students who give up
- Don’t like to grade group work
- Strict lecture

Assignments Students and Faculty Found Disengaging:

- Busywork
- Too simple assignments/lectures
- Assignments without credibility
- Do not know what professors or students wants
- Textbooks that are out of date, not practical or applicable, and boring
- Not helpful to major or me
- Topics are not interesting or assignments about the topics aren't interesting
- No direction

As a result of these general ideas about what students and faculty found both engaging and disengaging academically, a thematic analysis of their perspectives became important. These themes shed greater light on the NSSE results because we were able to find specific examples to explain the NSSE data reports. The following themes emerged from a transcript analysis of the focus groups.

Active Learning

A dominant theme was that the students wanted to be active learners if and only if the professor took the responsibility for creating an environment for active learning. Students demanded that the professor be enthusiastic, not appear bored, presents either “cutting edge” material or in a “cutting edge” manner, not rely on textbook for lecture, was not intimidating, and structured the class toward success for students. If the professor did all these AND got to know the students on a personal level, the students were motivated to actively learn. Students overwhelmingly suggested that this happens in classes for their major, but not core. Students enjoyed group work that was team oriented and community based in its problem solving.

Trust

Students would trust the professor of a hard class, and would work harder, if a “reward” was visible at the end. The question was what this reward constitutes. Students must have a clear direction toward an ‘A’ or ‘B’. If this was the case – again, the onus was upon the professor to provide justification for both the path and the outcome – then students overwhelmingly suggested they were willing to risk a difficult class. Students did not trust intimidating professors, or ones who were too structured, bored, or who could not control a classroom. Students liked the professor to be part of a team. They seemed especially fond of teachers who appeared academically “human” to them and who were unafraid to admit failings.

Personal Relevance

Students clearly demanded that the material be relevant and that relevance be explained by the professor. Students wanted relevance included in course materials, assignments, teaching style, and outcome assessments. Without this knowledge, students conceded that the course became irrelevant and a mere “hoop to jump through.” They also suggested that they needed to see the importance of course content to the professor. The core was seen as the site where professors did not take or feel a personal relevance to their own careers. While students did not necessarily suggest that the course must be relevant to their major, they did suggest that it helps to motivate them if it is.

General Education Requirements – The Core

Students found the core, or “basics,” problematic. They felt professors did not want to teach them, content was covered in high school, students had too limited a choice, the material was boring to everyone in the class, the university culture presented them as “something to get through,” the relevance was not clear, and they were in a “foreign” environment. This “foreignness” is something that became apparent in the next theme.

Campus Division

Students were acutely aware of divisions and departments and understood them as divisive and problematic. Students liked teamwork in the classroom, but did not see it at the university level. Students freely made use of an “us and them” rhetoric in reference to their major versus other areas of the university. This, of course, contributed to attitudes regarding the core. Students loved the JBK Student Center renovation because they saw it as being for “all the students,” but loathed the new Fine Arts building. They identified certain positives in a campus that was small enough to “meet friends” and professors on campus. Students demand a public ownership of the university.

Assignments

Professors saw “engagement” as a *challenge* to “learning.” Students read texts that they did not perceive to be “default” materials. This seemed especially true in the core. Students appeared to be fine with a textbook if it was in their major area. What distinguished engaging from disengaging assignments was insightful. First, the amount of thinking that was demanded determined the level of engagement. The more freedom students had to think and opine through active learning, the more successful the student rated the experience. Second, students’ relationships to the professor were a motivation for success. Third, the more problem-based assignments were, the more engaged students found the course. Fourth, the relevance of the assignment must be clearly presented by the professor. Fifth, the student must perceive BOTH the possibility of absolute success and personal failure. Sixth, the professor must be viewed as a guide, not a grader.

▪ ***Where are our students experiencing failure and frustration?***

By understanding our students and detailing the expectations they hold about and for WTAMU, the QEP Team sought to fully understand what they experienced upon arrival on campus. The results from the CIRP, NSSE, and internal focus groups were insightful in helping us identify specific areas of concern.

Our students do not connect to faculty or each other.

The NSSE indicates first year students do not develop academic, career, or personal mentorships with faculty in their first year. The CIRP data highlights this even further. They are not interacting with faculty in or out of class. Simultaneously, these same students do not feel connected to peers. When in classes, they are not experiencing collaborative learning or peer tutoring. Symptomatically, they do not discuss academic or social topics that could become the basis for relationships. Our students do not discuss academics, religion, or politics with peers or faculty. They are not connecting to each other, course work, or faculty.

Our students and faculty do not value the Core Curriculum.

Obviously, the previous data analysis indicates our students are not challenged and/or engaged in core curriculum classes. Our students are not reading for class or pleasure. They do not participate in discussions about course concepts; thus, they are not able to apply and synthesize information in useful ways. Our general education core curriculum offers limited choices that do not seem to appeal to student interest or need. These same required classes tend to rely on rote memorization skills and do not offer relevance to a larger personal or social application. The QEP team feels the course context possesses relevance, but we must help student access it.

Our students are not prepared for the collegiate experience.

The NSSE and CIRP data clearly challenges WTAMU to help our first year students understand the expectations for and the new experiences within the collegiate environment. Our students do not engage in community or problem based learning in the first year curriculum. Thus, they are not adequately prepared to synthesize and apply knowledge. The data demonstrates that we are not helping them make such links. Therefore, when they enter a classroom in their first year, they tend to violate professor expectations both academically and socially.

Our faculty do not utilize engaging teaching strategies.

The focus group thematic analysis was particularly clear in identifying faculty resistance to using active learning and engaging assignments and activities in the core classes. Discussions, presentations, and projects help students synthesize and apply course concepts. However, the data analysis of NSSE, CIRP, and focus groups strongly assert that our faculty could be more proactive and assertive in making teaching methods more engaging for first year students.

▪ ***Focused Topic for QEP: Engaging the First Year Student***
Defining Student Engagement

As noted by engagement specialist Philip Schlechty (2000), engagement is a process of connecting students more fully, personally and holistically, to their education, to their preparation for careers and to their contributing lives upon graduation. Engagement may take place in or out of class, with individuals or groups of students, and may include any number of pedagogies, strategies, or student learning experiences. Our first year students are struggling academically. In order to enhance their education and focus their learning outcomes, WTAMU must develop a plan to “*engage the first year student.*”

According to Kun (2005), student engagement represents two essential elements: student focus and institutional focus. First, the student element is defined by the amount of time and effort they dedicate to studying and to other educationally purposeful actions. Second, the institutional element is defined by how universities dedicate resources, focus curriculum, and develop learning opportunities that lead to student success. The likelihood of student learning is linked directly to student engagement (Schlechty, 2001). Students are engaged when they are active, enthusiastic, and committed to their educational success. “It requires the student to be committed to the task and find some inherent value in what he or she is being asked to do. The engaged student not only does the task assigned but also does the task with enthusiasm and diligence. Moreover, the student performs the task because he or she perceives the task to be associated with a near-term end that he or she values.” (Schlechty, 2001).

The QEP Team needed to develop an understanding of the student engagement concept in practice. The following is a system, adopted from Western Kentucky and East Tennessee State University student engagement programs, that illustrates how engagement activities affect student learning outcomes.

Engagement within the classroom

- Solicit questions in class
- Solicit participation in class discussions
- Require a presentation
- Include diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions
- Work with other students on projects during class
- Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when participating in class discussions
- Provide prompt feedback on students' academic performance (written or oral)
- Provide academic challenge (analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, applying)
- Variety of teaching techniques including technology, games, debates, skits, films, experiments, energy shifts, stories, higher order thinking activities
- Variety of student assessments as clear feedback for the learning process

Engagement within a course and outside the classroom

- Require written papers/assignments necessitating multiple drafts
- Assign papers/projects that integrate ideas or information from various sources
- Include diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in written assignments
- Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Synthesize ideas or concepts from other courses when completing assignments
- Tutor or teach other students in the course (paid or voluntary)
- Participate in a community-based project as part of a regular course
- Use an electronic medium (list-serv, chat group, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete and assignment
- Instructor discusses grades or assignments with students
- Instructor discusses ideas from readings or class with students
- Students discuss ideas from readings or class with other students

Engagement with Professional Preparation

- Faculty member discuss ideas/issues from the discipline with students
- Student work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course
- Students participate in a culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, thesis, project, capstone experience, etc.)
- Students participate in study abroad
- Students participate in an independent study in the discipline
- Students tutor or teach other students in the student's discipline (paid or voluntary)
- Faculty members talk about career plans with students

Engagement as campus culture

- Faculty work with students on activities other than coursework (e.g. committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)
- Students participate in community service or volunteer work
- Students participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- Students participate in an independent study
- Faculty members available, helpful, and sympathetic
- Administrative personnel and offices helpful, considerate, and flexible

Engagement through experiential learning activities

- Practicum
- Internship
- Field experience
- Co-op experience
- Clinical assignment
- Service-Learning

Engagement through civic activities

- Involved in the community and society
- Participate actively in groups and projects aimed at social or political change either on campus or in the wider community
- Seek the opportunity to have their voices heard in public
- Develop capacities for leadership
- Work as volunteers, lending time and skills to helping people in need or in helping try to solve community problems

“Not every teacher can be engaging, but every teacher can create engaging work for students.” (Schlechty, 2001)



2

QEP VISION & GOALS

The QEP team used this opportunity to redefine WTAMU as an educational institution by developing a vision based on Boyer's *New American Colleges*. Our vision of the QEP exhibits the following characteristics:

- Model of Excellence
- Student, faculty, and staff partnerships
- Application of theory to practice
- Integrated view of knowledge
- Interdisciplinary courses and projects
- Classrooms extended beyond the "walls"
- Students, faculty and staff involved in community

To fulfill this vision, the QEP team must engage the entire campus with a new perspective. For success, it is essential that viewpoints of the administrators, faculty, staff, and students shift:

SHIFT FROM:

Focus on staff & faculty

→

Stand alone programs

→

Individualistic

→

Discipline based

→

Community & University disconnected

→

SHIFT TO:

Focus on learning

Building unified programs

Collaborative

Interdisciplinary

Engagement

With the guiding principles and vision in mind, four goals were established to meet dramatically increased student capacity for learning:

Goal I. Enhance active and collaborative learning

Objective: Facilitate faculty development & improving classroom instruction in core courses.

Objective: Infuse service-learning and project based learning into the core curriculum.

Goal II. Enrich educational experiences

Objective: Create unique field experiences to develop first year student civic responsibility.

Objective: Augment cultural awareness on a global level for civic responsibility.

Goal III: Develop college success skills

Objective: Build successful learning skills.

Objective: Link problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Goal IV. Cultivate supportive campus relationships

Objective: Connect first year students to peers in the campus community.

Objective: Link faculty to peers in the campus community.

Objective: Foster relationships between first year students and faculty.

The QEP Team believes that the following initiatives will be instrumental in achieving these identified university-wide goals.

QEP GOAL – INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT

<i>Goal I.</i> Enhance active & collaborative learning	<i>Goal II.</i> Enrich educational experiences	<i>Goal III.</i> Develop college success skills	<i>Goal IV.</i> Cultivate supportive campus relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Curriculum Reform ▪ Core Curriculum Fellows ▪ Project “Citizen U.” ▪ Smart Classrooms ▪ Thematic Freshman Year Experience Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Curriculum Fellows ▪ Readership WT ▪ Project “Citizen U.” ▪ WT TV Campus Channel ▪ Learning Communities ▪ Thematic Freshman Year Experience Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Readership WT ▪ Smart Classrooms ▪ Learning Communities ▪ Engaging Orientation Programs ▪ Thematic Freshman Year Experience Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Curriculum Fellows ▪ Faculty Mentoring Program ▪ WT TV Campus Channel ▪ Learning Communities ▪ Engaging Orientation Programs ▪ Thematic Freshman Year Experience Course

PILOT INITIATIVE I

Readership WT: Common Reader Program

Benchmark of Best Practices

Although excellent common reader programs are available throughout higher education institutions internationally, this initiative will be based on the programs at Colgate University and Ball State University. Internationally most programs grew from research made available through the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience (<http://www.sc.edu/fye>) and more recently through the Policy Center on the First Year of College (<http://www.brevard.edu/fyc>). The FYE National Conference 2005, with a team of nine WTAMU Administration, faculty, staff, and students attending, proved a beneficial resource.

Purpose Statement

Much attention has been placed nationally on the increased number of first year students who lack strong academic skills. The NSSE data indicate our students are well below the national averages in academic preparation, academic challenge, and campus engagement. The Common Reader Program benefits all first year students. The Common Reader Program is one demonstrated strategy that has been successful nationally in addressing transition issues and improving student engagement. Nationally, Readership Programs vary from elective to required, and may be taught in many different ways from inclusion in orientation programs, general education class curriculum, discipline specific offerings, and learning communities. Incorporating the Reader Program has the ability to connect everyone on campus through the common experience of reading.

Pilot Overview

For academic year 2005-06, Readership WT piloted the inclusion of both a common reader text and the *New York Times*.

- The initial common reader text was *A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League* by Ron Suskind.

- The book was selected by a committee of students, faculty, staff and administrators.
- The book was distributed to all first year students as a gift from the university in the summer New Student Orientation programs.
- Two specific programs were initially piloted for targeted use of the text in the curriculum: The IDS freshman seminar courses and the Honors program. Both were evaluated through written assignments, reflective essays, and observations.
- The author, Ron Suskind, and subject of the book, Cedric Jennings were brought on campus as the Freshman Convocation keynote speakers. They also facilitated targeted conversations and programs with the IDS and Honors students.
- An essay contest is currently underway and will conclude in April 2006.
- The New York Times was made available to all students in every academic building.
- Faculty were encouraged to use the newspaper in classes and were given training on such inclusion.
- The Readership WT committee is evaluating the program and potential books for the coming academic year.

Identifying the Objectives

In order to improve student engagement, retention and the overall quality of the first year experience, WTAMU will implement a Common Readership Pilot Program with a Common Reader text and the NY Times.

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Engaging students by creating opportunities for becoming life long learners (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ Focus groups ▪ NSSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students get engaged in the education process early. ▪ Increased expectation for academic challenge ▪ Increased academic preparation ▪ Students connect with each other and the university ▪ Improvement of critical thinking skills
<i>Develop a constituency of experience with & support for common reader program (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot results from IDS and Honors seminars in Fall 2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are engaged in class discussions of text ▪ Students build their understanding of issues addressed in text ▪ Participants become ambassadors for program
<i>Make positive connections with & between incoming WTAMU students (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ Reflective Essays ▪ Buff Branding orientation assessment report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student learning begins with dissemination in New Student Orientations Programs ▪ Student learning infused into book discussion and analysis through Buff Branding mission and curriculum ▪ Student learning is enhanced as Directors and Staff from orientation programs develop and implement common themes ▪ Students engaged to learn, participate and benefit from this exciting and innovative, educational endeavor
<i>Develop connections between current and incoming students (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment report of New Student Conference ▪ Assessment report from NSC student leaders ▪ Number of entries via bulletin boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students learn through peer relationships in New Student Orientations and Buff Branding via e-mail ▪ Students learn with Reading Mentors in general discussion of text via bulletin boards

Barriers to Success

- Potential cost of books for first year students, faculty, staff.
- Potential cost of New York Times subscription.
- Lack of understanding of the intent and value of Readership WT.
- Resistance of faculty to support the program in the curriculum.
- Focusing on the purpose of the program, and not whether one likes the book.
- Student resistance to reading.

PILOT INITIATIVE 2

Core Curriculum Fellows Program: Developing the core by developing the core faculty

Benchmark for Best Practices

Fellowships are not a new tool to encourage and reward desired behaviors. Although we did not find fellowships targeting core curriculum instructors, elements of this initiative were based on faculty learning communities at Miami University (considered the model for other programs), Missouri Western State University, and Simon Fraser University.

Purpose Statement

WTAMU strongly feels that teaching excellence can be attained through a process of sharing and collaboration among the faculty across disciplines. Faculty learning communities may examine issues related to student engagement. These faculty peer groups may encourage faculty engagement in the University and broader communities by asking them to lead by example.

Pilot Overview

The Core Curriculum Fellowship Program was piloted in the 2005-06 academic year with 15 instructors in an active, collaborative, yearlong program. Together, these Core Fellows worked to evaluate, redesign, and enhance one of their core curriculum courses through a series of monthly seminars, activities, and assignments. The Core Fellowship Pilot helped faculty infuse engaging instructional strategies in the course design, assignments, lessons, and activities.

- The Core Fellowship Development Grant program engaged core faculty in an active, collaborative, yearlong program to enhance teaching and learning in the core curriculum.
- The initial faculty development training program commenced August 22-23, 2005. This session guided core fellows through the process of re-thinking their teaching strategies in the core curriculum and re-framing the syllabus, activities, and assignments for these targeted classes.
- Follow-up seminars and activities throughout Fall 2005 focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning, community building, student assessment, and program assessment.
- Core Fellows were charged with implementing their course designs and teaching strategies in Spring 2006.
- Core Fellows were also required to disseminate their information, experiences, and recommendations to peers through training sessions, web sites, publications, and targeted mentoring relationships.
- Each Core Fellow had to present an assessment plan for evaluating the effectiveness of their instructional changes. They will compile this report in Spring 2006.

- At the conclusion of the pilot program academic year, each Core Fellow will receive a \$500 stipend.

Future Core Fellows will be challenged to try out teaching and classroom innovations, assess student learning outcomes in new ways, prepare a course or project portfolio; engage in seminars and roundtable discussions; and present project results to the campus and at national conferences.

Identifying the Objectives

In order to develop greater levels of teaching excellence, the Core Curriculum Fellowship Program will examine new teaching techniques as well as help faculty reach their goals of teaching excellence. The objectives include:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
Strengthen faculty teaching in the core curriculum <i>(Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIEQ/CEA Teaching Portfolios Student learning outcomes Changed syllabi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning is enhanced through engaged teaching in the core classroom Higher levels of student engagement and learning in the classroom
Increase the rewards for and prestige of excellence in core curriculum teaching <i>(Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development grant applications University awards for core teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty will work to reach excellence in core curriculum teaching by improving student learning
Create an awareness of the complexity of teaching and learning in the core curriculum <i>(Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys focus groups CIEQ/CEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communities within and outside University will recognize that teaching and learning requires diligence.
Disseminate successful strategies to peers to help improve teaching, and create interest in the core fellowship program <i>(Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination reports applications for Core Fellows program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty will use the strategies provided to improve student learning Faculty will apply to the grant program

Barriers to Success

- Participant's time commitment.
- The isolated nature of faculty life — the group structure of the community experience is not for everyone.
- Past experience with and perceptions of such endeavors. WTAMU experimented with a similar faculty learning community with mixed success. Participants were very positive about the experience, but only seven faculty were included. The program was never supported financially or with dedicated personnel. Those participants did not receive a stipend to reward their efforts. The experiences were not evaluated or disseminated.
- Communities are not for everyone. Some faculty members may object to having to work with faculty from other disciplines thinking that they cannot learn about teaching and learning from faculty outside their discipline. College faculty are trained in graduate school that their life is best experienced in isolated learning.

INITIATIVE 3

University Core Curriculum Reform

Benchmark of Best Practices

While no single University can claim rights to the most fulfilling core curriculum program, helpful information was provided by Colgate University, Augustana College, and Winthrop University.

Purpose Statement

The WTAMU mission statement is “to educate students to be informed, responsible, creative, and articulate decision makers who will exercise good citizenship, appreciate diversity and be professionally competent.” To this end, a liberal arts education is at the foundation of all degrees issued by this institution. Our core seeks to nurture and develop well-rounded individuals who are equipped to think through the issues that will confront them for the rest of their lives. The core is also designed to create community and conversation across the disciplines. The structure of core classes allows individual faculty members to bring their own perspectives to the class. Students will then be exposed to a wide range of content and viewpoints, thereby broadening their otherwise limited perspective. Another purpose of the core is to create a shared learning experience for all students that fosters critical thinking and discussion in other classes as well as outside the classroom. Unfortunately, the core is not working as designed for some students. The perception of the core is that it is too large, inflexible, and poorly taught. Core curriculum must be studied and improved because:

- The core is the foundation for all student learning outcomes.
- The core develops well-rounded people.
- The core significantly impacts the freshman experience.
- The core impacts student retention.
- The core affects student networking and engagement at the university.

After reviewing the CIRP, NSSE data and focus group themes, the QEP Team believes the core must to be re-evaluated and reformed to become the “heart” of the college experience.

Identifying the Objectives

In order to promote the overall academic experience, we must consider some of the following:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Reduce core to 42 hours (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decrease time to degree and graduation efficiency ▪ Learning opportunities with increased opportunities of minors
<i>Increase options or selections within the core (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of core revisions with great number of choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More competitive and flexible core ▪ Decrease core class sizes ▪ Provides incentives for departments to put outstanding faculty in core classes
<i>Improve the instruction of core courses (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ CEA ▪ Core evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance learning outcomes with decrease core class size ▪ Improve learning opportunities with more tenured faculty in core classes ▪ Designate Teaching Excellence Award for core instructors
<i>Create value for the core (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus Groups ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ CEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasize and re-explain the importance of the core ▪ Block scheduling of core courses to enhance learning opportunities ▪ Outstanding faculty teach core classes

Barriers to Success

- Proposed changes to core curriculum requirements are tenuous for many reasons, but the primary reason is that the core is territorial. No action or lack of action can best be made under uncertainty or fear, but under logical reasoning. The University core is currently the largest in Texas, see (<http://statecore.its.txstate.edu/>) for a comparison of core curriculum in the State.
- People do not like change. Faculty who do not teach core level classes may find unique challenges and opportunities by stepping out of their topic specific classes to teach in the core.
- The lack of faculty or the shortage of faculty in some fields makes it difficult for some departments to put PhD's in core classes.
- The core is not valued by students or faculty. All too often, students feel that the core is a barrier to cross before taking classes they want.

INITIATIVE 4

Project "Citizen U.":

Infusing Service-Learning into the Curriculum

Benchmark of Best Practices

Elements of this initiative were based on service-learning learning programs at Colgate University; Portland State University; IUPUI; Murray State University, Clarion University, Rockhurst University, California Polytechnic State University, and University of Utah. Important texts used were: *Challenging and Supporting the First year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (2005) and *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (2005).

Purpose Statement

Service-Learning is a "method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully-organized service that: is conducted in and meets the needs of the community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled: and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience" (Plater, 2004, p. 5). Service-Learning is distinctly different from volunteerism or community service because it establishes a pedagogical connection and facilitates reflection on a course's learning outcomes as experienced through the service performed.

Service-Learning partnerships must parallel with the learning outcomes of the course. A recent evaluation study published by Astin and his colleagues at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA collected longitudinal data from a sample of more than 20,000 undergraduates attending national colleges and universities. About a third of these students had participated in Service-Learning during college. Through both quantitative measures and in-depth case studies, the researchers found a significant positive impact of Service-Learning courses on student academic achievement, as measured by such variables as GPA, writing skills, and critical thinking skills. More than 80% of the students felt that their service "made a difference" and that

they had learned from their service experience. The qualitative data suggested that Service-Learning is effective in part because it facilitates four kinds of learning outcomes:

- 1) increased sense of personal efficacy,
- 2) increased awareness of the world,
- 3) increased awareness of one’s personal values
- 4) increased engagement in the classroom

Dr. Astin called Service-Learning one of the most important pedagogical innovations of the past fifty years (*Virginia Commonwealth University, www.vcu.edu/quality*). The student learning outcomes will be more effectively taught and demonstrated through linkage to the community.

Identifying the Objectives

“Citizen U.” Service-Learning Initiatives will infuse new purpose and interest into learning course objectives through partnerships between course curriculum and community needs. For service-learning to enhance the WTAMU campus, measurable objectives have been developed.

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Enhance engagement for learning course objectives through service-learning partnerships between classes and the community (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of service-learning partnerships ▪ Curriculum revisions ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ S-L pre/post tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 30 courses will be designated as “Service-Learning” courses ▪ Course will create new assignments to improve student learning outcomes ▪ Develop partnerships with community ▪ Change course descriptions ▪ Improved teaching evaluations
<i>Provide students with the knowledge, ability, and desire for lifelong learning & involvement with community (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S-L pre/post tests ▪ Volunteer rates at partner organizations ▪ NSSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will be more civically engaged ▪ Students will volunteer at greater rates ▪ Students will connect course content to community needs for greater learning
<i>Develop student ability to inquire, think, analyze, and problem-solve (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student, faculty, partnership academic assessments ▪ Curriculum revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will produce more productive, purposeful, and useful work
<i>Develop student ability to write, read, speak, and listen (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student, faculty, partnership academic assessments ▪ Evaluation of student graduate per major 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will improve their academic and professional abilities
<i>Demonstrate student commitment to community through Leadership & Service Transcript (Objective 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student transcripts reflect at least 5 S-L courses and 100 hours of volunteer work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students graduate with service transcripts

Barriers to Success

Social Barriers

- Students do not want to be engaged with their community or their peers.
- The generation that is most connected via technology is least connected to and as a community.
- According to the *Civic and Political Health of the Nation Report (2002)*, 70% of students today distrust those around them, compared to the 36% of baby boomers that harbor distrust.

- The contributing cause of distrust is seen in the way citizens isolate themselves from their neighbors, communities, and shared problems.
- In a 1999 survey, 68% of 18-34 year old citizens felt their lack of connection to people and communities created their disconnection to government (CPS Survey, 2000).
- This disconnection is evident in the rapid decline in voter turnout. For citizens 18-24 years old, only 37% voted in the last presidential election (CPS Survey, 2000). Those who did vote were generally uninformed on the major issues in their communities.
- Students today do not regularly seek news and information about issues concerning our country, state, or even community. Only about 30% of students today regularly seek out news; thus, most students today have no knowledge of or therefore concern for the outside world (*Civic and Political Health of the Nation*, 2002).
- The age of technology parallels the loss of community, citizenship, and connectedness (*American Democracy Project*). With the decline in community engagement, we have an increase in isolation, cynicism, and ignorance.

University Barriers

- Professors may resist the need to incorporate service-learning into their curriculum.
- Due to lack of knowledge and systemic faculty development opportunities, faculty do not have time or desire to learn new teaching strategies in any coherent fashion.
- Students may not understand the value or necessity of community based learning to their academic pursuits.
- The relationship between WTAMU and the Panhandle community is not as strong as needed or desired.
- WTAMU does not have an infrastructure to solicit community partners and assist faculty.

INITIATIVE 5

Smart Classrooms across the Curriculum

Benchmark of Best Practices

The Benchmark of Best Practices is based on four faculty development centers and Smart Classroom models: University of Virginia, Spelman University, Vanderbilt University, and Clarion University. Important texts were: *Challenging and Supporting the First year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (2005) and *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (2005).

Purpose Statement

WTAMU's commitment to technology for teaching and learning is demonstrated in the opening sentence of the university mission statement "... WTAMU is dedicated to providing a high quality baccalaureate and graduate education using traditional delivery and distance learning where appropriate." The university should provide robust teaching technologies to all faculty along with ongoing support focused on helping faculty develop the ability to explore the abilities that facilitate and integrate technology into best practices.

SMART Classrooms are an important concept in the effort to engage our students. SMART Classrooms are electronically enhanced lecture classrooms. These rooms create new opportunities in teaching and learning by integrating computer, multimedia and network

technology. While efforts are made to standardize equipment in the SMART classrooms, each room is unique. Most SMART classrooms are equipped with the following:

- Instructor station installed with a PC or Macintosh computer
- High resolution LCD video projector for computer and video display
- Smartboard or projection screen
- VCR, document camera, and audio system
- Connectivity to the university network
- Commonly used software
- Connections for guest laptops

Our university must sustain active and planned faculty development that fosters the exploration of technologies for teaching and that connects technology to engaged teaching practices.

Identifying the Objectives

As WTAMU seeks to support faculty members' abilities to engage students in active, meaningful learning, we have come to recognize the vital role technology plays in that process as well as the critical role technology plays in faculty development.

In order to support faculty efforts to infuse technology into their professional lives as professors who are engaged in practices of teaching, researching and serving the wider community, WTAMU will examine its role in sustaining these efforts. The objectives of faculty technology development include:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Enable all WTAMU faculty to infuse teaching technologies into their teaching practices. (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and efficacy of formal faculty training opportunities through campus workshops, video streaming tutorials and online learning communities. ▪ Institutional support of informal learning opportunities through mentoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal and informal learning opportunities make technology infusion a part of the university culture and a teaching expectation for good teaching practices.
<i>Provide faculty with access to current and emerging technologies (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of Internet drops, ceiling mounted projectors and document cameras in each campus building. ▪ Wireless connectivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The university will actively support its faculty's and student's technology abilities to use technology for learning and teaching
<i>Support the costs of teaching and learning technologies (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit plan and budget requests ▪ Amount of requests funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students have ability to make choices between various technologies
<i>Encourage critical examination of teaching and learning technologies (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of articles or presentations given examining academic technologies and their usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students become informed, responsible, creative and articulate decision makers"

Barriers to Success

- Several financial obstacles become apparent when faced with the costs of technology, hardware and software, and network infrastructure. Additional funds must be secured through various means. These means must be developed from a wider base of support than through raising student technology fees.
- Several less tangible obstacles become apparent when considering the question of faculty training. While new technologies encourage knowledge building through collaboration and dialogue, this is not a comfortable concept of knowledge and learning for all faculty members.
- Additional obstacles present themselves by the dynamic and evolving nature of technology. Technology's constant change makes it difficult to plan for a period of time much longer than 5 years.

INITIATIVE 6 **Faculty Mentoring Program**

Benchmarks of Best Practices

This initiative is based on programs developed at Northern Illinois University, Stanford University, McGill University, and Montclair State University. Additionally, significant finding from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is used to provide an underpinning for this program.

Purpose Statement

New patterns of faculty development based upon scholarship must be developed to engage students, the community and education. As Ernest Boyer stated in *Scholarship Reconsidered*, we must "...move beyond the tired old 'teaching versus research' debate and give the familiar and honorable term 'scholarship' a broader, more capacious meaning." Boyer views scholarship as having four basic elements: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Lee Shulman described university teaching as more than technique; rather it is the enactment of a deep understanding of a field of knowledge and how you learn and use this knowledge. According to Luna and Cullen (1995), "The concept of quality improvement has been incorporated into higher education within the last decade. Incumbent with this concept is the empowerment of college and university faculty to harness their unique talents and skills and promote their professional growth. For years, business and industry has applied the philosophy and principles of mentoring to attract, retain and promote junior employees, and mentoring has improved individual and corporate performance and effectiveness."

Mentorship typically matches experienced faculty who have experiences with the profession and the university with new faculty to assist them with their orientation to the profession and to the university. Typically, the mentor and mentee will identify goals for the mentee early in their relationship and they will periodically review the new faculty member's progress in meeting those goals primarily directed toward scholarly activities including teaching, research, and service.

Identifying the Objectives

The objectives of mentoring programs for Faculty Development are:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Link tenure-track professors with experienced academics (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of mentoring partnerships established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New and tenure track faculty develop supportive relationships to improve student learning outcomes
<i>Provide advice on teaching, research, the profession, and the inner workings of the University (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ HERI ▪ Attendance at professional development workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaging teaching strategies will be implemented in core classes ▪ Students report greater satisfaction with the university
<i>Connect faculty within and across disciplines (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of interdisciplinary research projects ▪ Number of interdisciplinary course projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty work together on research and classroom initiatives ▪ Unified faculty voice for learning ▪ Mentored faculty become leaders on campus
<i>Improve teaching strategies and outcomes (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ NSSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentored faculty become stronger teachers and improve learning ▪ Mentored faculty emerge as instructional leaders

Barriers to Success:

- Ratio of untenured to tenured staff in the academic unit and the possibility that a selected mentor will not be around for the entire period before tenure is obtained.
- Institutional culture of individualism and academic silos.
- Finding a reward system that would entice participants to serve as mentors.
- Time constraints on faculty loads.

INITIATIVE 7

WT TV: Creating a Campus Channel

Benchmark of Best Practices

Elements of this initiative were based on engagement focused campus channels at *Western Kentucky University* and *Syracuse University*. In an article on the College Publisher Network published April, 21, 2004, Michael Schoonmaker, advisor to the Syracuse University student-run television says of their programming that began broadcasting over their campus channel, “ We love the chance to show the world what we can do. We want it to be real and for students to have a stake in it.” WTAMU has an opportunity to do the same.

Purpose Statement

The mission of WT TV is to provide WTAMU (and possibly cable-subscribing households of Canyon) with information and entertaining programming produced by WTAMU that would engage students and faculty academically, professionally, and socially. WTTV endeavors to provide an opportunity for students to learn of world and local events and make links to their academic

experiences. Walter Lippman noted “ that the media shape people’s perceptions of that which they cannot experience directly.” In order to engage students and the community in the university culture, an appealing, professional presentation of our university is needed.

Currently, WTAMU has an integrated information delivery system that was designed for cable and community television, corporate communications, educational institutions, digital signage, and hospitality channels. Up to this point the university information channel has been just that: a source of information. It has not been engaging, academically focused or purposeful. Its benefit has been solely as a “bulletin board” for students. But it has the potential to be so much more. A campus channel that takes advantage of the latest technology has the power to communicate university messages with maximum impact, to WT students, via a closed-circuit television, and possibly the Internet.

Identifying the Objectives

A campus channel can be an effective tool if it does two things: communicate and educate. To accomplish this charge, measurable objectives have been developed:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Connects students to campus life and traditions by using current monitors more efficiently and effectively</i> <i>(Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various video displays with multiple zones of text, video, graphics, and audio ▪ focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Postmodern “MTV” students engage w/ media that is high-tech, fast moving and compelling
<i>Enhances the university’s image as it motivates, informs, and educates students, faculty, staff, and visitors</i> <i>(Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional critiques ▪ focus groups ▪ Numbers of groups producing programming for display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many disciplines across campus take advantage of “narrowcasting” on campus channel ▪ Students learn about local, national, and global issues
<i>Engage students in a learning experience with global perspective</i> <i>(Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ HERI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programming offers local & national news ▪ Class discussions link news to courses
<i>Enhances campus culture of engagement</i> <i>(Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ HEIR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Airing campus events will engage students with WT traditions and customs

Barriers to Success

- Monitors do not garner attention currently and may not be in campus consciousness
- Logistics of students creating “commercials” for their organizations and events
- Battle over territories; who controls the content, programming, etc.
- Professor attitudes about linking course discussion to campus, local or national stories presented on WTTV

INITIATIVE 8

Student Learning Communities

Benchmark of Best Practices

Elements of this initiative were based on service-learning learning programs at Colgate University; Portland State University; IUPUI; and Abilene Christian University. Important texts used were: *Challenging and Supporting the First year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (2005); *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (2005); the initial monograph about learning communities by Gabelinick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990); and John Gardner's insights such as, "If I were to be asked what structural and pedagogical innovation currently being developed in American higher education may hold the greatest promise for improving first-year student academic performance and retention, I can now argue that it may well be the learning community" (1999) monograph series from the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Purpose Statement

Freshmen students are in a season of transition and uncertainty, needing guidance to help them reap an enriched educational experience. Learning communities have documented success in addressing first year complications. This approach is successful regardless of socio-economic level, academic preparation level, first-generation status, or ethnicity. Learning communities work just as well for honors programs as they do for developmental education programs. The very nature of learning communities is that they are flexible and adaptable, making them good options for all types of students, courses, classes and settings. According to Goodsell & Love (1999), learning communities:

- help students form social networks among their peers
- increase student involvement.
- improve student performance
- assist under prepared students to persist at rates equal to their more prepared peers
- impact student retention
- provide opportunities for faculty development
- shift the focus to student learning outcomes
- allow educators to rethink the ways by which students are taught.

Identifying the Objectives

Because learning communities are an effective engagement tool, measurable objectives have been developed:

Objective	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>All new first year students participate in a learning community (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of student assignment to a learning community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students gain academic confidence ▪ Students develop peer support ▪ Students enhance personal growth
<i>Expand existing successful learning communities, particularly Honors, USA and CAMP (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of number of students and faculty participating in learning communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further exposure of campus to learning communities ▪ Increased learning success of target students
<i>Establish a campus review and implementation mechanism for implementing learning communities for first-year students (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of research, discussion and development of first year student learning communities plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased student participation in learning communities ▪ Increased student learning outcomes
<i>Establish new pilot learning communities (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of new learning communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of models that can be replicated across campus ▪ Increased student learning outcomes
<i>Improve student learning outcomes and success rates (Objective 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ Surveys ▪ Retention reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student learning improves ▪ Student success rates increase ▪ more freshmen return for second year
<i>Identify faculty rewards structure for learning community involvement (Objective 6)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty rewards criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty ambitiously participate in learning communities to improve student learning
<i>Coordinate the Freshmen Year Experience Class with all freshmen learning communities (Objective 7)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Freshmen enrollment in the class ▪ Retention rates ▪ NSSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most at-risk first year student learning outcomes and success rates increase

Barriers to Success

- Moving to this concept for the entire freshmen class is a cultural shift for our university.
- Time commitment from the university faculty, staff and administration to the development, involvement and support for a comprehensive learning communities plan for all freshmen.
- Coordination challenges among offices and divisions within the University
- Resistance from some freshmen students, e.g. nontraditional age and commuter, to participate.
- Logistical difficulties with student information system, tracking, assigning students and faculty, and arranging groups.

INITIATIVE 9

Engaging Orientation Programs

Benchmark of Best Practices

Elements of this initiative were based on programs at *Colgate University (NY)*, *Texas A&M University (TX)*, and *University of Rochester (NY)*. Important texts used were: *Challenging and Supporting the First year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (2005) and *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (2005).

Purpose Statement

WTAMU currently has three orientation programs, housed in three different divisions: New Student Conference (Admission in Enrollment Management); Buff Branding (Student Services); and Freshman Convocation (Academic Affairs). These programs have little or no coordination of materials, goals, or personnel. They do not present a cohesive picture of the academic mission of the university. Orientation programs are about new beginnings for first year students, families, and universities. We want our orientation programs to be a defining moment for students and their families as they transition to college. This transition should mark the formulation of basic habits that influence academic success and personal growth. These programs are our best opportunity to “*introduce a strong learning environment, build the foundations for academic success, welcome students and families to the campus community, promote student interactions with faculty and staff, and convey the values and traditions of the new institution*” (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005, p. 391).

Identifying the Objectives

In order to promote a cohesive picture of the academic mission of the university, the following objectives have been established:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Unify the three current orientation programs by making them all mandatory and inter-related through topics, people and themes</i> (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surveys & Focus groups about the effectiveness & continuity of current programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing student learning, starting from their first experience at WT & carrying it throughout their senior year ▪ Learning improves as students bond with their peers, faculty, staff and the university as a whole
<i>Introduce the academic values of the university to students and families</i> (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ CIRP ▪ Orientation assessment report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students and families are prepared for the academic experience in our university ▪ Orientation materials reflect the academic values of the university
<i>Develop a peer mentor program starting at the orientation programs and carried through the entire freshmen year</i> (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership assessments between students and small groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students feel more at home and have a closer tie with their classmates & university ▪ Same group of peer mentors guide students through every phase of orientation and then throughout first year experience
<i>Develop a website for the “Class of” use throughout the students’ four year career at WT</i> (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online counter of hits and survey of usefulness and interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The “Class of ----.” will have a common place to share ideas, comments, projects and information

Barriers to Success

- Students feel they have the right to choose what they attend and don't attend. By making this mandatory, there will be initial complaints and battles with students as well as parents.
- Staff are already overworked in these areas and will not want to (or in some cases be able to) devote the amount of time it will take to develop and coordinate these programs in this manner.
- Each program has a "season" where it is worked on/with and it is left to sit for the rest of the year.
- Faculty do not see the point in the first two orientation programs and as a whole are not willing to assist the programming aspects of the events.
- Students are not encouraged by all areas of the campus to attend these programs. Athletics and band specifically opt out of Buff Branding due to time constraints.
- Faculty, staff and students are leery of change and territorial in relation to these programs.
- There is no way of coordinating and monitoring the peer mentor/leadership program or the website design and up-keep at this time.

INITIATIVE 10

Thematic First Year Experience Course

Benchmark of Best Practices

Although excellent freshman year experience courses are available throughout higher education institutions internationally, this initiative will focus on the programs at Colgate University, University of South Carolina, University of Washington and Colorado State University. Internationally, most programs grew from research made available through the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience (<http://www.sc.edu/fye>) and more recently through the Policy Center on the First Year of College (<http://www.brevard.edu/fyc>).

Purpose Statement

John Gardner clearly states that *"there has been more research on the effects of the first-year seminar than any other course in the history of higher education. Research studies repeatedly demonstrate that student retention (persistence to college graduation) and academic performance (GPA) are significantly improved by course participation"* on the website *Policy Center for the First Year of College*, <http://www.brevard.edu/fyc>.

The recent demographics for the state show a bleak future for Texas unless efforts are made to increase the college attendance rates. With the push to encourage more students to attend college, regional institutions such as WTAMU need to be prepared to address the increase in numbers, especially those who are often under-prepared for achieving success in the rigor of academia – first generation, low-income, diverse backgrounds from small rural high schools, etc. Research has shown that the challenge is not just getting students to pursue higher education, but keeping those students actively engaged in their education through graduation.

The freshman year experience course is one demonstrated strategy that has been successful nationally in addressing transition issues and improving student engagement, thus impacting the retention of freshmen. Nationally, courses vary from elective to required, semester credit hours vary from 1-3 hours, and the format may be taught in many different ways from an extended orientation course to a discipline specific offering.

Several years after the first freshman seminar course (SCOM110) was dropped from the curriculum at WTAMU, a need was identified to restart an interdisciplinary freshman seminar course, which had academic rigor, consistency among sections, and specific qualifications required for instructors. In 1995, the 3-hour credit course, IDS 1071 (Interdisciplinary Studies) returned to the curriculum as an elective. All freshmen are encouraged to take the course; however, freshmen from the bottom half of their high school graduating class or those with a composite ACT below 19 or combined SAT below 950 are required to take the course in their first semester at WTAMU. Due to the requirement of academically weak students to take the course, many faculty and students with stronger academic backgrounds tend to see the course as developmental or focused on assisting weak students. This has resulted in a stigma that is difficult to overcome. The QEP Team strongly believes that the current IDS course needs to be retooled and reintroduced to students, faculty and staff in a manner that illustrates its importance for academic success for all students, no matter their educational background.

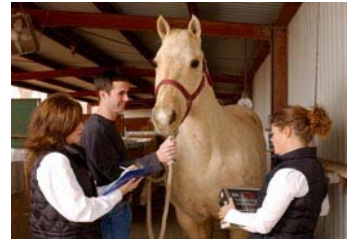
Identifying the Objectives

In order to improve the overall quality of the freshman year experience the current IDS 1071 Freshman Seminar, the following objectives must be addressed:

Objectives	Assessment	Outcomes
<i>Encourage all entering freshmen to take the IDS freshman experience course (Objective 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrollment in IDS 1071 ▪ Enrollment evaluations for numbers of students not required to take IDS 1071 ▪ Faculty and student attitudinal survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students benefit from the early opportunity to get engaged in the education process ▪ Increased academic success ▪ The IDS 1071 course engages students and faculty
<i>Incorporate Common Reader text into the course (Objective 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ CIRP ▪ Readership WT assessment report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students in IDS 1071 have common reading experience ▪ Students are guided through a text with discussions that build their understanding of issues addressed ▪ Students improve critical thinking skills
<i>Implement peer mentors in all sections of the course (Objective 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of peer mentors ▪ Mentor to IDS 1071 student ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased buy in from freshmen being mentored by an upperclassman ▪ Develop strong peer leaders who are mentored by a key faculty on a one to one basis
<i>Add value to course to remove the developmental stigma through themed content (Objective 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of themed courses ▪ Attitudinal surveys of faculty advisors & students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students desire the opportunity to learn from stimulating faculty ▪ Themes provide interest around purposeful and engaging topics
<i>Evaluate how to make the course fit into the learning community strategy (Objective 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Studies cited of best practices ▪ Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased student engagement ▪ Plan for incorporating learning communities and IDS 1071 sections ▪ IDS 1071 students are incorporated into a learning community

Barriers to Success

- Cost associated with staffing a required FYE course.
- Maintaining enrollment at 25 or less in each section.
- Lack of understanding the intent and value of the course for students.
- Faculty buy in.
- Politics of adding another course to the options in the core, or to adding this requirement in the major curriculum in all departments.
- Difficulty in recruiting full-time faculty to teach in every discipline.
- Resistance of faculty to support the course as they advise students.
- Cost to students for additional course, tuition rebate, etc.
- Reaching consensus on the type of course, then identifying common course objectives and goals.



3

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

It is imperative that implementation of our engagement vision and goals partner with university strategic priorities. The QEP has been included into the strategic planning process and in the departmental unit planning process. By including the QEP in the strategic plan and unit plan processes, individuals and units can best identify and address their responsibilities in promoting the engagement of our first year students. Simultaneously, we can use this framework to immediately incorporate QEP engagement initiatives into other university planning documents.

The implementation plan must address two important features to ensure the success of our QEP. First, the plan must develop the infrastructure necessary to design, implement, and assess each initiative. Second, the plan must provide direction through implementation strategies for each initiative. However, action plans must ensure flexibility to allow for changes in student characteristics, campus needs, and funding resources. In order to understand our QEP, we will offer a holistic timeline for design and development of the plan. Our resource allocation plan will provide a detailed understanding of our vision for structuring and supporting these efforts. An action plan for each initiative will then follow.

Engaging First Year Students QEP Timeline 2006-2008

PROCESS	Sum 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007	Sum 2007	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Sum 2008	Fall 2008
Design								
Readership WT								
Core Fellows								
WTTV								
Engaging Orientations								
Thematic FYE course								
Core Curriculum reform								
Learning Communities								
Faculty Mentoring								
Smart Classrooms								
Project Citizen U.								
Implement								
Readership WT								
Core Fellows								
WTTV								
Engaging Orientations								
Thematic FYE course								
Core Curriculum reform								
Learning Communities								
Faculty Mentoring								
Smart Classrooms								
Project Citizen U.								

Engaging First Year Students QEP Timeline 2009-2011

PROCESS	Spring 2009	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2010	Fall 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011
Design								
Readership WT								
Core Fellows								
WTTV								
Engaging Orientations								
Thematic FYE course								
Core Curriculum reform								
Learning Communities								
Faculty Mentoring								
Smart Classrooms								
Project Citizen U.								
Implement								
Readership WT								
Core Fellows								
WTTV								
Engaging Orientations								
Thematic FYE course								
Core Curriculum reform								
Learning Communities								
Faculty Mentoring								
Smart Classrooms								
Project Citizen U.								

This timeline provides an overview of the QEP implementation plan. In order to fully understand the vision for our QEP, the resource allocation plan will be detailed in the following section. The infrastructure of our university has been reliant on broad-based participation in and support of campus programs. This system has worked effectively as long as the person responsible for initiating a program stayed on task, even though, in many cases, the tasks were extraneous to job descriptions.

Our university has the third lowest administrative cost in the state of Texas, behind University of Texas, Austin and Texas A&M University without the economy of scale. We are significantly lower than any sister university in our state or region. Although we take great pride in our resourcefulness and budgetary restraint, this lack of investment has become problematic. Our programs for faculty and students are often driven by the personalities of our faculty rather than a systemic effort on behalf of the university. Such structure is risky because it is contingent on such professors remaining employed at WTAMU and interested in the programs they initiated.

Issues such as faculty development rely on faculty and staff willingness to step in and assume responsibility through committee assignments. Yet, we do not have infrastructure to support such efforts long term. The allocation plan attempts to institutionalize the QEP by incorporating its goals and initiatives into job descriptions, university systems, and campus expectations. These allocations ensure system support of the QEP and still maintain our low administrative cost standing.

QEP Resource Allocation Plan 2006-2011

This budget request format is based on the WTAMU Unit Plans. The QEP request establishes the infrastructure needed to ensure each initiative is systemic and institutionalized. The request itemizes the initiative proposals in the beginning year of implementation. As with other unit plans throughout the university, this request was reviewed by the University Administrative Team. With the WTAMU Budget process, 2006 is the baseline fiscal request. Fiscal year 2007 and above only include new monies requested.

QEP Resource Allocation Plan <i>(Based on WTAMU Budget/Unit Plan Request Form)</i>	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
I. Current QEP Budget Needs 2006						
A. Executive Director of Quality Enhancement						
B. Administrative Assistant - Secretary II						
C. Non-staffing needs						
1. Travel for Conferences, meetings, committee development	10,000	2000	1000			
2. Meeting / project development	2000	2000				
3. Service Supplies	10,000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
4. Capital Outlay	6000	3000	2000	2000	1000	1000
<i>Total Additional Current Needs</i>		<i>8,000</i>	<i>4000</i>	<i>3000</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2000</i>

II. Growth Needs based on QEP Implementation	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
A. Faculty Development Coordinator ½ position 07 & 08; full 09						
B. Faculty Development Coordinator ½ position						
C. First Year Experience Coordinator						
D. Graduate Assistant 07						
E. Graduate Assistant 08						
F. Graduate Assistant 09						
<i>Total Growth Needs</i>						

III. Initiatives 2006	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
A. Readership WT						
1. Common Reader Program	5600	10000	1000	1500	2000	3000
2. NY Times Reader Program	8000	8000	2000	2000	2000	2000
The Common Reader Program is one demonstrated strategy that has been successful nationally in addressing transition issues and improving student engagement. Nationally, Readership Programs vary from elective to required, and may be taught in many different ways from inclusion in extended orientation programs, general education class curriculum, discipline specific offerings, and learning communities. Incorporating the Reader Program has the ability to connect everyone on campus through the common experience of reading.						
B. Core Fellows						
1. Core Fellows	10,000	15,000	10,000	10,000	8000	7000
2. Faculty Development Training		7000	5000	5000	2500	2000
In order to develop greater levels of teaching excellence, the faculty learning communities at WTAMU will examine new teaching techniques as well as help more senior faculty reach their goals of teaching excellence.						
C. WT TV Campus Channel						
	8750	2000	2000	2000	1000	1000
1. Redesign the campus channel						
2. Incorporate news and campus events						
The mission of WTTV is to provide WTAMU (and possibly cable-subscribing households of Canyon) with information and entertaining programming produced by WTAMU that would engage students and faculty academically, professionally, and socially. WTTV endeavors to provide an opportunity for students to learn of world and local events and make links to their academic experiences.						
D. Assessment Tools						
	6000					
1. NSSE Assessment (TAMU System Office supported)						
2. HERI faculty, CIRP, YFCY						
With these comprehensive measurement tools targeting the broad population of first year students, WTAMU will gain an important understanding of the overall impact of the QEP.						

IV. Initiatives 2007	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
A. Engaging Orientation Program Unification						
1. Peer Mentor Development/ PULSE			10,000	3000	3000	3000
2. Plan a unified orientation experience throughout first year		1000				
<p>“West Texas A&M University's mission is to educate students to be informed, responsible, creative and articulate decision makers who will exercise good citizenship, appreciate diversity and be professionally competitive.” Based on this statement, the university should provide a starting place for all its students, thereby instigating a series of Freshmen Year Experiences beginning with our orientation programs.</p>						
B. First Year Experience Course						
1. Redefine and extend the IDS course		5000	12,000	2000	1000	1000
2. Incorporate Faculty into teaching roles						
<p>The freshman year experience course is one demonstrated strategy that has been successful nationally in addressing transition issues and improving student engagement, thus impacting the retention of freshmen. Nationally, courses vary from elective to required, semester credit hours vary from 1-3 hours, and the format may be taught in many different ways from an extended orientation course to a discipline specific offering.</p>						
C. Core Initiative						
1. Evaluate the effectiveness of General Ed classes						
2. Implement changes to general education requirements						
<p>The core is also designed to create community and conversation across the disciplines. The structure of core classes allows individual faculty members to bring their own perspectives to the class. Students will then be exposed to a wide range of content and viewpoints, thereby broadening their otherwise limited perspective. Another purpose of the core is to create a shared learning experience for all students that fosters critical thinking and discussion in other classes as well as outside the classroom. Unfortunately, the core is not working as designed for some students. While perception is not always reality, the perception of the core currently is that it is too large, inflexible, and poorly taught.</p>						

V. Initiatives 2008	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
A. Learning Communities			12,000	4000	2000	2000
1. Topic Specific learning communities						
2. Residential Learning Communities						
The evidence is strong that the learning community coupled with student-centered teaching strategies can be a transformational tool to foster learning in all areas.						
B. Office for Student Learning and Teaching Excellence (SLATE)						
1. Design SLATE objectives and faculty needs			15,000	15,000	10,000	5000
2. Develop SLATE programs and training initiatives						
In order to develop greater levels of teaching excellence, the faculty need specific, targeted, and well designed training programs to infuse active learning, service-learning, and engagement strategies into the classroom.						
C. Faculty Mentor Program			2000	1500	1500	1500
1. Develop Mentor participants						
2. Faculty training and expectation						
3. Develop mentor/mentee relationship						
The concept of quality improvement has been incorporated into higher education within the last decade. Incumbent with this concept is the empowerment of college and university faculty to harness their unique talents and skills and promote their professional growth. For years, business and industry has applied the philosophy and principles of mentoring to attract, retain and promote junior employees, and mentoring has improved individual and corporate performance and effectiveness.						

VI. Initiatives 2009	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
A. Smart Classrooms				45,000	45,000	45,000
1. Evaluate faculty effectiveness w/ technology						
2. Faculty training and instructional redesign						
3. Course redesign to maximize effective use of technology						
4. Implement Smart Classroom Technology						
As WTAMU seeks to support faculty members' abilities to engage students in active, meaningful learning, we have come to recognize the vital role technology plays in that process as well as the critical role technology plays in faculty development. With only a handful of technologically equipped classrooms campus wide, SMART Classroom technology must be installed on a yearly basis.						
B. Service-Learning Project "Citizen U."				12,000	12,000	6000
1. Provide development grants						
2. Faculty training and syllabus redesign						
3. Develop Community partner database						
4. Develop Leadership/Service transcripts						
In order to promote academic, professional, and civic engagement, Project "Citizen U." Service-Learning Initiative will infuse new purpose and interest into learning course objectives through partnerships between course curriculum and community needs.						

Total New Initiatives	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
<i>Initiative Request</i>	38,350	48,000	89,200	103,000	90,000	78,500
TOTAL QEP REQUEST	166,454	95,000	167,200	145,000	92,000	80,500

PILOT INITIATIVE 2006
Readership WT: Common Reader Program

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
DESIGN		
Readership WT Committee identified mission/objectives	Feb 2005	Committee
Selection criteria	Feb 2005	Committee
Solicit book titles from community	Feb 2005	QEP Chair
Devise a timeline for common reader	Feb 2005	Committee
Campus audit for New York Times need	March 2005	QEP Chair
ACTION		
Committee selects short list	March 2005	Committee
Committee Reads assigned texts	March 2005	Committee
Select three finalists	March 2005	Committee
Select final common reader text	April 2005	President
Community/Faculty meetings to explain project mission	April 2005	Provost
Identify & train initial pilot study faculty	April 2005	QEP Chair
Readership WT curriculum material development	April 2005	Committee
Readership WT curriculum material training	May-Aug 2005	QEP Chair
Incorporate into New Student Conferences	May-Aug 2005	NSC Coordinator
Incorporate into Buff Branding Orientation	Aug 2005	Branding Chair
Incorporate into IDS and Honors class curriculum	Aug 2005	Instructors
Incorporate Author into Freshman Convocation	Sept 2005	Convocation Chair
Instructor Dialogue	Nov 2005	QEP Chair
Reflective Essay Analysis	Dec 2005	Instructors
Common Reader Essay Contest	March 2006	QEP Chair

This action plan has already facilitated the successful launch of Readership WT in fall 2005 through a common reader and the *New York Times*. Each incoming freshman received a text of *A Hope in the Unseen* during New Student Conferences or during registration. The program was piloted in both the IDS 1071 Freshman Experience course and in the Honors program freshman seminars. The success of the pilot program was initially evaluated by a graduate Qualitative Research Methods fall 2005 course in which the graduate researchers conducted focus groups with the target population. A Quantitative Research Methods Spring 2006 course is designing a survey and will distribute, analyze and make recommendations from both the focus group and survey results. In fall 2006, the next common reader text, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich will be incorporated into all core curriculum courses as either assignments, discussion points, or through related projects. The *New York Times* is placed in all academic buildings. Professors were provided strategies for inclusion of the New York Times into course discussions and assignments as a way of broadening the course content to a larger global context.

PILOT INITIATIVE 2006
Core Curriculum Fellows Program

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
QEP Team identified mission/objectives	Jan 2005	QEP Chair
Develop Grant Application	Jan 2005	QEP Team
Devise a timeline for Core Fellows	Feb 2005	QEP Chair
Disseminate Development Grant applications	Feb 2005	Core Committee
<i>ACTION</i>		
Evaluate grant applicants	May 2005	Core committee
Select recipients with distribution across colleges	June 2005	Core Committee
Notify recipients with timeline for academic year	June 2005	Chair
Introduce Core Fellows at annual faculty meeting	August 2005	Provost
Two day targeted training with Dr. Constance Staley	August 2005	QEP Chair
Core Fellows Development Training	September 2005	Core Committee
Core Fellows Development Training	October 2005	Core Committee
Core Fellows Development Training	November 2005	Core Committee
Core Fellows fall evaluation report	December 2005	Core Fellows
Core Fellows implement changes into core course	January 2006	Core Fellows
Core Fellows Development Training	February 2006	Core Committee
Core Fellows Disseminate Engagement Strategies	Feb-May 2006	Core Fellows
Core Fellows Development Training	March 2006	Core Committee
Core Fellows Development Training	April 2006	Core Committee
Core Final Report	May2006	Provost

This implementation plan ensured the Core Curriculum Fellowship was successfully launched as a development grant opportunity in Spring 2005. Over two dozen faculty applied for 14 Core Curriculum Fellowships. These fellows met monthly with an assignment targeting the development of engaging teaching strategies. Each fellow was awarded \$500 and distinguished throughout campus in faculty meetings as Core Fellows. The initial assessment indicates a much greater understanding of our first year student needs and a willingness to alter teaching strategies to meet those needs. The QEP Team strongly feels this program will continue to provide WTAMU faculty with the tools they need to reach teaching and learning excellence while engaging students in the process of teaching and learning.

INITIATIVE 2006
WT TV: Creating a Campus Channel

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
QEP Team identified mission/objectives	Jan 2005	QEP Chair
Conduct technical audit for potential upgrades	Jan 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Design new WT TV look and concept	August 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Develop programming guidelines	October 2005	Provost
<i>ACTION</i>		
Upgrade campus channel	Aug-Dec 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Install new equipment and transform control	August 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Incorporate news feeds into design	December 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Program channel with ingested video, picture, audio	December 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Hire graduate assistants	December 2005	WT TV Coordinator
Monitor and regulate new Campus Channel	January 2006	Dir. Communication
Launch new campus channel	January 2006	WT TV Coordinator
Disseminate information of new features on campus	February 2006	Dir. Communication
Monitor the monitors throughout campus	continual	QEP Team
Train student organizations on developing commercials	March 2006	WT TV Coordinator
Incorporate campus community more fully	continual	WT TV Coordinator

The university currently has televisions throughout the campus that once served as a bulletin board. They were underused and underdeveloped. The campus bulletin generally announced campus events. The screen did not include video, graphics, or audio. An assessment of their use by Student Government in 2003 indicated the televisions were rarely turned on, and even more infrequently caught the attention of students. The new launch of WT TV incorporates vital campus information through engaging visuals. It also continually feeds local, national, and global news while showing or advertising campus events. The QEP Team felt the use of the equipment already in place warranted new approaches to engage students.

INITIATIVE 2007
Engaging Orientation Programs

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
Orientation Directors identify mission/objectives	January 2006	Exec. Director QE
Establish unifying theme and activities	March 2006	FYE Coordinator
Solicit student, staff, faculty input	May 2006	Orientation Directors
Develop orientation materials	September 2006	Orientation Directors
Identify Peer Mentors/Student Leaders	November 2006	Orientation Directors
Plan for Freshman Convocation	Jan – Aug 2006	Convocation Chair
Plan for Buff Branding	Jan – Aug 2006	Branding Chair
Plan for New Student Conferences	Aug 05 – May 06	NSC Coordinator
<i>ACTION</i>		
Train Peer Mentors	Jan - May 2007	FYE Coordinator
Incorporate Student Organizations	Jan - May 2007	FYE Coordinator
Incorporate Faculty and Staff	Jan - May 2007	FYE Coordinator
Coordinate Orientation tutoring, advising and counseling	Jan – May 2007	Orientation Directors
Infuse more academic preparation into orientations	Jan – May 2007	Orientation Directors
Training faculty on orientation objectives and role	Jan – May 2007	FYE Coordinator
New Student Conference orientation	May – Aug 2007	NSC Coordinator
Buff Branding orientation	August 2007	Branding Chair
Freshman Convocation orientation	September 2007	Convocation Chair

Currently, our orientation programs are executed separately of each other. This action plan seeks to develop a unifying relationship between all three programs to infuse the university academic values into our new students and their families. Faculty need to be trained over the importance of New Student Conference, Buff Branding, and Freshman Convocation, and these orientations must involve a broader range of faculty in more specific and purposeful ways. Currently, the first professionals our students see are staff members. When students take a tour of our campus or attend a New Student Conference, the only time they see a faculty member is when they go in to discuss their degree plan. While staff are a critical part of a student’s collegiate career, our students must view our faculty as a vital part of their academic experience before attending a class. Gaining faculty by-in and involvement with these orientation programs will not only help the incoming freshmen get to know our faculty members, it will also add credibility to the events. We will also consider, with campus-wide input, making these events mandatory for all freshmen to ensure each student has the best chance of success.

INITIATIVE 2007
Core Curriculum Reform

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
Engage in campus-wide conversation about core	Aug-Dec 2006	Provost
Establish guidelines for purpose of general education	September 2006	Provost
Establish criteria for inclusion of core classes	September 2006	Provost
Evaluate effectiveness of current core classes	Aug - Sept 2006	Core Committee
Develop new general education core curriculum proposal	November 2006	Core Committee
Create Faculty Development workshops targeting core	Aug – Dec 2006	Exec. Dir. QE
<i>ACTION</i>		
Present new core proposal to curriculum committee	November 2006	Core Committee Chair
Disseminate approved core curriculum to campus	January 2007	Provost
Offer faculty development workshops on teaching core	February 2007	Exec. Dir. QE
Implement new core curriculum in catalog	February 2007	Planning & Analysis
Implement new core curriculum requirements	August 2007	Provost

Changing the core curriculum holds many roadblocks. Currently, general education courses are viewed with territorial perspective. The inclusion or exclusion of a course in general education requirements might significantly impact departmental budgets and faculty lines. However, the core will be restructured to offer more choices in classes, and will focus on developing engaging teaching strategies and assignments in the classroom.

The University Administrative Team will explain and champion these changes across campus and into the community. Core courses have a significant impact on student learning outcomes, student retention and success, and student evaluation of the University. These changes in the general education requirements will put a premium on hiring and developing exceptional instructors to lead these courses.

These changes must also serve as a rallying point for faculty when advising students. Faculty must begin discussing the importance of the general education foundation with their students. The Administration needs to emphasize the value of the general education to students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members.

INITIATIVE 2007
Thematic First Year Experience Course (IDS 1071)

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
DESIGN		
Assemble faculty and staff to establish course objectives	Aug-Dec 2005	IDS Coordinator
Evaluate current FYE course format	Aug-Dec 2005	IDS Coordinator
Study program at Univ. of Colorado, Boulder	August 2005	QEP Chair
Create a comprehensive training program for instructors	Jan-Dec 2006	IDS Coordinator
Develop proposals around themed course content	Jan-Dec 2006	IDS Instructors
Develop materials explaining and marketing IDS 1071	September 2006	Exec. Dir. QE
ACTION		
Educate campus on the merit of reformatted IDS 1071	May-Dec 2006	Exec. Dir. QE
Train advisors across campus on merits of IDS 1071	May-Dec 2006	Exec. Dir. QE
Incorporate IDS 1071 into orientation materials	January 2007	Orientation Directors
Pilot sections of thematic IDS 1071 course	Spring 2007	IDS Instructors
Assess Pilot results	June 2007	IDS Coordinator
Finalize themed IDS 1071 courses	June 2007	IDS Instructors
Implement full slate of IDS 1071 themed courses	Fall 2007	IDS Instructors

The current version of IDS 1071 is a required course for any first year student who graduated high school in the bottom half of his or her class, or whose ACT scores fall below an 19 and SAT score is below 950. The course targets the development of college success skills in academically at-risk students. As is, this course has difficulty engaging students in the broader academic pursuit of knowledge. The course objectives, while worthy and important, are not couched in a greater joy of learning. Students gain study skills, learn about the campus, and develop academic and career goals. However, the course does not help students link these objectives to academic success and joy of learning. By selecting themes or topics that interest students and could be important to them, the IDS course would engage students in the pursuit of knowledge. In doing so, IDS 1071 will still incorporate the college success objectives through learning material and studying topics more relevant to the student experience. For example, Dr. Constance Staley, in her faculty development workshop targeting the Core Curriculum Fellows in August 2005 discussed her first year experience course developed at University of Colorado, Boulder. Their FYE courses are themed around such topics as “Community Service,” “The Dating Game,” and “What Should I Do With My Life?” These examples could provide an important roadmap to revitalizing this important course on the WTAMU campus. Faculty, staff, and students across campus, according to the Engagement Audit Focus Groups referenced in Section 1, view IDS 1071 as a course for “dummies.” Given the State of Texas requirements for general education at 42 hours, proposing IDS 1071 as a core requirement is not an option. This course must be revamped in such a manner that its purposefulness, intense learning, college preparation, and enjoyable topics make it attractive to students of all academic backgrounds to take, persuade advisors to encourage students to enroll, and entice outstanding faculty to teach.

INITIATIVE 2008
Faculty Mentoring Program

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
DESIGN		
Develop list of Tenured professors as mentors	September 2007	Department Heads
Create Mentor expectations manual	November 2007	SLATE
Develop timeline for mentor/mentee meetings w/ topics	December 2007	SLATE
Disseminate information about Mentor program goals	February 2008	SLATE
Plan in conjunction with New Faculty Orientation	Feb-July 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
Hold an initial mentor planning session with mentors	August 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
ACTION		
Incorporate Mentors into New Faculty Orientation	August 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
Help new professors understand the culture of support for first year programs	August 2008 -	Mentor
Provide advice on our students: their background, capabilities, weaknesses, and expectations	August 2008 -	Mentor
Provide assistance on the explanation and expectations for the Annual Professional Summary (APS)	August 2008 -	Mentor
Help to integrate the faculty member into the department, university and professional communities	August 2008 -	Mentor
Advise on course materials and improvement in teaching skills	August 2008 -	Mentor
Mentor attend some of the classes of the mentee	August 2008 -	Mentor
Provide annual written evaluation of mentee performance	June 2009	Mentor
Provide annual written evaluation of mentor performance	June 2009	Mentee
Celebration of mentor/mentee program	May 2009	Exec. Dir. QE

The mentor's primary mission is to help the junior staff member develop successful strategies for teaching our first year students. Department Heads and Deans will designate several tenured professors in their academic units who have agreed to serve as mentors. New faculty members will be instructed to select one or more mentors (depending on the practice of the academic unit) from this pool. SLATE Coordinators will ensure each new faculty member has a mentor assigned to them by the end of the first month of their first fall semester at WTAMU. A goal of this program could be to team up the new faculty with faculty from entirely different disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. This mentoring program will not only help un-tenured faculty progress successfully in their career as teachers, it will directly impact student learning. Most importantly, mentoring is a positive approach toward building a community within our university. Being a faculty mentor would be rewarded as Service in the Annual Professional Summary evaluation.

INITIATIVE 2008
Student Learning Communities

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
Develop learning communities planning groups	May 2007	Exec. Dir. QE
Develop ideas for the learning community structures	June 2007	FYE Coordinator
Create large group of university stakeholders	June–Dec 07	Exec. Dir. QE
Develop a management and assessment plan	January 2008	FYE Coordinator
Identify peer advisors for living and learning in the residence halls	Feb-July 08	FYE Coordinator
Enhance curricular coordination with core courses	Feb-July 08	SLATE
Develop faculty teaching and support mechanisms	Feb-Dec 08	FYE Coordinator
Employ peer leaders in all learning communities	May 2008	FYE Coordinator
Solicit information and resource networks	May07-May08	FYE Coordinator
Define budget and space plan for implementation	January 2008	Provost
Incentives and rewards	May 2008	Provost
Integrate IDS 1071 with the learning communities	May-Aug 08	IDS Coordinator
Assign first year students to a learning community	August 2008	FYE Coordinator
Create a marketing campaign for students and families	January 2008	Communication Serv.
Establish an annual conference about first-year experience	April 2009	Exec. Dir. QE

WTAMU currently enjoys success with varying forms of learning communities: Honors residential program, College Assistance Migrant Program for students of migrant backgrounds, and the University Success Academy summer first generation program. However, the university has no formal plan for learning communities on campus, no system support for them, and no formal assessment of their effectiveness.

Because a formalized implementation of learning communities will not take place until fall 2008, the QEP team feels it is important to involve more campus constituents in the design of this program. Therefore, our implementation plans to this point focus on developing the program. Only after a detailed strategic plan is developed can action plans be implemented. The university community is deeply committed to and excited about the institutionalization of learning communities.

The learning communities initiative is a vital part of improving faculty-student interaction, frequency of student-student interaction, study skills, tutoring, cooperative learning, and communication skills. Learning communities will promote deeper learning and reflection on the educational experience.

INITIATIVE 2009
Service-Learning Project “Citizen U.”

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
DESIGN		
QEP Team identify mission/objectives	September 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
Identify Community Agents	Sept 08-Aug 09	Fac. Dev. Personnel
Create partnership database	Sept 08-Aug 09	Fac. Dev. Personnel
Campus Audit	September 2008	Fac. Dev. Personnel
Create development grant applications	October 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
Community/Faculty meetings to explain project mission	November 2008	Exec. Dir. QE
Disseminate grant applications	January 2009	Exec. Dir. QE
Requirements for Service Transcript designation	January 2009	Exec. Dir. QE
ACTION		
Award development grants to faculty	February 2009	SLATE
Curriculum development training for grantees	March–June 09	SLATE
Establish student achievement objectives and goals	March–June 09	Grantees
Market requirements of Service Transcript designation	March–June 09	Exec. Dir. QE
Implement service-learning into curriculum	August 2009	Grantees
Establish Faculty Training Teams of grantees	June-Dec 2009	Exec. Dir. QE
Disseminate teaching strategies and successes to peers	Jan – May 2010	Grantees, SLATE
Share service-learning results with community	May 2010	SLATE
Award ceremonies to recognize & celebrate successes	May 2010	SLATE

The “Citizen U.” process will be developed and maintained through the *Office for Student Learning and Teaching Excellence*. Students will be evaluating, researching, creating, and implementing solutions to important social problems, while achieving course learning objectives. These innovative processes will increase critical thinking skills, create awareness of community issues, and link students with the community to understand and solve important social problems. The result of “Citizen U.” will produce innovative ways to engage students with course learning objectives, and challenge faculty to be more creative in their instruction; thus, redefining the educational environment on our campus.

Students will receive a Leadership & Service transcript upon graduation. Potential guidelines for this designation might include:

1. Successful completion of 12 hours of service learning courses.
2. 100 hours of community service.
3. Overall GPA of 2.75 and a GPA of 3.0 in service learning courses.
4. Graduates from the program will be recognized at the annual University Awards Ceremony.
5. “Citizen U” scholar designation will be added to the official university transcript.

Project “Citizen U.” Service-Learning Initiative will enhance our students’ engagement with learning outcomes as well as develop sustainable, important, and innovative changes in our university. Project “Citizen U.” seeks to improve instruction and learning by developing an intellectual and experiential interaction with the community. The service-learning program will use faculty and student work in classes to research, recommend, and implement solutions to problems or issues identified by a variety of community agents. These service-learning partnerships will engage students in classroom projects and assignments that teach course objectives while providing community agents with research, services, problem solving, and student efforts.

INITIATIVE 2009
Smart Classrooms across the Curriculum

Strategies for Implementation

Process	Timeline	Persons Responsible
<i>DESIGN</i>		
List needs for SMART Classrooms per building	Aug-Dec 2008	Department Head Council
Identify areas for more urgent technology needs	December 2008	Deans Council
Design development opportunities for classroom use	Jan-July 2009	SLATE
Evaluate faculty effectiveness with technology	Aug-Dec 2008	IITL (Instruct. Tech. Lab)
Create developmental grants for course redesign	January 2009	SLATE
<i>ACTION</i>		
Demonstrations of SMART classroom technology	Feb–Dec. 2009	IITL
Implement SMART classroom technology	Continual	Information Technology
Provide faculty training and instructional redesign	Continual	IITL & SLATE
Establish rotation for SMART classroom installation	August 2009	Information Technology
Develop SMART classroom mentors	January 2010	SLATE

In order to develop a viable strategy for implementation, WTAMU must identify how the use of technology by students and faculty fit in the university’s mission. This initiative will seek to value an environment in which each faculty person can gain the skills needed to use technology effectively in the context of her or his specific teaching area or research focus. The initiative also calls for the infusion of SMART Classroom technology throughout the campus. With the technology availability in classrooms, faculty will have an opportunity to:

- Rethink individual teaching methods and goals.
- Explore potential of specific instructional technology applications.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching-learning practices.

If WTAMU seeks to support technology practices as a way to academically engage and challenge our students, WTAMU must enhance the faculty development resources available and the technological tools needed.

**QEP Proposed Personnel Support:
OFFICE OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

Benchmarks of Best Practices

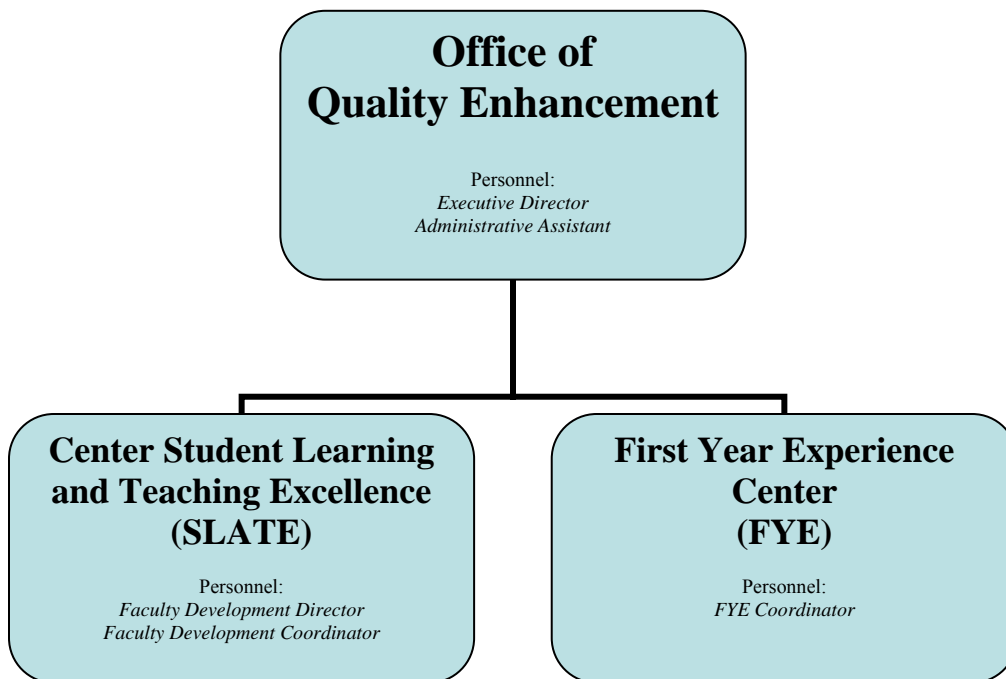
The organizational structure, office missions, personnel, and job descriptions were based on successes at several universities: Kennesaw State University, University of Denver, Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis, Tarleton State University, Indiana University South Bend, Texas A&M University, Bradley University, California State Channel Island, Tulane University, Richmond University, and Austin Peay University.

Office of Quality Enhancement Mission

The mission of the Office of Quality Enhancement is to institutionalize the QEP: *Engaging the First Year Student*. The office is to work with multiple university constituencies to facilitate an environment on engagement in which the maximum potential of each student and faculty member can be achieved. This office is charged to provide to the university community leadership and service of distinction in facilitation of faculty and student academic development; curricular development and enhancement; commitment to standards of quality in evaluation of Quality Enhancement initiatives; commitment to diversity; advocacy for interdisciplinary, cross-campus, and community wide partnerships; recognition of achievement; and enhancement of the university learning environment.

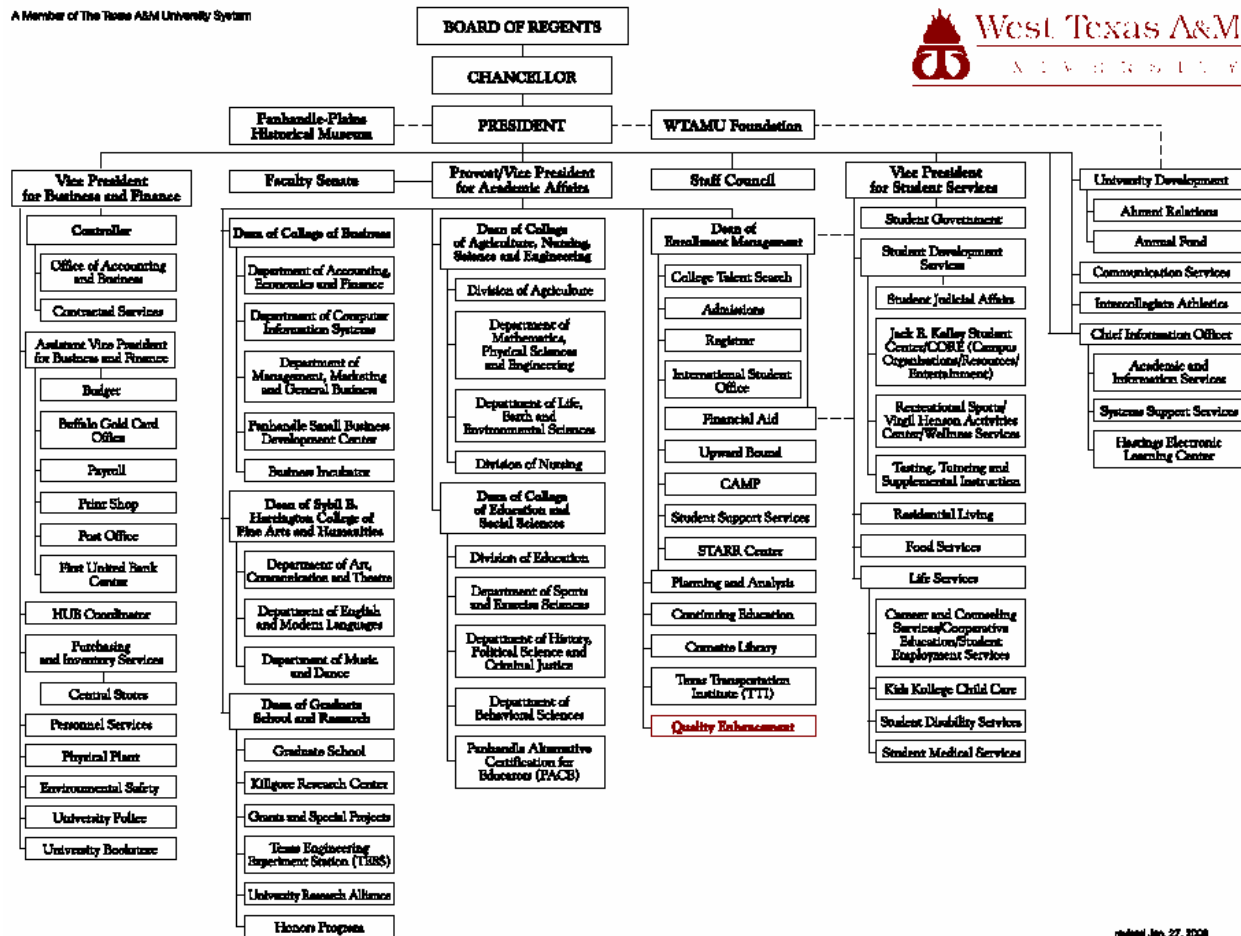
Organizational Structure

The office of Quality Enhancement will report directly to the Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The following chart illustrates the structure of the QEP.



University Organizational Chart

The following graphic is a representation of the organizational structural changes. The creation of the office of Quality Enhancement will report directly to the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The office personnel will be included in all university planning functions and will work with deans, department heads, faculty, and staff for successful implementation of the QEP.



Personnel

In order to institutionalize the quality enhancement plan initiatives, a more formal system of personnel support is necessary. Adding personnel and support staff to a university environment is an important endeavor. Our university culture has been one of low administrative costs, which, in many cases, has resulted in low administrative support for new initiatives. To meet the important demands of the QEP plan, the personal structure is warranted.

Executive Director of Quality Enhancement

Executive Director has two primary areas of responsibility. One is to lead those organizations within the Office of Quality Enhancement that provide academic support and out-of-class learning experiences for students and that assess and enhance teaching and learning. The other is to coordinate campus-wide initiatives to enhance teaching and learning, expand learning beyond the classroom, and improve the overall quality of the undergraduate academic experience. These two major areas converge at the present time in the planning and design of *QEP: Engaging the First Year Student*. The Executive Director coordinates the plan implementation. The executive director should also coordinate and develop grants for program support.

Administrative Assistant

Provides office assistance to the Quality Enhancement office. Serves as assistant to the Director of Quality Enhancement. Top level contributor, may act as an internal consultant providing guidance on complex projects. May act in a clerical, secretarial or administrative capacity to manage the activity and the productivity of the Office of Quality Enhancement in an efficient manner. Essential function include:

- Provides assistance to Director of Quality Enhancement. Coordinates calendar (schedules meetings and appointments), makes telephone calls, assists visitors, coordinates the appropriate distribution of mail, drafts correspondence, makes travel arrangements, and makes arrangements for meetings and other functions.
- Coordinates off-campus course delivery, off-campus scheduling, off-campus facility rentals, and off-campus property managements.
- Verifies data and prepares SACS reports as needed.
- Coordinates the development of program proposals.
- Creates and maintains websites for QE office.
- Ensures evaluation data are collected each semester.
- Summarizes and prepares statistical reports showing data.
- Maintains records, files, and reports.
- Coordinates all activities focusing on assessment planning processes e.g., training programs, document template preparation, benchmark data research, etc.).
- Creates and maintains written processes for QE office functions.
- Provides computer problem solving assistance to office staff.
- Contributes to the effective team management of all relevant problems, issues, and opportunities.

This job description shall include, but is not necessarily limited to, the above duties. May temporarily perform other duties assigned to maintain operations and services.

Center for Student Learning and Teaching Excellence Mission (SLATE)

Supports the Office of Quality Enhancement through development of programs and services on learning and teaching, enhance faculty teaching skills, mentor faculty about teaching concerns, develop a library of resources. SLATE will develop the skills of graduate teaching assistants as they prepare for their current and future work as teachers, attend workshops to develop their classroom skills, gain help in preparing a syllabus or a teaching portfolio, work with a mentor, and a place where undergraduates are invited to contribute to the dialogue about teaching enhancement. Most of all, SLATE is a place whose programs, services, and projects demonstrate that teaching and learning excellence is a vital part of the mission of West Texas A&M University.

Faculty Development Director

Center for Student Learning and Teaching Excellence Director supports teaching and learning across the WTAMU campus. Our mission is to enhance faculty development and student learning through various programs and support systems such as:

- Provide opportunities for teaching faculty to discuss students' learning and ways to enhance learning in their classrooms
- Support faculty as they implement their ideas for improving students' learning
- Bring research about teaching to the attention of the university community
- Encourage involvement in the scholarship of teaching and learning
- Offer course assistance at any stage: planning, teaching, or evaluating
- Foster instructional innovation
- Advocate and recognize excellence in teaching
- Facilitate meetings with small groups of faculty to find time-efficient and effective ways to improve student learning
- Develop materials for New Faculty Orientation program
- Host workshops, conferences, and discussion forums on teaching and learning in higher education
- Publish newsletters, research reports, and other works on the scholarship of teaching
- Meet individually with faculty and instructional staff who want discuss any facet of teaching and student learning

Faculty Development Coordinator (½ faculty; ½ Coordinator)

Coordinator assists the Faculty Development Director in developing and implementing SLATE programs. Specifically, this coordinator's duties should focus on service-learning and community based learning strategies that might include:

- Providing training, resources and support for developing service-learning courses
- Developing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure effective and safe service-learning experiences for students
- Developing community partnerships as sites for service-learning projects
- Working collaboratively with Student Services personnel on student leadership development, community partnerships, volunteer opportunities, & campus events
- Working with other campus offices and programs on collaborative projects as requested that involve community service
- Assisting with the evaluation and assessment of how service learning enhances student learning as well as how it benefits community members

Center for First Year Experience (FYE)

Supports the Office of Quality Enhancement through development of programs assisting students' transition to college, both academically and socially. The center will strive to make connections between experiences in the classroom and those outside. The FYE Center will be committed to providing students with a comprehensive program of services, activities and support networks that will assist them in becoming satisfied and successful members of the WTAMU family. The FYE Center will be a combination of living and learning that will aid students in their transition to WTAMU by providing: Sense of community; Support system; Student involvement and leadership; Out of class contact with faculty and new students through learning communities; and, developing the first year experience course (IDS 1071).

First Year Experience Coordinator

The coordinator ensures a strong foundation for first-year students-through close faculty interaction and involvement with the university community-that helps our first-year students achieve academic and personal success. These duties include:

- Create an environment that emphasizes the importance of making connections with the student's learning and life
- Create an environment that emphasizes involvement and inclusion in the university community
- Increase access to services that foster academic support and personal development
- Link faculty and students
- Develop a sense of community and belonging for first year students by making the university more personal
- Help students develop peer-peer and student-faculty relationships through learning communities
- Coordinate the restructure of first year experience course
- Coordinate the unification of orientation programs such as Buff Branding, Freshman Convocation, and New Student Conferences and facilitate their engagement



Benchmark of Best Practices

The Engaging the First Year Student assessment plan was developed with ideas and resources from the following: Mercer University, Harvard Family Research Project, University of North Texas, Denton, and the text: *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student* (2005).

Assessment Foundation

According to M. Lee Upcraft (2005), a comprehensive model for assessing the first year of college has several important components:

1. Know the characteristics of first year students
2. Assess first year students' needs
3. Assess student satisfaction with their collegiate experience
4. Assess the climate for first year students
5. Assess outcomes
6. Benchmark with other institutions

These characteristics served as guidelines for developing the QEP topic itself and devising an assessment plan. Each of our assessment tools specifically addresses one or more of these components.

Mercer University's QEP assessment plan was particularly helpful in providing a structure for accommodating the assessment characteristics identified by Upcraft (2005). The Mercer plan was adapted from the Harvard Family Research Project (*HFRP Performance Measures*). This model distinguishes two performance measures as outcomes to be assessed:

- **Measures of effort** are the direct outputs of program strategies and activities. Outputs are the discernible products of QEP initiatives that evaluate whether objectives were accomplished in terms of quantity rather than quality.
- **Measures of effect** handle student learning outcomes and evaluate desired changes in the first year student population.

Measures of effect on student learning and measures of institutional effort will be used in assessing achievement of the *QEP: Engaging the First Year Student* goals. Measures of effect will be used to assess student learning. The WTAMU assessment plan will measure the QEP in two spheres: globally and contextually. To measure the campus-wide, or global, effect of the QEP plan, we will employ holistic, well documented, and purposeful assessment tools.

To fully understand the effectiveness of the QEP, our assessment is focused on answering three main questions:

1. Are QEP activities having a significant impact on student learning?
2. What lessons has the institution learned through implementing QEP initiatives?
3. How should the institution modify QEP initiatives to get better results?

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Adapted from Mercer University

Measure of Effect: Desired outcomes in student population

Outcomes	Campus-Wide Assessment	Criteria	Timetable	Responsibility
Increased collaborative & active learning to develop student participation in and application of course content	NSSE YFCY Focus Groups CIEQ/CEA	Improvement in scores and student reports on performance	2003 NSSE baseline; 2006 YFCY baseline - Forward	Planning & Analysis; Quality Enhancement
Increased college success skills through critical thinking development	Stud. Perform. indicators YFCY CEA	Increase in student GPA in core courses	Varies with program	Planning & Analysis
Increased field experiences to develop student problem solving skills	NSSE pre/post CIRP&YFCY CIEQ/CEA	Improvement in scores and student reports on performance	2003 NSSE baseline; 2005 CIRP baseline; 2006 YFCY baseline - Forward	Planning & Analysis
Increased community involvement to develop student civic responsibility	pre/post CIRP&YFCY NSSE	Improvement in scores and student reports on performance	2003 NSSE baseline; 2005 CIRP baseline; 2006 YFCY baseline - Forward	Planning & Analysis
Students contribute to an increased climate of engagement on campus	NSSE Focus Groups	Positive trends in contributions to climate of engagement	2003 NSSE Baseline; 2006 NSSE forward	Planning & Analysis; Quality Enhancement

Measures of Effort: Countable evidence of program achievement

Objective	Timeline	Responsibility
Number of faculty using SLATE resources	2008	Initiative Leaders
Number of faculty incorporating common reader in courses	2006	Initiative Leaders
Number of student essays submitted	2006	Initiative Leaders
Number of faculty applying for Core Fellows	2006	Initiative Leaders
Number of tenure-track faculty teaching core courses	2007	Provost
Number of student volunteers	2007	Initiative Leaders
Number of volunteer opportunities	2007	Initiative Leaders
Number of service-learning classes	2008	SLATE
Number of smart classrooms added each year	2009	PROVOST
Number of faculty with smart classroom training	2009	SLATE
Number of students in leadership programs	2008	Student Services
Number of faculty in mentoring program	2008	SLATE
Number of students in learning communities	2008	FYE
Number of IDS sections needed each semester	2007	Initiative Leaders

In order to measure the effects on student learning, broad assessment tools will be used in conjunction with initiative and course specific assessments. These tools are explicated in the following section.

Campus-Wide Assessment

- *Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)*. The CIRP provides a detailed profile of our entering freshman class, as well as national normative data for students in similar types of institutions. It will give us a baseline of knowledge about our students' backgrounds, expectations, and character. This survey will be administered early fall.
- *Your First College Year (YFCY)*: YFCY enables institutions to identify features of the first year that encourage student learning, involvement, satisfaction, retention and success. It is administered in April of the first year for our students.
- *Higher Education Research Institute (HERI)*: The HERI Faculty Survey is designed to provide colleges and universities with timely information about the attitudes, experiences, concerns, job satisfaction, workload, teaching practices, and professional activities of collegiate faculty and administrators. HERI will measure impacts of faculty development.
- *National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE)*: NSSE is designed to obtain information about student participation in programs and activities that WTAMU provide for their learning and personal development such as academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching education experiences, and overall supportive campus environment. The results will provide an estimate of how our freshmen spend their time and what they gain from attending WTAMU.
- *Course/Instructor Evaluation Questionnaire (CIEQ)*: This course embedded assessment tool is completed by students at the end of each semester. It is designed to evaluate student perceptions of course content, instructor effectiveness, and offer suggestions for improvement. This tool will work along side the Course Embedded Assessment.
- *Focus groups*: As a qualitative data method, focus groups allow direct conversations and interactions around the topic of first year experience to emerge with important themes. Partnered with the empirical data collection methods, focus groups of students and faculty will provide a rich, insightful understanding for the quantitative data reports.
- *Institutional Research data*: Reports from the Office of Planning and Analysis on retention rates, CIEQ/CEA analysis, and enrollment trends will provide a broader picture on our student experiences on campus.
- *Course Embedded Assessment (CEA)*: WTAMU developed course-embedded assessments for the core curriculum. Assessment practices embedded in academic courses generate information about what and how students are learning within the program and classroom environment.

With these comprehensive measurement tools targeting the broad population of first year students, WTAMU will gain an important understanding of the overall impact of the QEP.

However, these comprehensive measures only provide a broad picture. For our assessment plan to truly measure a change in our institutional culture, each initiative within the plan must also evaluate effectiveness.

Initiative Specific Assessment

For detailed descriptions of each initiative purpose, objectives, and expected outcomes, please refer to section 2: Vision and Goals. The following summary highlights the assessment plan isolating each initiative. QEP initiatives will also reference the comprehensive tools detailed in the previous page when these surveys report specific data targeting initiative objectives.

Readership WT: Common Reader Program

Objectives	Assessment
Engaging students by creating opportunities for becoming life long learners (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ Focus groups ▪ NSSE
Develop a constituency of experience with & support for common reader program (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot results from IDS and Honors seminars in Fall 2005
Make positive connections with & between incoming WTAMU students (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ Reflective Essays ▪ Buff Branding orientation assessment report
Develop connections between current and incoming students (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment report of New Student Conference ▪ Assessment report from NSO student leaders ▪ Number of entries via bulletin boards

Core Curriculum Fellowship Program

Objectives	Assessment
Strengthen faculty teaching in the core curriculum (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ Teaching Portfolios ▪ Student learning outcomes ▪ Changed syllabi
Increase the rewards for and prestige of excellence in core curriculum teaching (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development grant applications; ▪ University awards for core teachers
Create an awareness of the complexity of teaching and learning in the core curriculum (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surveys ▪ Focus groups ▪ CIEQ/CEA
Disseminate successful strategies to peers to help improve teaching, and create interest in the core fellowship program (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dissemination reports ▪ Applications for Core Fellows program

University Core Curriculum Reform

Objectives	Assessment
Reduce core to 42 hours (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of revisions
Increase options or selections within the core (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of core revisions with great number of choices
Improve the instruction of core courses (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ Institutional Data reports

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core evaluation
Create value for the core (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus Groups ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ Institutional Data reports

Service-Learning Project “Citizen U.”

Objectives	Assessment
Enhance engagement for learning course objectives through service-learning partnerships between classes and the community (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of service-learning partnerships ▪ Curriculum revisions ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ S-L pre/post tests
Provide students with the knowledge, ability, and desire for lifelong learning & involvement with community (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S-L pre/post tests ▪ Volunteer rates at partner organizations ▪ NSSE
Develop student ability to inquire, think, analyze, and problem-solve (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student, faculty, partnership academic assessments ▪ Curriculum revisions
Develop student ability to write, read, speak, and listen (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student, faculty, partnership academic assessments ▪ Evaluation of student graduates per major
Demonstrate student commitment to community through Leadership & Service Transcript (Objective 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student transcripts reflect at least 5 S-L courses and 100 hours of volunteer work

Smart Classrooms across the Curriculum

Objectives	Assessment
Enable all WTAMU faculty to infuse teaching technologies into their teaching practices. (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and efficacy of formal faculty training opportunities through campus workshops, video streaming tutorials and online learning communities. ▪ Institutional support of informal learning opportunities through mentoring
Provide faculty with access to current and emerging technologies (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of internet drops, ceiling mounted projectors and document cameras in each campus building ▪ Wireless connectivity
Support the costs of teaching and learning technologies (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit plan and budget requests ▪ Amount of requests funded
Encourage critical examination of teaching and learning technologies (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of articles or presentations given examining academic technologies and their usage

Faculty Mentoring Program

Objectives	Assessment
Link tenure-track professors with experienced academics (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of mentoring partnerships established
Provide advice on teaching, research, the profession, and the inner workings of the university (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ HERI ▪ Attendance at professional development workshops
Connect faculty within and across disciplines (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of interdisciplinary research projects ▪ Number of interdisciplinary course projects
Improve teaching strategies and outcomes (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CIEQ/CEA ▪ NSSE

WT TV: Creating a Campus Channel

Objectives	Assessment
Connects students to campus life and traditions by using current monitors more efficiently and effectively (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various video displays with multiple zones of text, video, graphics, and audio ▪ Focus groups
Enhances the university's image as it motivates, informs, and educates students, faculty, staff, and visitors (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional critiques ▪ Focus groups ▪ Numbers of groups producing programming for disp
Engage students in a learning experience with global perspective (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ HERI
Enhances campus culture of engagement (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ HERI

Student Learning Communities

Objective	Assessment
All first year students participate in a learning community (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of student assignment to a learning community
Expand existing successful learning communities, particularly Honors, USA and CAMP (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of number of students and faculty participating in learning communities
Establish a campus review and implementation mechanism for implementing learning communities for first-year students (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of research, discussion and development of first year student learning communities plan
Establish new pilot learning communities (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of new learning communities
Improve student learning outcomes and success rates (Objective 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ Surveys ▪ Retention reports
Identify faculty rewards structure for learning community involvement (Objective 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty rewards criteria
Coordinate the Freshmen Year Experience Class with all freshmen learning communities (Objective 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Freshmen enrollment in the class ▪ Retention rates ▪ NSSE

Engaging Orientation Programs

Objectives	Assessment
Unify the three current orientation programs by making them all mandatory and inter-related through topics, people and themes (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surveys & Focus groups about the effectiveness & continuity of current programs
Introduce the academic values of the university to students and families (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ CIRP ▪ Orientation assessment report
Develop a peer mentor program starting at the orientation programs and carried through the entire freshmen year (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership assessments between students and small groups.
Develop a website for the “Class of --” to use throughout the students’ four year career (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online counter of hits and survey of usefulness and interest.

Thematic First Year Experience Course

Objectives	Assessment
Encourage all entering freshmen to take the IDS freshman experience course (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrollment in IDS 1071 ▪ Enrollment evaluations for numbers of students not required to take IDS 1071 ▪ Faculty and student attitudinal survey
Incorporate Common Reader text into the course (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSSE ▪ CIRP/YFCY ▪ Readership WT assessment report
Implement peer mentors in all sections of the course (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of peer mentors ▪ Mentor to IDS 1071 student ratio
Add value to course to remove the developmental stigma through themed content (Objective 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of themed courses ▪ Attitudinal surveys of faculty advisors & students
Evaluate how to make the course fit into the learning community strategy (Objective 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Studies cited of best practices ▪ Focus groups

Assessment Impact

The assessment plan for *Engaging the First Year Student* is both campus-wide, and targeted to specific initiatives. The plan offers an overview of the comprehensive assessment tools and details the evaluation plan for each initiative. Faculty responsible for the courses and programs involved in the QEP will identify additional learning outcomes and means of assessment.

The assessment and evaluation results will be used to strengthen and revise the plan over the next 10 years. The President’s Council, Office of the Provost, Office of Quality Enhancement, University Strategic Planning Committee, and QEP Team will conduct planning and assessment retreats to analyze the plan and its advancement. Since the QEP is dynamic, the initiative leaders and program developers will be given a chance to implement changes or improvements.

The offices of Planning and Analysis and Quality Enhancement will compile an annual report for the President and Provost. This report will be disseminated to the entire University community through e-mail, press releases, and presentations. The Board of Regents will receive an annual report about the progress of the QEP.



5

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

The *Engaging the First Year Student* QEP has experienced two and a half years of vigilant development involving a broad cross section of individuals in the WTAMU family. While the topic has undergone several revisions and shifts, this creative process refined and focused the QEP. Across campus and in the community, the theme of engagement continually surfaced as an important issue warranting our attention.

In August 2002, the WTAMU President and Provost solicited nominations for membership on the QEP team. After determining the group of people to lead our university toward quality enhancement, the Provost provided a specific and important charge with the task of developing a QEP. The QEP Team is comprised of members from every academic, administrative, and support division across the campus community.

PHASE I

QEP Steering Committee Charge

The Steering Committee was charged to develop and implement the WTAMU QEP. With the charge to enhance student learning outcomes, the QEP Steering Committee worked to:

1. Research “best practices” associated with student engagement.
2. Develop QEP initiatives that will positively impact student learning outcomes.
3. Secure university wide involvement in and commitment to the QEP.
4. Create a QEP of value to and excitement for the university community.
5. Detail a viable implementation plan.
6. Craft assessment strategies for charting the success of the QEP plan.
7. Ensure the QEP Plan is completed in accordance with the guidelines and deadlines established by SACS.

QEP Steering Committee Duties

In order to successfully enhance student learning outcomes, The QEP Steering Committee will work to:

- Develop the rationale for the QEP within the WTAMU mission and strategic plan.
- Audit existing university efforts related to *Student Engagement*, and discover how such efforts should be incorporated into the QEP.
- Create campus-wide excitement for and involvement with the QEP development process and plan implementation.
- Identify goals, objectives, and benchmarks to ensure a successful QEP.
- Establish timelines for the development and implementation of the QEP.
- Propose allocation of human and financial resources to develop, implement, and sustain the QEP.

- Pinpoint and execute appropriate assessment tools.
- Write the 75 page QEP narrative for submission to SACS.
- Advocate the significance of the QEP plan for WTAMU to all university partners.

PHASE II

QEP Topic Development Overview

Commentators, critics, and researchers have argued that universities are training workers rather than creating well-rounded, thoughtful citizens. Universities are not effectively using curriculum to academically and socially engage the student body; rather, they just create one-dimensional graduates ill-equipped to function in these volatile times. As we recognized these changes in cultural demands, WTAMU began a broad-based and inclusive planning process dedicated to enriching the complete student. A task force of faculty, staff, students, and administration initiated the American Democracy Project (ADP) on campus. We instigated conversations with faculty and students in each college. In doing so, an audit of our curriculum, campus culture, student services, and community partnerships and NSSE scores indicated that our students were not fully engaged citizens. The ADP task force developed focus group interviews with faculty, students, and staff to more specifically identify the core issues before us. The results merited the attention of every member of our university family. Thus, the QEP theme of *Engagement* was identified as a context through which students could thrive academically, professionally, and culturally. With the foundation of understanding that engagement was a major concern for all members of the University family, the QEP Team sought specific guidance and feedback from the entire campus through meetings, presentations, individual conversations, formal written requests, evaluation of relevant institutional data, and appraisal of goals outlined in Departmental Unit Plans.

QEP Task Force Assignments

After an initial review of engagement literature and best practices, the QEP Team decided to divide into three task forces to further understand the campus needs. Each Task Force was responsible for gathering ideas and requests for important issues related to engagement from their campus colleagues.

Freshman Experience Task Force Issues of Interest

Core Structure/Purpose	Freshman Orientation	Block Scheduling
Residential Living concepts	Freshman Reading List/program	Learning Communities
Cultural Relationships	Student Organizations/Life	Convocation

Faculty Development Task Force Issues of Interest

Active Learning	Learning Communities	Team Teaching
Interdisciplinary teaching	Interdisciplinary projects	Service-Learning
Block teaching	Teaching Excellence	Teaching grants

Community Relations Task Force Issues of Interest

Service-Learning	Community Based learning	Internships
Civic Education	Volunteering	Fund raising

Alumni relations

Outreach through Technology

Think Tank

With a thematic analysis of these issues, it was clear that the campus community had a vested interest in improving our University, and that the community has clear ideas on how we should augment our plan.

PHASE III

QEP Topic Refinement and Focus

The primary purpose of this phase was to evaluate the viability of suggested topic foci within the engagement theme. To refine the topic, the QEP Team worked to:

- Develop best practices research on topic areas for potential to improve learning
- Evaluate budget considerations and potential for practical implementation
- Consider topic contributions to student learning
- Evaluate institutional data on our students and identify gaps or areas of concern
- Narrow focus of engagement to a particularly at-risk population
- Facilitate campus-wide conversations about engagement and our most at-risk populations

In completing these elements, research data with the NSSE and CIRP made it clear to us that the first year student was an at-risk population that we were not educating effectively, efficiently, or enthusiastically. By focusing our engagement theme on the first year student population, the QEP focus easily emerged.

Within this phase, the QEP Team unified around two particular initiatives that captured our imaginations: Readership WT and Core Curriculum Fellowship program. In both instances, the QEP Team developed objectives, assessment strategies, and outcomes for piloting these initiatives. By piloting these two programs, the QEP was able to engage students and faculty, build knowledge about and excitement for the QEP, and evaluate the ability of the university to implement campus-wide change.

PHASE IV

Develop the Plan

The purpose for Phase IV is to review research of best practices and write the plan. Phases I and II provided the campus-wide support for identifying the QEP topic. Phase III narrowed the focus on our topic on the population of first year students. This phase developed the plan to meet the needs for engaging first year students. The results of this phase are found in the structure and contents of this completed QEP report.

PHASE V

Develop Foundations for Implementation

Phase V is vital for ensuring the success of the QEP. The following elements were the initial steps needed to start the implementation process:

- Establish the proposed changes to the organizational structure.
- Implement data collection.
- Refine budget requests for 2006 and begin marking monies for 2007.
- Develop administrative support.

- Plan implementation activities.
- Develop ongoing QEP information dissemination to University community.
- Redefine the role of the QEP Team as a QEP Council.
- Place personnel at Executive Director of Quality Enhancement Office.
- Follow established timeline and prioritize initiatives within each academic year.

QEP Team

Over the past two and half years of QEP development, the following individuals were nominated by the campus community to service on the QEP team at some or all points of the process. This team represents broad based support from all factions of the campus and community constituencies.

Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Chair, Associate Professor of Speech Communication
Mr. Ryan Franklin, Student, Student Body President 2003-04
Ms. Ashley Irwin, Student, Student Body Vice-President 2003-04
Mr. Westin Price, Graduate Student
Ms. Lisa Chase, Student
Mrs. Frannie Nuttall, Director, Grants and Special Projects
Dr. Joe Ella Cansler, Associate Professor of Music
Dr. Joshua Lewer, Associate Professor of Economics
Dr. LaVelle Mills, Professor of Marketing
Dr. Pam Lockwood-Cooke, Associate Professor of Mathematics
Dr. George Mann, Professor of Education
Dr. Amy Andersen, Associate Professor of Education
Dr. David Rausch, Associate Professor of Political Science
Dr. Wade Shaffer, Department Head, History, Political Science and Criminal Justice
Dr. Troy Johnson, Dean, Enrollment Management
Dr. Sally Sawyer, Supervisor, Distance Learning
Lora Hassl, Director, Innovative Instructional Technology Lab
Mrs. Prairie Burgess, Director, Student Organizations and Peer Education
Mr. Jeff Chisum, Director, Jack. B. Kelly Student Center
Mr. Ronnie Hall, Area Coordinator, Residential Living
Mr. Dearno Dearmond, Instructor, Marketing
Mrs. Cindy Barnes, Director, Student Advising, Registration, and Retention Center
Dr. Jessica Mallard, Associate Professor of Speech Communication
Mr. Keith Brown, Director, Alumni Association
Mr. Randy Rikel, Assistant Vice President, Business and Finance
Dr. Greta Schuster, Associate Professor of Agriculture
Dr. Jason Teven, Associate Professor of Speech Communication
Kala Weller, Student, Student Body Vice-President 2005-06
Dr. Duane Rosa, Director, Planning and Analysis, ex officio

This collection of individuals from across the campus solicited feedback from peers, developed initiative objectives and timelines, and unified the campus around the importance of *Engaging the First Year Student*.



LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEA	Course Embedded Assessment
CIEQ	Course/Instructor Evaluation Question
CIRP	Cooperative Institutional Research Program
FYE	First Year Experience
HERI	Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey
IDS	Elementary Group Dynamics
IITL	Innovative Instructional Technology Lab
NSC	New Student Conference
NSSE	National Survey on Student Engagement
PTI	Part-time Instructors
QE	Proposed office of Quality Enhancement
QEP	Quality Enhancement Plan
SACS	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
S-L	Service-Learning
SLATE	Proposed office of Student Learning and Teaching Excellence
STARR	Student Advising, Registration and Retention Center
TAMUS	Texas A&M University System
WTAMU	West Texas A&M University
YFCY	Your First College Year Survey



RESOURCES

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

University Resources

UIPUI	Institutionalization of Change	www.iport.iupui.edu/
Western Kentucky University	QEP & Engagement Definition	www.wku.edu/qep/
East Tennessee State University	QEP & Student Population	www.etsu.edu/sacs/enhance/team
Radford University	QEP & Curriculum	www.radford.edu/~planning/SACS/
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi	Freshman Experience	www.firstyear.tamucc.edu/wiki
San Francisco State University	Civic Engagement	www.sfsu.edu/~civic/
University of Missouri, St. Louis	Faculty Development	www.umsl.edu/facres.html
Castleton Sate College	Civic Engagement	www.castleton.edu/ADP/
Portland State University	Community Involvement	www.invcoll.pdx.edu/bylaws.htm
Murray State University	Core Education	www.murraystate.edu/qacd/ustud.htm
Texas State University, San Marco	NSSE	www.txstate.edu/effective/pa.htm
Mercer University	QEP Assessment	www.mercer.edu/oie/qep/
Colgate University	Academic & Student Affairs	www.colgate.edu/
Plattsburgh State University, New York	Faculty Development	www.plattsburgh.edu/offices/centers/cte/

Published Resources

Books

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