Wolff-Murphy asked for approval of minutes from previous meetings. Nelson requested removing sentence from October 2 minutes, page 3, first paragraph: Grades are amended with “D” or “In Progress.” All previous minutes were approved by committee. Web CT is up-to-date and contains handouts from past meetings.

Wolff-Murphy opened discussion of identifying elements for QEP, and need to begin research, literature review, and what strategies to work with. Not looking for measurable outcomes; need to establish 4-5 elements, to define learning outcomes, and then define assessments. Learning paradigm, math, information literacy, reading, basic skills, themes have been addressed. Also need operational definition of first year student.

“First year student” needs to include all colleges, the primary teaching of those students, and how they are not succeeding. If retention is the target, data shows transfer students stay—impact not as big. Need to pay attention to interventions focused on students with 15 hours or less and first time at TAMUCC. 75% of students are nontraditional—should we create our own issues (age, lifestyle, etc). Don’t focus on transfers; focus on where the greatest impact can be made. Direct toward first time in college, first year students. If narrow focus is defined, the outcomes will better affect the learning community.

Agreed: first time in college, first semester at TAMUCC, nontraditional. Dual credit hours up to 30 are defined as first year by coordinating board—first time in college after high school graduation.

Discussion of remedial courses showing learning improvement. Possible that intervention at high school level, working with employers and parents, academic focus on barrier courses and seminars could affect first year students and expand retention. How math is taught may indicate student success—should be taught in more logical, quantitative manner. Issue raised of textbooks being available, aptitude versus attitude, using tutoring to improve learning. Not only at risk students, but middle/high achieving students should be included in focus. Discussion of ways to get students to actively engage in learning. Instructors should focus on how they are teaching and using collaborative learning to aid students’ success.
Discussion of professionalization of seminar leaders, working with parents and kids, offering Smart Thinking to students summer prior to first year, and barrier courses. Hope is someone becomes an at risk coordinator. Could be under TLC, but also through working with faculty communication. Question of helping students in first year without dumbing down education. Communication prior to classes start to give students a better understanding of expectations and improve chance of success. Discussion of preconceived notion of “ease” of TAMUCC compared to other universities.

Seminar leaders working with students prior to first semester have shown success. Some college-prep courses could be taken in advance for credit. Financially challenged students not having access to resources has impact on learning. Use Smart Thinking, book reading programs, non traditional bridge programs, get students ready to work, know what faculty expectations are, make experience good while here, fix nonaligned courses. Use technology to bridge learning experience.

Discussion of Mission of QEP: To enrich or enhance the probability of academic success of first year students. In the pursuit of that mission the QEP will focus on the four elements. Preface with when looking at our students we found too many were on probation at the end of their first year—not about retention, about student success. Don’t focus only on at risk—Using TLC motto—to help unprepared to prepare, prepared to advanced, advanced to excel—includes all levels. What support services will help all first year students. “At risk coordinator” should be called “success coordinator” instead, to aid students through the transition of first year.

Discussion of finding the root of students’ difficulties, i.e., students from smaller schools are unprepared, well prepared students may be working two jobs, students with financial issues. How to determine strategy to deal with what the specific needs are. How to intervene before student fails because they are not aware of what is available. There are ways to deal with behavioral issues, TLC interventions, financial aid needs, help with computer access, but the availability needs to be more visible and coordinated between service providers. If students are not aware of services the QEP fails. The QEP can change the culture and aid improved learning. Need a plan, broaden it out, hit it early, and follow through.

Plan Outline:


If students are able to engage in learning process, they become more successful. First year success is created through raising standards and providing support. Courses may need to be more demanding for students to want to do better. Expect excellence in
thinking and engage students in their majors early on. Professional seminar instructors go in with a disciplinary target and students remain interested.

A good model for first year seminar is a stand-alone course with a full time faculty member who works with what students care about. Would be a cultural shift here but could be offered to upper end students. Advising and scheduling needs to improve to reach students’ needs and types of classes they want to take. Classes that include students with varied interests aids engagement. First year instructors in seminar classes aren’t as effective as permanent professional seminar instructors in focusing students’ interests.

Combine learning elements into measurable areas on which to focus attention. Find what the interventions are. Then the QEP will have identified itself. The elements are the means, but what are we trying to accomplish? If enriching and enhancing success and learning is the outcome, how to accomplish that. Start with focusing on the elements, and the outcomes will emerge. Need to utilize student focus groups to review the elements. Students need a better understanding of how to learn, how to engage. Connect students with various disciplines, major identities, new mindsets, and learning for the sake of learning.

Discussion of what to do next: Break into smaller groups, reading the literature, writing executive summaries, possible visits to other campuses focused on first year experience. Two more meetings to narrow down areas to be researched. Benavides to draft preliminary mission to focus on various components. Leads for areas: Budget-Shupala, Assessment-Hartlaub, Literature review-Sutton, Marketing-Byus. Bring in others from campus to add to research. Reference to Orser data—will be on Web CT.

Byus will contact committee from Faculty Senate about survey to determine what support services could benefit QEP. Other elements: Professional seminar instructors-Hartlaub, Bridge programs-Hartlaub/Needham, Improving teaching/instructors-Grise/Huerta. Needham indicated national searches are more effective. Title 5 grants support science & math—Veronica Guerra and Victor Davila have information. Need to collaborate with Sutton on literature reviews through Web CT/coordination of groups. Lit review to focus on best practices, specific disciplinary literature, and programs that are working elsewhere. Can write QEP then find the literature to support.

Student groups should be final sounding board for understanding how elements and interventions can be utilized. Using blogs instead of individual dialogs may be useful. Bridge and intervention prior to entrance into first year—issues to be diagnosed and coordinate strategies-assigned to Hardin/Moreno/Sterba-Boatwright. Barrier courses—math and reading—placement through THEA not necessarily identified. May want to look at barriers within courses and how the courses are being taught. Need an area to look at how diagnostics are coordinated and if students actually succeed. Linking seminar with supplemental instruction to avoid the tutoring stigma may bring in more students needing help. Look at the problem as a whole—what kind of teachers, types of classes, improving methods—to identify further interventions. Challenge is in
identifying an area where at risk students can get help, and still create a good learning experience.

Send email to Wolff-Murphy to take lead on other elements. Next meeting: October 16, 2:30-4:30, UC Bayview Room 320.

Summary of QEP Focus Ideas

Elements to be addressed:
1. Professionalizing / improving student learning in first year, including seminar
2. Bridges / interventions prior to entrance into first year – Diagnosis and coordinating strategies
3. At-risk students / coordination of success for all levels of students
4. Barrier courses – identify and ways to improve
5. Engagement / Reflection / learning

Areas of Focus:
1. Support services
2. Outreach to community
3. Academic
4. Enhance & Succeed
5. Engagement

Minutes submitted by: Ann Loberg
Approved by: Susan Wolff-Murphy for submission to Committee
Approved by Committee: _______________, 2008