Wolff-Murphy began with summarizing minutes from the last meeting regarding defining first year student, the mission statement, and the matrix of elements. Professionalizing teaching, bridges or interventions, coordinating diagnostics, barrier course issues and engagement were broad areas agreed on. Discussion of QEP Mission statement by Benavides and comparison to Loon’s draft, which included a theme of sustainability.

Loon’s Mission statement discussion—idea of incorporating the idea of sustainable development into first year courses through teaching strategies that can then aid students to connect with the community, and involvement in state, national and global issues. Could be difficult to show measurable success and faculty and students have been resistant to such a change. SACS does not require success or meeting expectations, but need something that can be measured, measure it, and then show a strategy to improve. The challenge of interdisciplinary understanding may be beyond the scope here because there is a real concern with buy-in. Individual departments may not see the idea of global sustainability as what students should be taught. Efforts in the past such as Writing Across the Curriculum have not been effective. It might be possible to start with a few classes and follow the idea for five years to show a measurable change to SACS.

Discussion of Benavides Mission statement—may have better chance of showing success in measuring professionalization of first year teaching, coordinating support services and challenging students to get them engaged in learning. The elements would have a greater impact on students at all levels. Shows interest in the learning paradigm that is focused on how the students meet goals and what the university can take responsibility for. Idea of the need to keep referring to the QEP plan to be sure the answers are there. Workshops or programs like “E Learning” can be used to assess learning.

Discussion of removing or changing language such as “sustainable”, “improving the learning environment,” “nurture,” “providing professional development opportunities,” “interdisciplinary understanding,” etc. to show consistency in QEP. Use of bullet points to build to the learning environment focus of first paragraph. Keep statement about unprepared to prepare, etc. as it shows all levels and not just at risk students, and is a good point for measurement. Use “enhancing” instead of “creating” the learning
environment. Reference to the university mission of excellence, engagement, expansion, and effectiveness. Idea of making it more challenging and more supporting at the same time.

Possible language in first paragraph: “…enhancing the learning environment to support the unprepared to prepare, encourage the prepared to advance, and inspire the advanced to excel.” Levels would include Honors students, regular population, and students in developmental courses. Rearrange bullet points to show focus on students first, then academic and support services, then faculty teaching. Change first bullet to read: “Empowering students to reflect on their learning, to actively engage in the learning process, and to develop into lifelong learners.” Assessment of lifelong learners would be that they are information literate. Use “develop the skills of lifelong learners.” Instead of “building bridges” use “interventions prior to entrance into first year…” Possibly take bridge programs out of mission statement and include in strategy for intervention.

Discussion of handout referring to Latino Student Success, 63 things faculty can do to improve retention. Ideas may be useful, such as parent involvement and needing the university to find ways to get them to the campus to understand what their kids are doing. Involve people from recruitment to get parents on campus and that would aid student engagement.

Timeline and breakout groups discussion—agreement that to get to next steps committee should meet in smaller groups and then get back together to discuss. Topic writing should begin and by January 30 should have literature review finished and marketing preparation in place. Fiscal request is being worked on for SACS and Nelsen needs budget for QEP—Shupala will provide. Most Steering Committee members will be in various groups, and will bring in outside expertise.

Element Groups—may need to add Student Services as separate from Diagnostics. TLC will be hub of Interventions, with Moreno and Hardin. Bantell and possibly Moreno will work in Bridge/Transitions. Wolff-Murphy will be involved in all the Groups. Engagement is part of all the Elements and will not be considered an individual Element. Interdisciplinary understanding to be included. May need Task group for public relations for accountability. Group meetings need to find projects to undertake, what the goals are of projects, and then find measures and assessments. Not every goal has to be outcome oriented — can be participation or a means to measure engagement, such as attendance improvement or pass rates.

Barrier courses—math and reading—work will be done separately by Sterba-Boatwright and Nelson. Plans developed should inform other barrier courses as to what can be done differently. Math focuses primarily on math now, and reading goes across the curriculum, but need to narrow scope so groups can agree as to goals of QEP. Conduct literature reviews, discussions with colleagues, and come up with a brief list of focus items. Math and reading could be focus, which would integrate into other first year courses.
When groups come back together, can assess how individual ideas will fit together and then narrow down scope and potential literature review, if necessary. Assignments—Bridge Programs—Needham working on with focus on high school to college transition. Barrier courses group can possibly get together with Improving Teaching group. Diagnostics/Intervention—some student support work has been previously done and group may not have to meet until they hear what the other groups are doing; need to focus on all levels of students. All groups need to work on identifying projects and goals and have preliminary version to return with in two weeks. Contact Wolff-Murphy to join a group.

Next meeting: October 30, 2:30-4:30, location TBA.

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