QEP STEERING COMMITTEE  
Thursday, September 18, 2008


Absent: Marshall Collins, Margaret Dechant, Nancy Nelson

Babbili welcomed and thanked the committee for their commitment. Introduction of Robert Nelsen, who produced the UTDallas QEP and SACS report. Babbili stressed a sense of urgency to the work that committee will accomplish. This is an opportunity to show the university’s institutional strengths and will be a unique selling proposition (USP). The focus should be on internal quality enhancement, and this committee’s contribution will be remembered, as the QEP will shape the university for many years to come.

Billeaux explained the spring Topic Selection Committee’s preliminary work in collecting ideas from across the campus and looking at various proposals for QEP criteria and topics. The general topic is “The First Year Experience at TAMUCC,” which is a very broad idea. The charge of this committee will be to narrow that down. Committee also needs to determine a theme for the QEP. Defining goals, how to implement the process, finding resources, and writing the QEP will be assigned to members of the committee, who may enlist help as needed. Five to six student members will be added to the committee.

After the group introduced themselves, Wolff-Murphy discussed the topic selection process and themes. There is a need to invite more feedback from campus community to refine the focus via email or meetings to identify possible themes and elements. By beginning of October there should be a clear idea of how to assess feedback and implement the topic selection process, and the marketing/budget/assessment of goals. QEP needs to be done by the end May. Groups will be assigned to each area: marketing, assessment, budget, literature review, and other elements as they are identified. Committee should read QEP handout and assess how to get the job done.

Nelsen explained requirements of QEP: 120 pages/20 pages of appendices, and the document has to be accessible as well as assessable. Has to have an accurate plan, including a flow chart with specific goals and what assessment will be. The plan itself and the learning outcome have to be combined. It needs to be a bound document and campus community needs to be aware of it. Budget is $150,000 (0.1% of operating budget) for five years. The university will be judged on whether the change has been implemented. Students will be queried as to what has improved.

Discussion of scale and significance of QEP. It is meant to show significant change, and the university will be impacted for years to come—the culture of the university needs to be recognized—this is a very large scale project, and there will be follow-up on the outcome. Important to use the opportunity to show that there are good programs and those programs can be enhanced and improved.
Billeaux explained data on students’ probation rate as an area of discussion and what does and does not indicate the lack of improvement. Need to address how to creatively address the problem in the university community. There may be a need to find a way to address the problem of students’ learning. If this becomes the theme, there should be a shared intellectual engagement of students. Need to think about what sorts of elements need to be discussed, then poll wider community for input.

Byus discussed that from a marketing perspective, it would be more efficient to use a proven product instead of inventing another program. Marketing can be used to enhance the culture and the knowledge of the university community. Nelsen explained interventions can be done, but with a different measurement goal.

Nelsen: Budget for this year is $30,000, but more likely $100,000 will be set aside. Money used for pre-marketing the theme campus-wide, such as giveaways, events, etc. to raise awareness. Bantell suggested running some student focus groups to come up with ideas as to what they need to succeed. Should narrow the focus to first year students right out of high school. A QEP failure would result from two things: 1. too low a budget, which shows that the university is not as committed to this as they should be, and 2. that it is so broad that it can’t accomplish goals and can’t be measured. It is important to show improvement.

Discussion of courses to be examined. Needham asked if specific courses had been looked at. Billeaux: work is being done in core courses, DFW rates in Gateway classes. Retention task force gave FW rates last year, but there is a need to address the role of learning communities for weaker students. By next meeting will have further data on where the problems are. Possible problems with faculty may be also addressed. May email to campus community and then organize focus groups of 2nd and 3rd year students and/or probation students who have an idea of what is needed and what has or has not worked for them. Question of going through IRB—Sutton will check to see if necessary.

Wolff-Murphy: For next meeting -- Think about elements, read the QEP. Finalize the survey. Needham would like to see data regarding low performing students and what courses gave them problems; and also by sections in which they struggled. Discussion on what is causing low GPAs. First year faculty lack of tenured professors, grading standards, part time instructors, salaries, pre-testing (SATs) may be issues to look at. But, don’t want to use QEP as a means to highlight problems.

Degaish will bring someone from counseling center to group. Wolff-Murphy: Committee could use spring committee’s work, Foundation of Excellence representatives--those who have a hand in first year students. Peer mentoring is out there, and other resources, but committee needs to assess all these groups’ ideas.

Wolff-Murphy will draft issues list for next meeting. There is a Web CT shell set up for committee information. Request for volunteers for various task forces – send email to Wolff-Murphy. Next meeting will be Thursday, Sept 25, at 3:30, location TBD.

Minutes submitted by: Ann Loberg
Approved by: David Billeaux & Susan Wolff-Murphy for submission to Commiteee
Approved by Commiteee: October 9, 2008