



GOING FURTHER FASTER: COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON'S FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
66 GEORGE STREET
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29424

MARCH 20 – 22, 2007

KAY H. SMITH, PHD
AVP FOR THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE
843.953.2274
smithkh@cofc.edu

PAMELA I. NISSLIN, PHD
AVP FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND
ACCREDITATION
843.953.7526
niessleinp@cofc.edu

Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION	1
<i>What critical issues are being addressed?</i>	
II. DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE QEP WAS DEVELOPED	11
<i>Who was involved in its selection?</i>	
<i>How does the critical issue relate to the institution's planning and evaluation process</i>	
III. IDENTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC AND OF DESIRED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES	15
<i>What student learning outcome goals does this QEP aim to achieve?</i>	
<i>Are they focused, specific, and measurable?</i>	
IV. LITERATURE REVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES.....	20
<i>What literature has been researched?</i>	
<i>What have you learned through this research and through conversations with experienced professionals?</i>	
V. ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED.....	33
<i>How have you applied what you learned from the above research to addressing the student learning outcomes topic you selected?</i>	
<i>What changes in policies, procedures, and practices have you developed as a result?</i>	
<i>What actions to you plan to take in order to achieve the desired student learning outcomes?</i>	
VI. FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE	55
<i>What are the dates for implementing the strategies identified above?</i>	
<i>Is the timeline realistic and achievable?</i>	
<i>Does the timeline include professional development activities to prepare faculty and staff to implement the QEP?</i>	
VII. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	60
<i>How have you organized for implementation and continuation of the QEP?</i>	
<i>Who is responsible for each strategy? For keeping within budget? For monitoring progress? For modifying the plan?</i>	
VIII. BUDGET	67
<i>How much money has been budgeted for each year's effort?</i>	
<i>Does the budget detail all related expenses?</i>	
<i>What is the source of funding for the QEP?</i>	
<i>Can the institution afford to implement this plan?</i>	
IX. ASSESSMENT.....	68
<i>What measurement will be used to confirm whether or not you have achieved the desired student learning outcomes? Are these measurements valid and reliable?</i>	
<i>Have assessment costs been factored into the budget?</i>	

What is the assessment calendar?

Who is responsible for conducting the assessment? For evaluating the results?

BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
APPENDIX A: QEP ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES MATRIX	74
APPENDIX B: QEP ASSESSMENT TIMELINE 2007-2012	80
APPENDIX C: QEP BUDGET	85
APPENDIX D: QEP COMMITTEE CHART	91

I. Executive Summary and Introduction

The College of Charleston's Quality Enhancement Plan focuses on strengthening students' first-year experience at the College and proposes the development of a well-planned, coordinated, comprehensive and unified First-Year Experience program. This plan is timely. The College of Charleston Strategic Plan, approved by the Board of Trustees in April, 2003, calls for the creation of just such a First-Year Experience program. Also, the College is now reviewing its long-standing general education program, and current recommendations based on this review include a proposal to require a well-defined first-year experience for all students as part of a new and strengthened general education program.

The Quality Enhancement Plan for a First Year Experience has been developed at the same time as the faculty has been conducting its review of the general education program. This has strengthened both processes, involving more people from more constituencies across campus, and resulting in well-coordinated plans. The QEP is designed to be consistent with – and indeed an enhancement of – the current general education program, but it is also designed to become a cornerstone of a new general education program for the College.

Two curricular elements are proposed for College of Charleston's First-Year Experience: a newly revamped First-Year Seminar and the addition of Learning Communities. The First-Year Seminar and Learning Communities will be supplemented by strengthened support services and programs for new students. Overall, the First-Year Experience offers important and exciting new opportunities for enhancing student learning and engagement at the College of Charleston.

Introduction

The College of Charleston has undergone significant changes in recent years. The College's recently concluded Fourth Century Initiative brought the campus new faculty positions, reduction in class size, new buildings, and a renewed focus on student success. Smaller classes to improve faculty and student interaction, the remodeling of the Lightsey Center to house Academic Advising and Planning, Undergraduate Academic Services, Career Services, Service Learning and our disabilities program (SNAP) under one roof, and the remodeling of the Stern Student Center to facilitate student interaction all give evidence of this new focus. After a decade and more of enrollment growth, the College made the decision to stabilize enrollments so that we could "catch up to our growth" both in the classroom, with the addition of fifty new

faculty positions resulting in smaller classes, and around the campus, with building additions like the fine new Addlestone Library, the new Beatty Center for the School of Business and the School of Education. The profile of our entering students has changed too. There are more out-of state students and more students from affluent backgrounds who attended private high schools. Our average SAT score has been steadily rising to the present level of 1220. [The list of schools we compete against](#)¹ for entering students contains more regional and national institutions, as we aspire to become a nationally preeminent liberal arts university. We have strengthened our grading standards by adding the full range of plus and minus grades in 2006, and we have recently raised our probation standards. We have seen a steady growth in our four- and six-year graduation rates (49% and 62%) as well. Yet not all change has been positive nor have we been able to effect change in every area: our minority student enrollment has not grown to match our access goals. We continue to work on the barriers and problems that hinder us in reaching those access goals.

In other areas, too, change has been slower. For instance, our General Education requirements have not changed in many years, nor have we updated our Freshman Seminar, which has been offered to entering students since 1985. In general, the national emphasis on first-year student experience has not been fully answered by a campus commitment to create a coherent and unique College of Charleston first-year experience for our students. Yet we have done many positive things for first-year students. We have developed a distinctive and well-attended Convocation for our entering students; we have recently revamped New Student Orientation, and we have added required advising for first-year students. However, over the past several years, as the development and focus of our QEP topic on the First-year Experience indicates, our faculty and administrators have recognized that we have both the need for a strong first-year experience for College of Charleston students and the capacity and ability to offer a dynamic first-year program.

There are two basic reasons that the College needs a strong and distinctive first-year experience. The first has to do with issues centered around the growth of the College, its identity as a liberal arts and sciences institution, and our movement toward a new, more intentional and coherent general education program; the second has to do with the evidence that our students can and should rise to greater educational challenges sooner in their college careers.

The College of Charleston has long prided itself on its strong liberal arts tradition. While it has the size and scope of a comprehensive university and was classified in that way until the Carnegie classifications were recently changed, the College clearly sees its liberal arts and sciences mission as central and its professional schools as strengthened by this mission. Last spring, the College conducted a campus-wide faculty discussion on the identity of the College as a public liberal arts and sciences university. A faculty committee designed a process by which faculty across campus could meet one another and talk about the identity of the College of Charleston. Eighty-seven groups of five faculty members each (435 out of approximately 500 faculty) were formed randomly with attention to balancing school, department and rank within each group. A convener was appointed for each group and the groups were asked to respond to the question: “What does it mean to call a college or university a ‘liberal arts and sciences institution’?” Conveners were then brought together to summarize and discuss their groups’ responses. The discussion concluded with a Campus Forum with then President Higdon and current Provost Jorgens. The participation in this process and discussion by faculty was widespread and vigorous. Here are some of the [responses](#)² from the eighty-seven groups:

“As a group, we feel that the focus is on undergraduate education, breadth of undergraduate education, and student contact/interaction with the faculty. Although CofC is one of the largest colleges in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), the mission has always been to focus on undergraduate education and faculty availability. The number of faculty at CofC allows that mission to be accomplished while still having a large student population.”

“A liberal arts and sciences institution is one at which all students experience the traditional ‘core’ courses in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, whether they major in one of these disciplines or in business, education, ... or some other more explicitly career-oriented goal. At the heart of the institution are goals such as those recently defined by the Gen Ed committee and approved by the Senate. It is a student-oriented institution.”

“We found a high degree of consensus among the teams represented by our group concerning the meaning of a ‘liberal arts and sciences institution.’ Liberal arts and sciences means a focus on undergraduate students who take a common set of foundation courses that provides breadth of education as well as a commitment to the teacher-scholar model and its emphasis on one-to-one relationships with undergraduate students.

There was less consensus among the groups concerning the meaning of size. Some groups discussed that “liberal arts and sciences” implies small classes where students develop relationships with the professor and each other. Other groups discussed whether ‘liberal arts’ implies a smaller campus, and yet another group rejected campus size as a necessary requirement for liberal arts and sciences.”

Several aspects of what it means to be a liberal arts and sciences institution emerge from this campus-wide faculty discussion: First, a liberal arts institution is primarily student-centered. Relationships between students and professors are highly valued. Second, liberal arts learning

has a “core” or common set of outcomes represented by a common set of requirements or courses. Third, professional education is enriched by this core background in the liberal arts that students bring to it.

The ideas that students should have frequent and meaningful contact with faculty and that they should have common experiences and develop a common core of skills are also at the heart of our efforts to [change and update our General Education requirements](#).³ While the discussion on defining liberal arts and sciences allowed faculty to share their ideals, the discussion of revising the general education requirements compels faculty to acknowledge anxieties about reaching those ideals: “...often our students do not achieve as much as they are capable of. We don’t believe that this is because we are not working hard enough to motivate students. Rather, we feel that we are not all working together; we are not working from a shared understanding of what each student needs to learn in order to reach that intellectual maturity that we wish all our graduates to attain. Our general education courses, instead of explicitly promoting this intellectual growth, seem to many students to be disconnected experiences that have little relevance to their major and/or to their life after graduation. We believe that students can experience their education differently, and that they can learn more from us as a result.”

The first step of the General Education Committee has been to develop a set of intellectual skills, areas of knowledge, and dispositions that students will develop at the College of Charleston. They are as follows:

- Research and Communication in Multiple Media and Language, including proficiency in
 - Gathering and using information
 - Effective writing and critical reading
 - Oral and visual communication
 - Foreign language
- Analytical and Critical Reasoning, including
 - Mathematical and scientific reasoning and analysis
 - Social and cultural analysis
 - Interdisciplinary analysis and creative problem-solving
- Historical, Cultural, and Intellectual Perspectives, including knowledge of
 - Human history and the natural world
 - Artistic, cultural, and intellectual achievements
 - Human behavior and social interaction
 - Perspectives and contributions of academic disciplines
- International and Intercultural Perspectives, gained by
 - Knowledge of international and global contexts
 - Experiencing, understanding, and using multiple cultural perspectives

-
- Personal and Ethical Perspectives, including experiences that promote
 - Self-understanding, curiosity and creativity
 - Personal, academic, and professional integrity
 - Moral and ethical responsibility; community and global citizenship
 - Advanced Knowledge and Skills in Major Area of Study, consisting of
 - Skills and knowledge of the discipline
 - Sequence of coursework that fosters intellectual growth
 - Coursework that extends and build upon knowledge and skills gained from the core curriculum
 - The ability to transfer the skills and knowledge of the major into another setting

The General Education committee also has strongly recommended that the general education requirements include the common First-year Experience that this Quality Enhancement Plan proposes. The General Education committee sees the addition of a vigorous and intentional First-year Experience, including curricular elements like a new first-year seminar and learning communities, as one of the most important ways that we can make learning more coherent and connected to our liberal arts goals. Within the proposed General Education curriculum, the First-Year Experience will be the ‘cornerstone’ upon which an engaged and productive educational experience at the College of Charleston will be built. The faculty have been involved for several years in discussion about the first-year experience, centering around a revamping of the existing Freshman Seminars. The Faculty Senate charged both the [Academic Planning Committee](#)⁴ and subsequent *ad hoc* committees to examine this issue in recent years. Yet while interest has been high on the issue of developing a first-year program, problems remained to be solved.

The discussions of the faculty on its liberal arts mission, on general education, and on a new approach to the first year indicate that College of Charleston faculty members believe that it is important that they make personal connections with entering students and that they challenge entering students intellectually. But, as the institution has grown, as professional education has gained vigor, and as the College acknowledges that the coherence provided by an intentional general education curriculum has been weak in the past, we also have clear evidence from the National Survey of Student Engagement that we are not doing as well in these areas as we would hope. The National Survey of Student Engagement produces benchmarks in five areas of student engagement: Level of Academic Challenge; Active and Collaborative Learning; Student – Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experience; and Supportive Campus Environment. In

most of these benchmarks, the College of Charleston scores slightly higher than their fellow Master's-level institutions. But when compared with the top fifty percentile and the top ten percentile, the College is behind in each one. In all of the benchmark areas, College of Charleston had some results that were cause for concern:

Critically Low Areas of First-Year Student Satisfaction – NSSE 2005

- Level of Academic Challenge
 - Spent more than 25 hours a week preparing for class (7%)
 - Wrote 5 or more papers or reports of 5 to 19 pages (24%)
- Active and Collaborative Learning
 - Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course (7%)
 - Made a class presentation (24%)
 - Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (36%)
 - Worked with other students on projects during class (43%)
- Student-Faculty Interaction
 - Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (9%)
 - Discussed ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (19%)
 - Worked with faculty members on a research project outside of course or program requirements (30%)
 - Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (32%)
- Enriching Educational Experiences
 - Spent 5 hours or more involved in co-curricular activities (26%)
 - Institution encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (45%)
- Supportive Campus Environment
 - Institution helped student cope with non-academic responsibilities (33%)
 - Institution provided support needed to thrive socially (46%)
 - Positive relationships with administrative personnel and offices (50%)

Many of these areas identified as low on the NSSE, particularly Student-Faculty Interaction and Active and Collaborative Learning, are areas that College of Charleston faculty have not considered problematic in the past, and, in fact, have thought were strengths. Most faculty members believe that students and faculty interact frequently. In fact, it is undoubtedly true that some students and some faculty have a high level of interaction, but our students are telling us that this is far less common than we would like to believe.

There are areas of the NSSE where College of Charleston students report a higher level of interaction in the five benchmark areas:

Areas of First-Year Student Satisfaction – NSSE 2005

- Level of Academic Challenge
 - Application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations (76%)
 - Institution emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (81%)
 - Analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory (84%)
 - Read 5 or more assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings (84%)
- Active and Collaborative Learning
 - Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions (73%)
- Student-Faculty Interaction
 - Received prompt feedback on academic performance (71%)
- Enriching Educational Experiences
 - Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (71%)
 - Planned or participated in a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment (83%)
 - Planned or participated in foreign language coursework (85%)
 - Planned or participated in community service or volunteer work (87%)
- Supportive Campus Environment
 - Institution provides support needed to help achieve academic success (76%)
 - Positive relationships with other students (79%)
 - Positive relationships with faculty members (79%)

Note, however, that none of these benchmark areas rise to the 90% level and they average just 79.1%. It is not acceptable to the College's goals and aspirations, as well as to our view of ourselves, that our positive NSSE scores average at best a C+. It indicates that, at least from our first-year students' perspective, faculty are not as positively involved in creating learning opportunities as we believe ourselves to be. This gap, in itself, is sufficient to help us recognize the need for a more challenging and supportive First-year Experience.

It is informative to put our NSSE results into the framework of the information we gather about our students from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), sponsored by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. We have been administering the CIRP to entering students for many years. Besides giving us a solid demographic picture of our entering students, the CIRP asks students to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses and to rate their reasons for coming to college. Over the last several years (2004-2006), College of Charleston entering students have described themselves more often than those at other four-year colleges with a high degree of selectivity as having creativity, leadership ability, drive to achieve,

intellectual and social self confidence. They value self-understanding and understanding of others; they rank “to make me a more cultured person” and “improving my understanding of other countries and cultures” more highly than their peers at other selective colleges as reasons to get a college education. They have worked on political campaigns at a higher rate and been a guest in a teacher’s home more often as well.

This may seem like a group of very promising students. Yet the CIRP also reveals that, in high school, our entering students (46.3%) were more frequently bored in class than their peers at other selective colleges; 87.9% of them reported studying less than ten hours a week in high school; 89.8% read for pleasure 5 hrs a week or less; and 40.8% acknowledged partying 3-10 hours a week. In both the highs of their self description and the lows of their often contradictory behavior, College of Charleston students resemble entering college students elsewhere. In their article, “Expectations and Performance” in *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student*, Karen Maitland Schilling and Karl L. Schilling have compared the expectations of entering students with their actual engagement in the first year: “...not only do students report working less than they expected, but they also do fewer additional readings outside of class than they expected, they read even less about scientific theories and concepts, go to art exhibits and varied cultural events less than expected, and so on. The overall pattern of results suggests that although students’ initial expectations for their academic involvement may be less than faculty might wish, their actual engagement is even less than those initial expectations” (114). Others have referred to this gap between expectation and performance as the “freshman myth,” blaming the student for not living up to his or her own expectations and for allowing negative intellectual patterns developed in high school to persist in college. Yet, as the Schillings point out, faculty are complicit too. This lower level of performance does not necessarily result in lower grades: too many students have become “good economists...accurately reading the environmental cues in their new surroundings about how much they needed to work in order to achieve the grades they desired” (114).

Our students, who see themselves as creative or having a drive to achieve, or who describe their reasons for wanting a college education as a desire for greater cultural understanding, are not being disingenuous or deceiving. Rather they are expressing their aspirations. Yet they acknowledge, in other ways, patterns of behavior that can and, in fact, should, make these aspirations difficult to achieve. Our faculty, who see themselves as

encouraging active learning and close student-faculty interaction, are also expressing aspirations rather than reality. Both faculty and students can do much better in establishing and responding to academic challenges. We believe that our Quality Enhancement Plan for a more vigorous and intentional First-year Experience can address the aspiration/achievement gap that many students experience and thoughtful faculty acknowledge. Thus our goals are twofold: first, to give our entering students an experience that models our liberal arts goals and leads to demonstrable student learning gains; second, to challenge our students to do more, to “go further faster” and to embrace their aspirations through solid achievements in their first year. We believe both of these goals can be achieved by participation in demanding yet supportive first-year programs like our academic learning communities and our first-year seminar.

In their longitudinal study of student patterns of time management, the Schillings point out that “[t]he patterns of allocation of time observed in a student’s last year of college mirror the patterns of time allocation in the first year. Time apportioned for academic work is remarkably stable over students’ four years. So if little time investment is required to master the demands of the first-year-curriculum, that minimal time investment will likely characterize students’ academic engagement in their senior year” (115). Thus we expect to make sure that our students’ academic engagement and learning in their first semester creates patterns of work and achievement that will sustain them to their last semester. By creating a challenging and supportive model for our First-year Experience, we hope to provide the “demanding introductions to college/university life that are designed to exercise the mind and produce a fitness for later college-level work - work designed to live up to the freshman myth and narrow another troubling gap between expectations and experience” (115).

By adding well-thought-out learning community experiences which include peer-facilitated reflective seminars, we expect to demonstrate to our students the interconnectedness of knowledge and their role in generating knowledge, while introducing them to a community that values and supports intellectual achievement. By revamping our current freshman seminar, which is based on a “continuing orientation model,” to embrace an “academic model” (Hunter and Linder) and by setting cornerstone learning goals supported by our new General Education goals and our liberal arts aspirations, we expect to challenge our students intellectually in a supportive environment and to establish a pattern of challenge and support for their entire academic career. By linking their academic focus to enhanced student support services, we

expect to address and close the traditional gap in collaboration and coordination between academic and student affairs in order to create a seamless learning campus. By rigorously assessing the totality of our First-year Experience, we expect to make appropriate adjustments to strengthen our programs and reach our learning goals. We acknowledge that our goals are high, but we believe we can reach them; we are excited about the prospect of a new College of Charleston First-year Experience and we are ready to begin.

¹ College of Charleston Competition Analysis, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Competition_Analysis.pdf.

² “Discussing the Identity of the College as a Liberal Arts Institution,” available at <http://www.cofc.edu/~senate/CollegeIdentity06/index.html>.

³ Proposals from the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education, available at <http://www.cofc.edu/~oap/gened/proposal/>.

⁴ Minutes of the Faculty Senate, April 13, 2004, available at <http://www.cofc.edu/~senate/archives/minutes/min041304.pdf>.

II. Description of How the QEP was Developed

The SACS Executive Steering Committee was formed in June 2003 for the purpose of guiding the institution through the SACS reaffirmation process. On June 30, 2003, a report prepared by Dr. Pamela Isacco Niesslein., entitled [*Proposal to Prepare for 2007 SACS Reaccreditation*](#)¹ Using the ‘Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement’ provided a structure within which the work of the committee would be completed. The initial members of the Committee were:

- President
- Sr. V.P. for Strategic Planning and Administration
- Provost
- Accreditation Liaison
- Director of Institutional Research

As the work progressed, the following positions were added to the Committee:

- Dean of the Graduate School
- Dean of Students
- Three faculty representatives representing the School of the Arts , the School of Science and Math, the School of Business and Economics
- The Chair of the Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness

The responsibilities of the Committee were as follows:

- Coordinate and manage the internal review process
- Oversee development of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and institutional review of compliance with the Principles
- Ensure institution-wide engagement in the process
- Develop timelines and completion strategies
- Follow-up and implement the QEP

An early version of the *Principles* was used to provide the Committee with the elements needed for a quality QEP:

- Course of action for institutional improvement that addresses one or more significant issues that are critical or essential to the institution and that contribute to institutional quality with special attention to student learning.
- Comprehensive and thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the learning environment to support student learning and to accomplish the mission of the institution.
- Complements and is a part of the institution’s ongoing institution-wide planning and evaluation processes (does not replace these processes) and is a campus-wide endeavor (must engage all appropriate campus constituencies).

-
- Must contain specific, well-defined goals related to the issue of substance and depth, expected to lead to measurable results to reach the desired outcomes.
 - May not exceed 100 pages (with no more than 75 narrative), including narrative and appendices.

Early QEP discussions of the Committee centered upon the selection of a “significant issue or issues” that would be critical to the institution. Through a careful examination of the College’s [Strategic Plan](#)², the [Fourth Century Initiative](#)³, as well as elements from faculty committees and the College’s assessment documents, several topics clearly emerged: general education, academic advising, the first year experience of our students, student support services, and undergraduate educational programs. Initially there was strong presidential support for choosing “retention” as the topic, and discussions ensued regarding whether this was really a “student learning outcome” or was retention itself an outcome of intentional student learning that led to measurable student success? The answer was clearly the latter.

Over the next year (2004), the Committee participated externally in discussions with chairs of the departments, faculty members (through the faculty representatives on the Committee), and the Board of Trustees to further define these significant issues in order to refine the topic for the QEP. In fall 2004, the decision was made by the Committee, based upon all the discussions, to center the QEP on the general education component of the College’s curriculum, with an added emphasis on advising. Subsequent debate, however, conducted during the spring of 2005, changed the direction of the QEP once again. Based on a Noel-Levitz report on advising at the College, it was decided that change in this area was urgent. An advising taskforce of faculty and administrators was formed and made recommendations to the Provost for changes to first –year advising. These changes were implemented beginning in Fall, 2005. Also, in response to faculty deliberations, the Provost of the College created an ad-hoc committee of faculty and administrators charged with a review of general education and with instituting changes to the current general education program to ensure its responsiveness to current best practices as well as to develop measurable student outcomes and to assess achievement of these outcomes. While improvement to advising was considered too urgent to delay, changes to the general education requirements were thought to be possibly too broad for a focused Quality Enhancement Plan. It was also deemed possible that general education reform might take several years, again making it a risky possibility for the QEP process.

The faculty Academic Planning Committee reviewed the current Freshman Seminar course (FRSR 101) in 2003-2004 to try to determine its future direction at the College. The faculty felt that an inquiry-based seminar taught by roster faculty was more in keeping with the vision of the College that was emerging through the strategic planning process and the Fourth Century Initiative. In fall 2003, an ad-hoc faculty committee was formed to further refine the concept of the new first year seminar, reporting to the Faculty Senate in April, 2004. In January 2005, the new Office of the Academic Experience was created and its new head, Dr. Kay H. Smith, was named co-chair of the QEP due to the experience in student learning she brought to the College (she was also added to the Executive Steering Committee). In fall 2005 and spring 2006, after additional deliberation with the *ad hoc* Freshman Seminar committee, the academic departments, the deans of the schools, the Academic Council, and the Executive Steering Committee, the current QEP topic was selected. The compelling initiative that emerged through the three-year phase of discovery was the First Year Experience. Over the next few months, through consultation with the *ad hoc* General Education committee, the Deans, department chairs and the Faculty Senate, the topic was further refined to include the development of two curricular innovations for first year students, an inquiry based first year seminar (FYSM 101) and interdisciplinary learning communities. In order for the QEP to truly encompass the entirety of the Freshman Year Experience, academic support services in advising, orientation, residence life, and other areas of student life were incorporated in order to coordinate with these two curricular elements.

Four committees were formed to address these issues: First Year Seminar, Learning Communities, Student Support Service, and Assessment. The membership of the QEP committees deliberately overlapped with membership in the *ad hoc* General Education committee. Faculty who had worked on earlier committees considering what to recommend regarding the Freshman Seminar were also included. Excellent leadership was provided for the two curricular QEP committees by Dr. Frances Welch, current Dean of the School of Education and Dr. Hugh Wilder, then acting Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Several department chairs were also represented on the committees. Oversight has been provided by a QEP Executive Committee comprised of the chairs and co-chairs of the QEP and each of the subcommittees.

Committee formation took place during the Spring semester of 2006, with most of the committee work occurring during the summer and fall of 2006. During this time period, several presentations were made to the Student Government Association, and a number of student focus groups were conducted to gather student views about proposed changes. Presentations were made to the Board of Trustees' Academic Affairs committee on two occasions, and Demetria Clemons, a member of the Board, was appointed to the QEP Executive committee. At the retreat for department chairs in August, 2005, the members of the Learning Communities committee did a presentation outlining their work at the 2006 Learning Communities Institute, and a similar presentation was done by the First Year Seminar committee chair at the Academic Forum for deans and department chairs in late fall of 2006. In addition, QEP Executive Committee members did numerous presentations to departments from all of the Schools. This work has resulted in a wider understanding among many constituents of the challenges and opportunities presented by our First-Year Experience Quality Enhancement Plan.

So we came full circle: beginning with the potential topics of general education, academic advising, the first year experience of our students, student support services, and undergraduate educational programs, we have been fortunate to be able to incorporate these elements into a cohesive plan to address the challenges presented by first year students at the College of Charleston and to provide them with a structure within which to meet specific learning outcomes. The QEP Executive Committee will continue to work closely with the General Education Committee (whose plan include the first year seminars as well as the concept of a coordinated first year experience), the Provost, deans, chairs, faculty governance, students and the Board of Trustees to ensure campus-wide participation and buy-in as we undertake the work of the QEP.

¹ *Proposal to Prepare for 2007 SACS Reaccreditation*, available at <https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Proposal%20to%20Prepare%20for%202007%20060303.pdf>.

² Institutional Strategic Plan, available at <http://crmc.cofc.edu/plan/isp.htm>.

³ Fourth Century Initiative, available at <http://crmc.cofc.edu/plan/4ci.htm>.

III. Identification of the Topic and of Desired Student Learning Outcomes

Identification of the Topic

The College of Charleston's Quality Enhancement Plan is to create an intentional and challenging multi-part First-Year Experience. Our First-Year Experience will consist of two curricular choices, Learning Communities and First-Year Seminars. Both of these curricular choices will fulfill general educational goals and have specific learning outcomes. Learning support for entering students in a variety of areas such as the Center for Student Learning is also part of our First-Year Experience Quality Enhancement Plan. Enhanced programming in specific areas such as Orientation, Advising, Summer Reading and Residence Life will also support student learning goals and lead to a more involved First-Year Experience at the College. All aspects of the First-Year Experience will be systematically assessed to demonstrate progress both in student learning outcomes and in engagement of students. Changes to the First-Year Experience will be based on evidence and will be designed to strengthen the program.

Expected Benefits

Based on the experiences of other institutions which offer comparable first-year seminars, as well as our own experience with the current Freshman Seminar (FRSR 101), expectations for the new comprehensive First-Year Experience program include:

For Students

- To enhance intellectual development and strengthen higher order thinking skills (see specific learning outcomes);
- To improve campus engagement and satisfaction;
- To improve degree completion and time to completion rates;
- To improve academic performance (as measured, for example, by improvements in students' grade point averages over their incoming predicted grade point averages).

For Faculty

- To offer new professional development opportunities, including new course development, pedagogical innovation, and research and publication on the scholarship of teaching;
- To offer new opportunities specifically to teach in areas of interest and expertise;
- To improve familiarity with the interests, abilities and needs of first-year students;
- To facilitate pedagogical collaboration.

For the College

- To integrate the First-Year Experience and the First-Year Seminar into the general education program and the College curriculum;
- To develop an exemplary First-Year Experience program, including the new First-Year Seminar, which is deserving of recognition and support.

Definition of Student Learning

Learning involves the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills and abilities.

Student learning is an intentional, active, continuing process. As a key element of the proposed General Education program at College of Charleston, the First-Year Experience provides student learning opportunities in the form of an introduction to the liberal arts and sciences education offered at the College. The College of Charleston's Quality Enhancement Plan for the First-Year Experience will establish clear expectations for college-level learning. In this context, student learning refers primarily to the deliberate cultivation of effective intellectual habits of inquiry, understanding and engagement, including:

- Asking productive questions, framing problems, defining issues;
- Organizing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating data;
- Speaking and writing fluently and clearly;
- Mastering a variety of problem-solving skills;
- Seeking and establishing conceptual connections within and across disciplines;
- Learning how to learn;
- Seeking awareness of and appreciation for human knowledge concerning the natural world, products of human imagination, and the diversity of human cultures;
- Seeking self-understanding;
- Engaging constructively in a community of learners.

Overall curricular aims of the First-Year Experience

- To help first-year students gain and strengthen the skills and habits of mind which will enable them to succeed in their academic pursuits and in their continuing development as life-long learners responsible for their own learning;
- To demonstrate clear standards and expectations for college-level learning;
- To introduce the liberal arts and sciences education offered at College of Charleston;
- To challenge and stimulate students, widening their intellectual horizons through disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry, close work with regular faculty members, and collaborative learning experiences in small seminars;
- To foster the development of small learning communities and friendships based on common academic work;
- To help students develop higher level thinking skills, including the application of ideas, analysis of problems and concepts, evaluation of proposals and choices, and the creation of new hypotheses (Bloom's taxonomy revised);

-
- To help students learn how to learn: to recognize different cognitive skills, understand their own learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, and adjust their learning strategies to new situations;
 - To acquaint students with the academic resources available at College of Charleston, including the library, information technology, and the Center for Student Learning;
 - To acquaint students with and foster respect for the values of academic integrity and the College Honor Code;
 - To encourage students to become constructively engaged and responsible members of the College and local communities.

First-Year Seminars will, in most cases, give general education credit in the appropriate area. Most Learning Communities will consist of courses that give general education credit. Some First-Year Seminars will be discipline-based and some will be interdisciplinary, while all Learning Communities will be interdisciplinary. All First-Year Seminars and Learning Communities will share some expected student learning outcomes; other outcomes will be specific to particular seminars and to particular courses within Learning Communities and will be articulated by the instructors of those seminars and courses. Learning Communities and First-Year Seminars may also develop separate learning outcomes based on the differing types of curricular structures they represent. For instance, FYSM 101 might stress in-depth research more frequently than Learning Communities, while Learning Communities might engage in interdisciplinary projects more often than First-Year Seminars.

Desired Student Learning Outcomes

The curricular elements of the First-Year Experience, the First-Year Seminars and the Learning Communities specifically address the academic needs of first-year students. They are designed to be an integral part of the new General Education program at College of Charleston. The current proposal for the new General Education program recommends the addition of a First-Year Experience requirement, through which all students would be required to complete either a First-Year Seminar or linked Learning Communities courses. Each component of the First-Year Experience requirement is designed to introduce students to academic inquiry at the college level in an engaging and rigorous way, to inaugurate students' participation in general education at College of Charleston, and to help them develop the skills and dispositions required to succeed at the College. The aims of the First-Year Experience are also intended to provide general support for the goals of the General Education program. Thus, the First-Year Seminars

and the Learning Communities will be characterized by: academic rigor; high expectations appropriate for first-year students; and assignments that require students to demonstrate understanding of course material through writing, research, and presentations.

Specific Student Learning Outcomes

We have identified eight specific learning outcomes that reflect the overall aims of the First Year Experience. These learning outcomes will be shared by all FYSM 101 sections and Learning Communities. At the conclusion of the First Year Seminar or Learning Community, each student will demonstrate improvement in the following areas:

- Effective reading, writing and speech;
 - *Specific Measure:* By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will complete at least one paper which demonstrates acceptable and appropriate written communication skills as understood in the discipline and as measured by a rubric approved by the First-Year Experience Committee.
- Use of academic resources and student support services at College of Charleston, including the library, information technology, the Center for Student Learning, the Academic Advising and Planning Center, the office of Career Services, and other appropriate academic resources, student support services, and cultural resources;
 - *Specific Measure:* By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of familiarity with the College library, information technology resources, the Center for Student Learning, the Academic Advising and Planning Center, and other appropriate academic resources and student support services.
- Familiarity with appropriate data, information and knowledge-gathering techniques and research skills in the discipline;
 - *Specific Measure:* By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge of information gathering techniques and research skills as appropriate in the discipline or to interdisciplinary learning.

The College will contract with the Policy Center on the First Year of College to participate in their Foundations of Excellence program during the fourth year of implementation of our QEP. One component of this contract will be to develop more specific learning outcomes for the following areas:

- Using appropriate critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in a variety of contexts;
- Understanding the goals of liberal arts and sciences education and the core values of College of Charleston;
- Understanding and respecting the values of academic integrity, including the College Honor Code;
- Using effective skills and strategies for working collaboratively;
- Engaging constructively in the College and local communities.

Assessment measures for these learning goals will also be explored through our work with the Policy Center.

IV. Literature Review and Best Practices

The body of literature on the First-Year Experience is large, rich and growing, particularly if one includes the pertinent literature on liberal arts education and general education reform. Perhaps one should start with John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938) and Alexander Meikeljohn's *The Experimental College* (1932). Meikeljohn's book, in particular, focuses on the development of his experimental residential college at the University of Wisconsin in the 1920s. Meikeljohn is inspiring, practical and surprisingly contemporary in his description of the chief task of the teacher working with students of seventy-five years ago: "...to get their minds active, to give them a sense of the urgency of human need, to establish in them the activity of seeing and solving problems. It is true that they are sadly in need of information, but it is far more true that they need the desire for information....[F]or them every new fact will take on significance, every new situation will become an object of active inquiry" (25).

In stressing active inquiry, Meikeljohn anticipates the educational reforms of the last ten years, particularly as they are expressed in such important works as the Association of American Colleges and Universities' [*Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as the Nation Goes to College*](#)¹ (2002), which stresses high expectations, intentional practices, and engaged liberal education. Likewise, the American College Personnel Association's [*Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*](#)² (2002) notes that transformative learning "always occurs in the active context of students' lives" (12). Active inquiry, high expectations, and intentional practices in the liberal arts context have guided both our work in designing the First-Year Experience at College of Charleston and our reading and research in preparation for that work.

Perhaps the three most recent works that have influenced various First-Year Experience QEP committees and their members at College of Charleston are *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (Barefoot, Gardner et al, 2005), *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (Kuh, Kinzie et al, 2005), and *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student* (Upcraft, Gardner et al, 2005). Both *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* and *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* focus on the conditions necessary to create outstanding programs in a variety of higher education settings, giving extensive examples of successful

educational efforts. The Barefoot and Gardner book, *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College*, highlights “thirteen campuses...for intensive case studies based on ‘their comprehensive attention to first-year students - attention that is embedded in or linked to the curriculum and co-curriculum and is coupled with evaluation and evidence of continuous improvement’” (xiv). Of particular interest and usefulness are case studies of institutions of similar size as College of Charleston, like Part Five’s study of Appalachian State University (273), where administrative support and coordination of effort resulted in an outstanding first-year program. The description of Elon University’s program in Part Three is also inspiring because of the thoughtful development of areas of “community enquiry and engagement” (166) at that institution. Although Elon is a private university significantly smaller than College of Charleston, its focus on coordinated support of liberal arts inquiry in the first year is admirable and useful in our quest to raise the standards of liberal arts inquiry for our first-year students.

Based on Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice), *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* describes twenty institutions which exceeded expectations in their National Survey of Student Engagement outcomes. These twenty schools “share six features that foster student engagement and persistence:

- A ‘living’ mission and ‘lived’ educational philosophy
- An unshakeable focus on student learning
- Environments adapted for educational enrichment
- Clearly marked pathways for student success
- An improvement oriented ethos
- Shared responsibility for educational quality and student success” (24).

The description of high expectations for student performance in the first year at very different institutions like University of Michigan and Wabash College contributed to our search for best practices that we could scale up or down as we designed our first-year programs. The QEP Learning Communities committee read two chapters of *Student Success in College*, “Chapter 7: Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality and Student Success” and “Chapter 12: Supportive Campus Environments,” in preparation for attending the National Learning Communities Institute at Evergreen State College in June, 2006.

The last of these three important books, *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College*, is a rich compendium of articles

on every aspect of the first year. This book has been of particular importance to the work of various committees. Hunter and Linder's "First-Year Seminars" (275) provided a taxonomy of first-year seminars that was used extensively by our own committee addressing that area. Similarly, the chapter on "Learning Communities" (371), by Jodi Levine Laufgraben, reinforced what we had learned from Laufgraben and Shapiro's *Sustaining and Improving Learning Communities* (2004). Both Hrabowski's chapter on "Fostering First-Year Success of Underrepresented Minorities" (125) and Jones' "Realities of Diversity and the Climate for First-Year Students" (141) helped the QEP leadership link specific ideas about how to develop first-year programs with ideas about the crucial need for increasing access and diversity on our campus. Members of our Student Support committee read various chapters including "Supplemental Instruction" (308), "Academic Advising" (320), "Service Learning and the First-Year Student" (356), and "First-Year Student Living Environments" (410). Our QEP Assessment committee read virtually all of "Part Six: Assessing the First College Year." One of the most important articles we read from *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student* was Karen Maitland Schilling and Karl L. Shilling's "Expectations and Performance" (108). Along with the Schillings' similar article "Increasing Expectations for Student Effort" in *About Campus* (1999), which was also read by our General Education Committee, this article influenced our focus on helping our students "go further faster" by carefully increasing the liberal arts challenges that we bring to our students and facilitating their success through high but transparent expectations.

We were very fortunate to be able to use *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student* as extensively as we did. Besides having the most current view of the state of first-year programs, it has an exhaustive bibliography for us to draw upon. All three of these books, *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College*, *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*, and *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student*, also gave us many ways of identifying best practices at a variety of institutions. Often we followed up readings in these texts with exploring first-year experience web sites of colleges and universities that had been brought to our attention through these books. While many members of the QEP committees might cite other influential texts that helped shape their thinking, these three have probably been both the most comprehensive and most useful in designing and shaping our own distinctive College of Charleston First-Year Experience.

The Office for the Academic Experience maintains and has made available to members of the QEP committees an [extensive collection of resource material](#)³.

Web Sites

Besides readings, we consulted web sites frequently. The most useful web sites were those that informed us broadly about the issues and innovations we were considering in designing our First-Year Experience. The Learning Commons web site, focusing on learning communities and sponsored by the [Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education](#)⁴ is full of information and links to articles and research on learning communities. Likewise, the web site maintained by the [National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition](#)⁵ is a compendium of useful information. Several QEP committee members also participate in the FYE listserv that is maintained by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience, where we can find and share information about the hands-on aspects of these programs. [The Policy Center on the First Year of College](#)⁶ also has a useful web site and all of these sites have links to other valuable resources. Assistant Vice President for New Student Programs Mindy Miley, a member of the QEP Learning Communities committee, also created a shared folder that contained these links as well as other documents and articles that the committee consulted. Of course, all the committees used the web extensively to explore a variety of web sites searching for examples and best practices as we began to work out the details of what we wished to attempt at College of Charleston.

Conferences

Much of what we have learned has come not only from readings and on-line exploration, but also from a carefully crafted program of sending College of Charleston faculty and staff to important conferences and institutes in 2006 to experience first hand the synergies involved in creating a successful first-year experience. Conference and institute attendance also helped us develop a more nuanced sense of best practices. In February, 2006, a large contingent of faculty and staff (Dr. Kay Smith, Office for the Academic Experience; Dr. Bill Olejniczak, Chair of the History Department and an original and ongoing member of the QEP First-Year Seminar committee and previous Faculty Senate committees on the first-year experience; Dr. Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students and Chair of the QEP FYE Assessment committee; Ms. Mindy Miley and Ms.

Page Keller from New Student Programs (Mindy also co-chairs the QEP Student Support Services committee and Page is on the QEP Learning Communities committee); Ms. Mary Burkard, an experienced instructor in our current Freshman Seminar and a member of the QEP First-Year Seminar committee) attended the 25th Anniversary First-Year Experience Conference in Atlanta. Sponsored by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, this very large conference offered something for everyone. Of particular importance was the workshop on assessing first-year programs offered by Randy Swing of the Policy Center for the First-Year Experience, which Dr. Jeri Cabot attended. In conversations with Dr. Swing, we were also able to sketch out a way that we could use the Policy Center's Foundations of Excellence program to assess our future progress in creating and sustaining our First-Year Experience program.

In March, 2006, Dr. Kay Smith; Dr. Bob Mignone, Math professor and Speaker of the Faculty Senate; and Dr. Susan Kattwinkel, Associate Professor in the Theatre department and a member of the current QEP First-Year Seminar committee as well as several of its predecessors, attended the American Association of Colleges and Universities' General Education conference in Phoenix, Arizona. In late March, attendees at both conferences and others working on the First-Year Experience gathered at a breakfast where they shared what they had learned. Copies of handouts, power points, and articles from both conferences were made available and talk focused on how we could incorporate the information and innovations we had learned into our First-Year Experience. For instance, Page Keller shared information and handouts on Summer Reading and Convocation programs that she had gathered at the FYE conference. In this way we were able to bring back to campus many of the rewarding experiences we had at these important conferences.

Learning Communities Institute

For those of us working on Learning Communities, the most important work that we did was at the Eighth Annual National Summer Institute on Learning Communities, June 20-25, 2006, at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Since this Institute is by invitation only, we [applied in November, 2005](#)⁷ and were fortunate to be accepted for the '06 Institute. Those chosen to attend the Institute included Dr. Kay Smith, Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience and co-chair of the College of Charleston QEP; Dr. Fran Welch,

Dean of the School of Education and Chair of the QEP Learning Communities committee; Dr. Lynne Ford, Chair of the Political Science department; Dr. Deanna Caveny, Chair of the Math Department; Dr. Bruce Fleming, Internship Coordinator for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences; Dr. Alison Piepmeier, Director of the Women's and Gender Studies program; Mindy Miley, Assistant Vice President for New Student Programs; Lauren Collier, Director of Service Learning; and Page Keller, Director of Freshman Seminar and Provisional Programs. We worked with the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education to get ready for the Institute. We prepared extensive demographic information on College of Charleston to send to the Washington Center and followed up with a conference call with Gilles Malnarich, Co-Director of the Institute. This helped place us in a team of schools with some similarities to ours, including the University of Cincinnati, College of St. Catherine, Oregon State University and St. Cloud State University. We were asked to prepare a series of questions that we hoped to explore at the conference. Our questions included:

1. What is the relationship between learning communities and departments? What can the learning communities movement learn from good departmental practices? Can the LC movement sustain itself without the institutional imbedding that departments enjoy? And what can departments, particularly large departments, learn from learning communities?
2. Are some learning community formations better than others in accomplishing specific goals? When should we use a residential model as opposed to a non-residential cohort model? Are outcomes different for residential, two linked classes, three linked classes, etc.? Does peer instruction, peer leadership etc. affect outcomes?
3. What do we mean by outcomes? Jean Henscheid talks about the "Provostial Four" - increased retention, increased graduation rate, higher student satisfaction, higher gpa, but what about learning outcomes? Greater facility with interdisciplinarity? Synthesis, and/or application of learning? Understanding of the social construction of knowledge? Do LC's do more than increase the numbers? How can we be sure that they will raise the level of intellectual challenge as they raise the level of support?
4. Should we target certain populations or courses? Should we have a broad initiative? Should LC's grow out of an attempt to help students get through identified academic difficulties or should they be more broad based and designed in part to help students achieve social adjustment in an academic setting?
5. How much collaboration between/among members of an LC team is necessary/desirable for the LC to be successful?

The work we did in developing these questions and working with the Washington Center staff prepared us for a productive experience at the Institute. The QEP Learning Communities committee also read a packet of articles provided by the Washington Center staff, including several chapters from both *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* and *Sustaining and Improving Learning Communities*. We also read the chapter “The Deep Democratic Tradition in America” from Cornel West’s *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism*. It helped develop our sense that learning communities would be good places for students to practice civic engagement and service learning.

At the Institute, we were able to find answers to most of our questions and also to learn to ask new questions. The College of Charleston team worked very well together on the central exercise of the Institute, [the Synthesis Report](#).⁸ It became the basis of our plan for creating learning communities. But in some ways, as important as the work we did together was the advice that we received. We worked with outstanding learning-community and first-year-experience practitioners to develop our plan. David Schoem, who is Faculty Director of the Michigan Community Scholars program at the University of Michigan, was particularly helpful. We were struggling with how to design learning communities that include “continuing orientation and transition issues” as well as “deep democracy issues” without taking instructional time that was needed for coverage of materials in each of the linked courses. David suggested that we look at the model that the Michigan Community Scholars program uses. We adopted a variation on that model to create a one-hour, non-credit “reflective seminar” that will be taught by a trained student peer facilitator to accompany each learning community. David’s article “Sustaining Living Learning Communities” in Laufgraben and Shapiro’s *Sustaining and Improving Learning Communities* were also valuable reading.

Nancy Shapiro, the author of *Sustaining and Improving Learning Communities*, was also a valuable resource for us. She recounted for us some of the experiences she had as the founding Executive Director of the University of Maryland College Park Scholars program. She warned us that we needed to build our learning communities from courses taught by respected faculty members who would become exemplary models of what we were trying to achieve. We appreciated the advice that she gave us and have referred to her frequently in our discussions since we returned to College of Charleston. We also worked with Jillian Kinzie. Jillian is the principle investigator for Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practices) and co-

author of *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. Jillian helped us understand the implication of our NSSE scores, helping us focus on the gap between what we think we are doing in the areas of student engagement and what our students say that we are doing. While we spent the most time working with David Schoem, Nancy Shapiro and Jillian Kinzie, we also met and exchanged ideas with a number of other people who were faculty at the Learning Communities Institute, including Jean Henscheid, Doug Howard, and Jayme Milsap Stone. Overall, our experiences at the Institute helped make us feel connected to a larger community of practice with similar concerns and helped us value our work in new ways.

The work we did at the Learning Communities Institute was also recognized and affirmed by the Washington Center's subsequent invitation to apply to participate in their National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities. Our application was one of 27 that were accepted and we have been working for most of this academic year on learning to assess interdisciplinary learning in learning communities. We will go into more detail on this project in the Assessment portion of this report.

Learning Communities Best Practices

The Learning Communities committee also chose to do some extra work on understanding the dynamics of living-learning communities. We asked Bruce Fleming to prepare [a report on best practices in living-learning programs](#).⁹ He produced a report that drew our attention to long-standing living-learning programs like Western College at Miami of Ohio and Experimental College at Tufts University, as well as to more recent programs like New Century College at George Mason University and Sharpe Community Scholars at William and Mary. We further developed understanding of living-learning programs by sending Page Keller, a member of the Learning Communities committee; Heather Dykes, Director of Residence Education in Residence Life; and Tavia Sessoms, Director of Housing Administrative Services, to the ACUHO-I Living and Learning Programs and Residential Colleges Conference at Syracuse University. While they were at the conference, the College of Charleston group had an opportunity to meet with Lee Burdette Williams, Dean of Students at the University of Connecticut and an experienced living-learning advocate.

Similarly, Bruce Fleming and Page Keller did [a best practices study of the use of peer facilitators in learning communities](#),¹⁰ examining programs at Washington State University,

University of Oregon, and Portland State University. What we learned from both of these best practices reports was useful in designing our Learning Communities proposal. Examining best practices helped us to determine that we needed to think carefully about how we reward students for being peer facilitators. In all cases, best practices must be tempered by what is best for *our* particular students at *our* particular institution. While some institutions choose to give academic credit for being a peer facilitator, for instance, we determined that it would be better on our campus to pay peer facilitators. Many of our students choose to work and there are ample but low-paying jobs in the hospitality and tourism hub of Charleston to employ our students. These jobs can often become a distraction from academic life for our students. Offering slightly higher wages (\$10) and a chance to build their resumes will help move these students from less meaningful off-campus employment to a higher level of campus involvement. Thus, best practices helped us see the range of options, but in all cases, we have tried to choose the options that are not just “best” but “best for College of Charleston.”

First-Year Seminar Research

First-year seminars were not common on American campuses in 1985, when the College of Charleston first offered its own Freshman Seminar. By 2002, over 90% of American colleges and universities were offering various kinds of first-year seminars with different levels of student participation (Policy Center on the First Year of College, [*Second National Survey of First-Year Academic Practices*](#),¹¹ 2002). In the earlier years, first-year seminars most commonly were of the “extended orientation” or “student success” types; in recent years, academic seminars have become more common (Hunter and Linder, 281). Most of the College of Charleston’s peer institutions (including current as well as aspirational peers) offer some version of the first-year seminar. By now, it is well understood that a sound first-year seminar is an important part of a successful first-year program which engages students early in their undergraduate careers and leads to enhanced student learning and success as measured in a variety of ways. FYSM 101, the new first-year seminar proposed as part of our Quality Enhancement Plan at the College of Charleston, is designed to achieve the basic aim of such courses as described by Hunter and Linder (2005, 276):

First-year seminars facilitate learning: learning about a subject or combination of topics, learning about the institution, learning about the diversity within campus communities, but most important, learning about oneself and one’s abilities.

FYSM 101 also includes the following indicators of success as found by Hunter and Linder (2005, 277):

- It is offered for credit;
- It is part of the first-year curriculum;
- It includes instructor training and development;
- Instructors are compensated for developing and teaching the seminar;
- The course is rigorously assessed.

The Policy Center on the First Year of College conducted a research project during 2002-2004, which led to the publication of *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College*. This study identifies five criteria of institutional excellence (Barefoot, Gardner, Cutright, Morris, Schroeder, Schwartz, Siegel and Swing (2005, 6-8):

1. Evidence of an intentional, comprehensive approach to improving the first year that is appropriate to an institution's type and mission.
2. Evidence of assessment of the various initiatives that constitute this approach.
3. Broad impact on significant numbers of first-year students, including, but not limited to, special student subpopulations.
4. Strong administrative support for first-year initiatives, evidence of institutionalization, and durability over time.
5. Involvement of a wide range of faculty, student affairs professionals, academic administrators, and other constituent groups.

The College of Charleston's First-Year Experience program, and specifically our new First-Year Seminar, is designed to meet each one of these five criteria.

The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University issued its report, "[Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities](#),"¹² in 1998. While originally directed at research universities, this report has been influential at many of the finest undergraduate and masters level institutions in the United States. The Report lists "ten ways to change undergraduate education." The second way is to "construct an inquiry-based freshman year," including "seminar learning" (Boyer Commission):

The freshman year should be reconfigured for maximum benefit, and the sophomore year should evolve as a result of those changes. The focal point of the first year should be a small seminar taught by experienced faculty. The seminar should deal with topics that will stimulate and open intellectual horizons and allow opportunities for learning by inquiry in a collaborative environment. Working in small groups will give students not only direct intellectual contact with faculty and with one another but also give those new to their situations opportunities to find friends and to learn how to be students. Most of all, it should enable a professor to imbue new

students with a sense of the excitement of discovery and the opportunities for intellectual growth inherent in the university experience.

First-Year Seminar Best Practices

Since 2000, various committees at the College have been examining the current Freshman Seminar; specific planning began in 2003 for a new structure for the course, with greater faculty oversight and integration into the liberal arts curriculum. A number of forms of First-Year Seminars have been considered, with attention paid both to appropriateness to the mission of the College and to logistical concerns. The Policy Center on the First Year of College, [*Second National Survey of First-Year Academic Practices*](#)¹³ (2002) identified the four major types of First-Year Seminars as College Transition Themed seminars, Special Academic Theme seminars, Discipline-based Theme seminars, and Remedial/Study Skills Theme seminars. Only the first two types produced satisfactory results in a study of 10 learning outcomes. Over the course of the last six years, discussions among faculty at College of Charleston have led to an initiative to develop a First-Year Seminar that combines the strengths of the two forms. This type of seminar would address two major goals of the First-Year Experience at the College: 1) it introduces students to the academic rigor and liberal arts and sciences curriculum that they will encounter throughout their careers at the College, and 2) it acquaints students with both the history and resources of the college, so that they can both feel connected to the institution and best utilize its resources to ensure their success.

Although other structures of courses – including an add-on hour and short-term course (either at orientation or on regular occasions scattered throughout the first semester) – were considered, theoretical and logistical considerations led faculty to the three-hour, first-semester Special Academic Theme seminar that will include a significant amount of transition themed material. Throughout the five-year study period, similar courses at other institutions were investigated, for use as models in one or more aspects of the proposed course. While successful programs vary widely in format and content, several, even those at institutions quite different from College of Charleston, indicate the efficacy of course elements that seem suitable for our needs.

Miami (OH) University, The College of William and Mary, and Wake Forest University all require a Freshman Seminar and use the Special Academic Theme format. This format engendered the most excitement among our faculty, and shows the most promise for keeping

faculty interested in teaching the course, ensuring continued vitality. But like Kennesaw State University, which requires either a First-Year Seminar or a Learning Community, a certain amount of College Transition content is desired, particularly because we recognize that all students, no matter what their ability level, experience a transition to college. All programs examined keep course enrollment numbers low, including large institutions such as UNC – Chapel Hill and Trinity College – Duke University. We have decided to follow this example for our courses, keeping enrollment to 20-22 students – the maximum at which in-depth discussion and writing critiques can be done.

Some institutions make a point of advertising the participation of both junior and senior faculty in the program, including The College of William and Mary and Wake Forest University. This practice ensures the continued participation of faculty and is essential for the goal of connecting First-Year students to roster faculty members. Although the mostly adjunct faculty and staff teaching our current Freshman Seminar are highly qualified and enthusiastic, their lack of connection to academic departments does not help to integrate students into the life of the college.

Finally, successful programs at other institutions emphasize skills and habits that are consistent with our recently adopted goals for General Education. The College of William and Mary has as its goal for the class to “initiate students into the culture of critical thinking and independent inquiry that is at the core of the undergraduate program” (from the Course Catalog). [Sewanee - The University of the South](#)¹⁴ emphasizes “[f]aculty engagement, student interaction, intellectual excitement and integration of learning and living.” Like these schools and others (e.g., [Duke University](#),¹⁵ which uses the course to integrate students into the “community of scholars”), College of Charleston wants to integrate students into the scholarly life as early possible, in order to both ensure their success throughout their college careers and to instill in them a life-long love of learning.

Conclusion

As we noted at the beginning of our review of literature and best practices, the body of literature on the first-year experience is large and growing, as is the documentation of best practices. Still, we believe that we have gained familiarity with important parts of this body of work. We have also developed relationships with practitioners who have been generous in

sharing their knowledge with us. We have attended significant conferences as well. Most important, those of us on the QEP teams have developed a sharing relationship with each other, so that what we read and learn as individuals is more likely to become part of the wider collegial discussion of how best to implement the changes that we propose and have worked hard to bring about. In the final analysis, our best resources are each other.

¹ *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as the Nation Goes to College*, available at <http://www.greaterexpectations.org/>.

² *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*, available at <http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/LearningReconsidered.pdf>.

³ College of Charleston Office for the Academic Experience Resource Library, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Resource_Library.pdf.

⁴ Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, available at <http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/home>.

⁵ National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, available at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/>.

⁶ The Policy Center on the First Year of College, available at <http://www.firstyear.org/>.

⁷ Eighth Annual National Summer Institute on Learning Communities Institute Application, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Institute_Application.pdf.

⁸ Eighth Annual National Summer Institute on Learning Communities Synthesis Report, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Synthesis_Report.pdf.

⁹ Bruce Fleming, “Best Practices of Living Learning Communities,” available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Best_Practices_of_Living_Learning_Communities.pdf.

¹⁰ Bruce Fleming and Page Keller, “Best Practices for Peer Facilitators,” available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Best_Practices_for_Peer_Facilitators.pdf.

¹¹ *Second National Survey of First-Year Academic Practices*, available at <http://www.firstyear.org/survey/survey2002/index.html>.

¹² “Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities,” available at <http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/webform/II>.

¹³ *Second National Survey of First-Year Academic Practices*, available at <http://www.firstyear.org/survey/survey2002/index.html>.

¹⁴ Sewanee – The University of the South, The First Year Program, available at <http://www.sewanee.edu/fyp/>.

¹⁵ Duke University, First Year Experience, available at <http://www.aas.duke.edu/firstyear/writing20.html>.

V. Actions to be Implemented

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the Quality Enhancement Plan committees at College of Charleston (First-year Seminar, Learning Communities, Student Support, and Assessment) have worked diligently and studied many sources of information, including important publications, best practices, and informed practitioners, in developing their proposal for the First-year Experience. This chapter will outline the steps – commenced and ongoing – that will put what we have learned into practice.

Learning Communities Rationale, Goals, and Learning Outcomes

Learning communities have been selected as one component of our First-year Experience for several reasons. First, they allow students to reach specific learning goals and outcomes that are often difficult to accomplish in stand-alone classes. For the Learning Communities committee, the most important specific learning outcomes have to do with evidence of interdisciplinary learning. Working with the Washington Center for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education, we are becoming more aware of how to design assignments and evaluate student work for elements of interdisciplinary learning. Learning communities, which most often link courses from different disciplines, bringing together students and faculty with disparate interests and skills, provide an ideal setting for exploring interdisciplinary learning. We expect that students will demonstrate interdisciplinary learning frequently through writing and speaking assignments.

Second, we believe that learning communities address issues of active and collaborative learning in dynamic ways. “Active and Collaborative Learning” is an area in which we currently have evidence from our NSSE scores that we need improvement:

- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course (7%)
- Made a class presentation (24%)
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (36%)
- Worked with other students on projects during class (43%)

Learning communities will provide a venue for students to work together on interdisciplinary projects, to make class presentations to a supportive and interested group, and to facilitate understanding of course material through study groups and group conversations.

Third, we expect that most learning communities will develop appropriate service learning projects. Faculty members will be trained and facilitated by our Service Learning Office, and the addition of our planned reflective seminar will offer time and curricular space to develop such projects.

Fourth, we expect that most learning communities will develop assignments that will increase writing and speaking skills. In the area of writing and speaking, we will share assessment of student learning with the First-Year Seminars.

Finally, we expect that participation in learning communities will help students integrate social and academic concerns through the time they spend together and the work they do together. In all, we have an ambitious set of goals that are reflected in the chart that we developed at the Learning Communities Institute:

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Goals	Conditions	Outcomes—Students will:
<p>Deep learning involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cognitive complexity ▪ Analytical, critical, and synthetic reasoning ▪ Interdisciplinarity ▪ Recognition of scientific, historical, cultural, and intercultural perspectives ▪ Autonomous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small class size ▪ Personal relationships with faculty members who are teacher-scholars ▪ Quality interactions with peers and faculty members ▪ Emphasis on information literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand and apply perspectives from multiple disciplines ▪ demonstrate awareness of a broad range of historical, cultural, and intercultural perspectives ▪ transition to active, engaged learners
<p>Engaged scholarship requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A participatory community of learners ▪ Active learning ▪ Emphasis on writing and speaking ▪ Engagement in principled and informed dissent (“speaking and listening, articulating one’s views and earnestly considering those of others”—Cornwell and Stoddard, 26) ▪ Academic and social integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safe and open environment ▪ Faculty who “foster the conditions that make dialogue possible.”—Cornwell and Stoddard (26) ▪ A vibrant intellectual campus culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be able to engage effectively in dialogue, speaking up for/from their own informed perspectives and actively listening to the perspectives of others ▪ be able to communicate effectively in multiple media ▪ participate in curricular and co-curricular experiences
<p>Meaningful civic engagement involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality service learning that empowers students as change agents ▪ Understanding leadership as a process, not a position ▪ Reflections on social justice issues ▪ Strengthening democratic practices ▪ Preparation for active citizenship, from local to global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diverse community ▪ Intergroup dialogue ▪ Service-learning support ▪ Reflection in the classroom ▪ Sustainable partnerships ▪ Leadership training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be involved in at least one activity that promotes “the deep democratic tradition” (West) ▪ engage with one new, perspective-broadening community
<p>Practical competence requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to identify problems and access appropriate information and campus resources ▪ Information literacy ▪ Development of essential skills for academic success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A resource-rich campus (library, Center for Student Learning, Advising, Service Learning, etc.) ▪ Faculty development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ access resources available at the College of Charleston ▪ demonstrate basic academic competencies

Development of Learning Communities

The QEP Learning Communities committee has been actively planning to develop learning communities that will meet these goals in several ways. The first way was to experiment with several small learning communities in fall of '05 and '06. In January of 2005, Dr. Kay Smith accepted the newly created position of Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience. Dr. Smith had taught in learning communities and had administered the Watauga College Program, a coordinated studies living learning program, at Appalachian State University. Through collaboration between Dr. Smith and the Office of New Student Programs, several small learning communities were created for fall of '05: one linking an English 101 and a History 101 class; one linking an Introduction to Theatre class to an English 102 class; and one linking several levels of math classes to an English 101 class. This math learning community also had a living-learning component and was designed for women students.

The following fall (2006) several more linked classes were created, and several freshman-only sections of popular general education courses were also created in order to give faculty who rarely taught all freshmen an opportunity to explore this option in a low-key way. This was felt to be good preparation for faculty to decide to teach in either a learning community or a revised first-year seminar. In all cases, faculty were provided with some preparation and support from the Office of New Student Programs, and courses were evaluated for student and faculty satisfaction ([Learning Communities Survey Results Fall 2005](#),¹ [Learning Communities Survey Results Spring 2006](#),² [Comments from Residential Learning Community Students Fall 2006-Spring 2007](#)³ and [Faculty Evaluations](#)⁴). Working with a few pilot programs also allowed us to determine how to coordinate the administrative aspects of learning communities, particularly recruiting, enrolling students, working with department chairs and the registrar, and supporting learning community students through co-curricular activities. By the time that the QEP Learning Communities committee was formed, it had some background and experiences available with which to shape its work.

The opportunity to attend the Learning Communities Institute has been important in the further development of the work of the Learning Communities committee. At the Institute, the committee decided that learning communities will be developed at College of Charleston in several ways: 1) learning communities based on skills development (utilizing high DFW courses); 2) discipline-linked learning communities (e.g., statistics linked to sociology); 3)

theme-based learning communities (e.g., Global Awareness). Determining to create learning communities based on skills development led us to study more closely the [group of courses taken by first-year students which had high rates \(+20%\) of grades of Ds, Fs, or Withdrawal](#).⁵ Our study also examined supplemental instruction in those courses, as well as how many of the courses had midterm grades. We used some of this information in planning our math and science learning community and we will continue to use this information when planning other learning communities. We will also study the impact of the learning community format in decreasing Ds, Fs, and Ws.

Discipline-linked learning communities link courses that have the ability to strengthen learning in both disciplines. For instance, a student taking linked sociology and statistics classes would see the real world application of statistics and would be likely to benefit from the synergy linking the two subjects. Two of our faculty members are currently considering developing a learning community linking Introduction to Art History to a computer science course. They are going to demonstrate to students the growing participation and influence of computers in contemporary art as well as the contribution of artists to computer functions. We are eager to facilitate learning communities with this kind of interdisciplinary focus. We expect that this kind of learning community will occasionally include first-year seminars (FYSM) specifically designed as a link in a learning community.

Thematic learning communities represent a third type of learning community planned for the College of Charleston learning community mix. Themes can unite courses and link faculty members with similar interests. We plan to offer several thematic learning communities in the fall of 2007, based on the theme of Global Awareness. These learning communities will be residential; we plan to use the fourth floor of our newest residence hall on Liberty Street. There will probably be three learning communities: one linking political science, computer technology and a library course on Electronic Resources for Research; another linking women's studies and political science; and a third linking a course in computer technology with Introduction to Interpersonal Communications. In developing a residential cluster of themed communities, programming, including presentations by students, can be coordinated. There is much promise in making residential learning communities thematic, and thematic learning communities may lead to the development of coordinated studies communities, representing a high degree of interdisciplinary faculty cooperation as well as student social and academic integration.

One other type of learning community has developed out of a renewed focus on diversity and access on our campus. In October, 2006, a diversity retreat was held for senior administrators and selected faculty and student support services staff ([Diversity Retreat Agenda](#)⁶ and [Institutional Diversity Analysis](#)⁷). The retreat was sponsored by then President Festa's office and was coordinated by Associate Vice Presidents Don Burkard, Carolyn Morales, Patrice Prince, and Kay Smith. Many good ideas emerged from the retreat and from the work that followed it. One of the developments of the retreat was a focus by the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Planning, the Office of Transfer Admissions, and the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience on creating a bridge program with Trident Technical College, also here in Charleston. Utilizing our good relations with Trident Tech, we have been able to develop what we are calling the "Keystone" program, in which first-generation and underrepresented groups of students who are interested in transferring to College of Charleston are identified by Trident. Students who join the "Keystone" program will take one course at College of Charleston under the current cross-registration agreement. That course will be linked with one course that they will all take together at Trident Tech. Faculty at the two institutions will work together to create a cross-institutional learning community. We will train the Trident Tech faculty member in our First-Year Experience workshop and that faculty member will receive the same stipend for learning community work that College of Charleston faculty will receive. When these students transfer to the College they will also take an appropriate First-Year Seminar. We think the Keystone Program will be a significant innovation in the learning community movement because it creates links across institutions, not just across departments.

Again stimulated by access and equity issues, we are also working with YESCarolina, an organization sponsored by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). YESCarolina promotes education about entrepreneurship in secondary schools. College of Charleston has a significant commitment to teaching entrepreneurship, with a recent Kaufman Foundation grant and with the greatest number of faculty in the nation teaching entrepreneurship in the undergraduate setting. Recruiting first-generation college students and underrepresented students through YESCarolina will allow us to build a learning community for entering students around the theme of entrepreneurship. While not all students who participate in an entrepreneurship learning community will join because of YESCarolina, we expect to recruit many of them and to give them a continuing entrepreneurial focus for their first year of college.

Both the “Keystone” learning community shared between our institution and Trident Technical College and the entrepreneurial learning community represent ways to use the innovation of learning communities to help achieve equity and access goals that are very important to us.

The Learning Community Model

The model for College of Charleston’s learning communities will include peer groups enrolled in two classes together, a theme for each learning community, and a connecting Reflective Seminar that is peer facilitated. The Reflective Seminar will be a new element that will allow us both to involve upper-level students with first-year students and to provide a multi-use instructional space to accomplish some of the more important goals of learning communities. Peer facilitators will be upper-division students who will complete thorough classroom training and will be supported throughout the experience with ongoing weekly training modules. Peer facilitators will apply and/or be recommended for these positions.

Peer Facilitator Role

Peer facilitators will engage students in a variety of ways both in the linked courses and in the Reflective Seminar (the zero-credit course which is facilitated purely by the peer facilitator). The peer facilitator becomes a mentor to first-year students, a teacher, a guidance counselor, a College of Charleston ambassador, a discussion leader, and a tour guide of the resources available academically and socially on our campus. It becomes quickly evident that peer facilitators are more than merely “tutors” in this program. They often serve as a communication bridge between faculty members and the students, helping students access faculty members and feel comfortable in their communication with them. Additionally, they provide one more means of assessment of program goals and future direction. Peer facilitators provide support for the faculty member in a variety of ways, with one of the most important being as a student sounding board for classroom ideas, lectures, and activities. Additionally, peer facilitators assist in technology, assist in classroom conduct, provide an extra mechanism for answering student questions, and facilitate out-of-class learning experiences.

For students, peer-to-peer relationships are a cornerstone to success at the post-secondary level. Students often talk about the role that their friends, classmates, and roommates played in their success during the formative first year of the college experience. A mentor-based first-year

experience program will provide students an instant connection with someone who will represent the institution positively; connecting incoming students with this individual will increase the success and, therefore, the persistence of first-year students who may otherwise become “lost in the shuffle.”

[Peer facilitators in the Learning Communities program will be trained](#)⁸ in collaboration, learn about the resources on campus, become diverse learners through working with the students in their groups, and develop/expand their personal group/team working skills. Peer facilitators benefit by growth in leadership skills from the role they play within first-year programs, and they benefit from the enhanced faculty contact in forming a learning partnership with two faculty members. Facilitators become keenly aware of the program’s goals as well as the learning engagement within their personal academic and social environment. Lastly, engaging students to think about new ways to visualize and intake course materials challenges their own learning abilities; academics, therefore, usually strengthen as they are redefining their personal learning abilities while directing their students to do the same.

Objectives for the Peer Facilitator

- To ensure the successful academic, social, and personal transition of incoming first-year students to College of Charleston.
- To provide a student representative who will act responsibly and identify enjoyable educational, cultural, and social experiences that will benefit incoming students.
- To provide the peer facilitator an opportunity to develop leadership skills, social skills, and personal skills that will aid him/her in future endeavors within the college and outside of the institution.

Intended Outcomes for the Peer Facilitator

- Peer facilitators work with diverse groups of people, developing cross-cultural sensitivity.
- Peer facilitators recognize political, cultural, social, and religious differences among a varied source of student backgrounds.
- Peer facilitators develop adaptability and flexibility in learning to work with each student as an individual learner.
- Peer facilitators develop tolerance for ambiguity, self-reliance, and coping skills.
- Peer facilitators learn when to ask for help.

Learning Communities Summary

The Learning Communities model represents some exciting changes for College of Charleston, including interdisciplinary collaboration among both faculty and students. It brings peer facilitators into this collaborative mix and gives them significant roles to play. Our ability to create learning communities at the College has been enhanced by the fact that there are faculty members ready to play a role as well. Because the Learning Community committee was able to do most of its decision-making and organizational work at the Learning Communities Institute at Evergreen State College, and because Learning Communities are built out of existing courses and do not require a time-consuming curriculum review, the Learning Communities portion of our First-Year Experience will be able to begin in Fall, 2007, followed by the introduction of the First-Year Seminar in Fall, 2008. Up to fifteen [Learning Community opportunities](#)⁹ will be available to first-year students. The first course to train peer facilitators will be offered in February, 2007, and each February of subsequent years. The faculty development aspect of our First-Year Experience, the FYE workshop to train approximately thirty faculty teaching in Learning Communities, will be offered in May, 2007. In subsequent years, the FYE workshop will train both First-Year Seminar and Learning Community faculty.

First-Year Seminar Report

The task of developing the First-Year Seminar part of the First-Year Experience Quality Enhancement Plan has been quite different from the task undertaken by the Learning Communities committee. The College has been studying new approaches to the First-Year Seminar for several years, including the involvement of two Faculty Senate committees. The Faculty Senate Academic Planning Committee issued a report in 2004, which was approved in principle by the Senate, but problems arising from definition of type, coordination with other curricular elements, funding, and organization remained to be solved. The First-Year Seminar Committee for the Quality Enhancement Plan, chaired by Hugh Wilder, solved those problems with a [proposal for a new First-Year Seminar course](#)¹⁰ that will be the second curricular component of our plan.

Background and Rationale for Change: Current Freshman Seminar (FRSR 101)

The current Freshman Seminar (FRSR 101) is a two-credit elective course which applies toward general degree requirements. In the taxonomy developed by Hunter and Linder (2005, 279-280), FRSR 101 is an “extended orientation seminar,” focusing on student transition and success. The catalog description is:

FRSR 101: Freshman Seminar (2)

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the value and applications of a liberal arts education. In addition, this course focuses on the benefits of becoming an active member of the academic community by developing self-awareness of the college community and the community at large.

The course is designed to help freshmen:

1) Understand the maturational changes they will undergo during the college experience and the roles they will play as students. 2) Identify personal and work values, establish realistic career and life goals. 3) Obtain information about academic programs including course, major, and graduation requirements. 4) Understand occupational implications of their educational choices. 5) Develop or improve study and time management skills. 6) Become familiar with the College’s procedures, resources, and services.

FRSR 101 has served its students well. Despite being an elective course, enrollment has averaged more than 800 for the last five years, nearly half of the entering class each year. Evidence suggests that first-year students completing FRSR 101 are retained at a higher rate than those who do not take FRSR 101 and also earn higher-than-predicted grade point averages. The course has helped many students make the transition from high school to college.

However, the current Freshman Seminar also has problems. As an elective course, it is not integrated into the general education program or any other academic program at the College; neither is it integrated into a comprehensive program for entering students. The course is rarely taught by regular faculty members; instructors are adjuncts or professional staff members at the College. While the course teaches important college transition and survival skills, there is little academic content. It is difficult for students to master and internalize skills not based in the practice of disciplinary or interdisciplinary study. Finally, the current course is not administered or assessed in standard ways. It belongs to no academic department. Scheduling, staffing and instructional decisions are made by administrators rather than faculty; sections and instructors are not evaluated as they are in standard department-based course offerings.

The New First-Year Seminar (FYSM 101)

For these and other reasons, the College proposes to develop a new First-Year Seminar, FYSM 101. This new course will be an “academic seminar” in the Hunter and Linder (2005)

taxonomy, but will retain important successful elements of the current Freshman Seminar. The new course will be part of the new general education program which is currently under review and subject to possible revision. In the current general education plan, particular sections of FYSM 101 will count for particular general education area credit. In the recently proposed new general education plan, all sections of FYSM 101 count toward the First-Year Experience requirement and particular sections may also count toward particular general education area credit. (If the new general education plan is not approved by the faculty, then there will be a specific proposal to add FYSM 101 or a Learning Communities course as a requirement in the existing general education program.) Because sections of the new course will be discipline-based, they may also count toward requirements in specific majors, minors and concentrations. In these ways, FYSM 101 will be well-integrated in the College curriculum and in the students' cumulative learning experience at the College.

Further, the new course will be integrated into a new comprehensive First-Year Experience program, including curricular, residential and co-curricular elements. All sections of the course will be taught by roster faculty members, bringing students into close contact with faculty early in the students' careers. These faculty members will teach important college transition and survival skills, but will do so in the context of inquiry-based disciplinary or interdisciplinary learning. This will strengthen first-year students' engagement in the academic life of the College in the crucial first months of the students' lives on campus, as well as help them master the skills necessary for a successful college career.

Finally, FYSM 101 will have its own faculty-based administrative structure, integrated within and coordinated with the existing College academic and administrative structures. The Director of the First-Year Experience will be appointed by the Provost from among the faculty at the College. The Director will administer the First-Year Experience program, including the new First-Year Seminar as well as the Learning Communities program with the help of a new standing faculty committee on the First-Year Experience. This administrative structure will ensure that the new course is a rigorous part of the regular College curriculum, with syllabi, instruction and student learning reviewed and evaluated in standard ways.

FYSM 101, the Mission of the College, and the Strategic Plan

The new First-Year Seminar is designed to address specifically the needs, interests and expectations of first-year students, while engaging them early and substantially in the academic community that is College of Charleston. The Seminar is consistent with and supports the mission of the College and its core values, strengthening its traditional liberal arts undergraduate curriculum, with special focus on the first-year academic experience. (See the [Institutional Mission Statement](#),¹¹ 2006-2007 Undergraduate Catalog, page 7). The Seminar is designed to address the following institutional goals in ways appropriate for first-year students:

- To develop reading, writing, and oral communication skills;
- To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- To develop computer information retrieval skills;
- To develop a lifelong commitment to intellectual curiosity and learning;
- To develop global awareness;
- To develop an understanding of cultural diversity;
- To enhance affective development;
- To develop an understanding of the arts, humanities, mathematics, the natural sciences, and the social sciences;
- To encourage students to become conscious of the importance of political, social, economic, and scientific issues of their time;
- To train students in the method of scholarly inquiry and research (“[Statement of Institutional Goals](#),”¹² 2006-2007 Undergraduate Catalog, pages 7-8).

[The College of Charleston Strategic Plan](#),¹³ approved by the Board of Trustees in April, 2003, recommends that the College develop “a holistic, common student experience that focuses on the first year.” Among the recommended components of this first-year program is an academic experience such as a first-year seminar. The proposed new First-Year Seminar fulfills this part of the Strategic Plan.

FYSM 101 and the General Education Program

The current proposal for revising the general education program recommends a new First-Year Experience requirement as a part of general education. This First-Year Experience requires each new student to complete either a first-year seminar (FYSM 101) or a learning community. The adoption of this new requirement will strengthen the QEP proposal for FYSM 101 in at least two ways. First, FYSM 101 will be one option in the new general education First-Year Experience requirement. Second, many sections of FYSM 101 will count for general education credit in the appropriate area, in either the current general education program or in the

new program revised according to the proposal offered by the *ad hoc* Committee on General Education. If the new First-Year Experience is not approved as part of a new general education program, then a specific proposal will be made to require either FYSM 101 or a learning community as part of the existing general education program.

FRSR 101, the current Freshman Seminar, is offered for elective credit only. It is not part of the College's general education program; this is a weakness which will be addressed by the new course. FYSM 101, the new First-Year Seminar, will be an integral part of the College's general education program. The general education program is currently under review. This review is timely and will strengthen the College's Quality Enhancement Plan which focuses on the first-year experience. It is likely that (at least some parts of) the College general education program will be revised soon, as a result of the current review. But whether or not any part of the general education program is revised, the College is committed to implementing the new First-Year Experience program as proposed in the QEP, including the introduction of the new First-Year Seminar and Learning Communities courses.

Until the general education program is revised, FYSM 101 will be offered as an elective recommended for first-year students. Unlike FRSR 101, however, many sections of FYSM 101 will count toward general education credit in one of the areas included in the current program. This will make FYSM 101 attractive to departments offering the course (they will be offering general education courses) and to students (who will receive general education credit).

FYSM 101 is designed specifically to address and support the purposes for the College general education program as approved by the Faculty Senate in January and [September, 2006](#).¹⁴ In ways appropriate for first-year students and appropriate to the discipline offering FYSM for general education credit, the course will contribute to student learning through the following general education learning outcomes:

- Research techniques and communication skills in multiple media and languages;
- Analytical and critical reasoning;
- Historical, cultural and intellectual perspectives;
- International and intercultural perspectives;
- Personal and ethical perspectives.

Catalog Description

The catalog description for FYSM 101 will be:

FYSM 101: First-Year Seminar (3)

First-Year Seminars focus on topics within or across the disciplines of study in the College curriculum. Seminars introduce students to the discipline, its ways of thinking and methods of conducting research. Seminars also address the needs of first-year students: introducing students to the College's liberal arts and sciences curriculum and to resources such as the Library, computing facilities, advising and other student support services.

The catalog will also note that particular sections of the seminar may count for general education credit and may also count for credit toward a major. FYSM 101 has no prerequisite and is not open to students with more than 30 semester hours of credit (transfer or College of Charleston credit, excluding AP and dual-enrollment credits).

Syllabus, Instruction, Students

There is no set syllabus for FYSM 101; however, all sections of FYSM will share the following common features:

- Each will require writing and speaking appropriate to the discipline, and will provide students with feedback and opportunities for revision;
- Each will require either an experience which acquaints students with appropriate data, information and knowledge-gathering techniques and research skills in the discipline, or a creative project appropriate to the discipline;
- Each will require class discussion and collaborative learning experiences;
- Each will require students to become familiar with the College library, computing resources, advising and other appropriate student support services.

Beyond these common features, the seminars will offer students the opportunity to study specific topics within and across the disciplines. Faculty will offer seminars in their areas of expertise and interest. The topics and methods of study will be engaging, appropriate for and accessible to first-year students. A wide variety of seminars will be offered – on different topics, using different pedagogical techniques and addressing different learning styles. Seminars will be offered by different departments and schools, attracting students with diverse interests.

All sections of FYSM 101 will be taught by roster faculty. Section enrollment average will be 20, with no section having more than 22 students. Sections will be conducted as seminars, requiring discussion, group work and collaborative learning. Some sections may include laboratory or studio work. FYSM 101 is a three-credit course. It is intended for students in their first year at College of Charleston, with most sections offered in the fall semester. Additional sections will be offered, as needed, in the spring semester and during summer school.

No student may enroll who has earned (at the College or as a transfer student) more than 30 credit hours, excluding AP and dual enrollment credits earned while in high school.

The Honors College

The Honors College at the College of Charleston provides students with a living and learning community in which students interact in a number of ways, providing them with multiple opportunities to work, study, play, and live together. Honors freshmen are introduced to College of Charleston and supported in the transition from high school to college in a variety of ways. This introduction begins with a separate session for Honors students during summer orientation, which provides Honors students with an overview of Honors requirements and an opportunity to meet other Honors students, faculty, and staff. Second, all of the freshmen take at least one Honors class, and approximately half of them take two Honors classes. In these classes they have a small group experience (on average, 18 students per class) and have the opportunity to get to know their fellow Honors students and Honors professors. In addition, approximately two-thirds of the Honors freshmen live in Honors residence halls with other Honors students and with Honors RAs. Many of these students are also in their Honors classes, so this facilitates opportunities to study together and to help one another and answer one another's questions. They also have the advantage of having an Honors academic advisor with her office in the Honors residence hall to increase ease and opportunity of meeting. Finally, the Honors College hosts a variety of volunteer, social, and other extracurricular activities which provide further opportunities for Honors students to get to know one another and other people on campus and in the community. This range of opportunities already provides a greater sense of community and involvement to Honors students than exists for most of the students at College of Charleston. However, with the current focus on enhancing the first-year experience for all students, it seems appropriate to consider what would further improve the experience and with that the chance for academic success and retention for the Honors students.

To the range of opportunities we currently offer, we propose the addition of one component, a required one-semester, one-hour Freshman Honors course, Introduction to Honors, taught by selected upper-class Honors students on a pass-fail grading scale under the supervision of the Dean and Associate Dean of Honors. This type of course, taught by Honors students as an alternative to the First-Year Seminar, is common in Honors programs and colleges across the

country. For example, such student-taught freshmen Honors courses are offered at the University of Georgia, the University of Iowa, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and American University.

We propose to have 10-12 classes of no more than twenty students each, with each section taught by two upper-class Honors students. We will offer the courses in clusters (3-4 sections meeting at the same time) to facilitate shared experiences, such as guest lectures. Honors students wishing to teach the course will submit applications in early spring and be selected by the Honors Committee. The student teachers will receive training in the Spring semester, along with the learning community peer facilitators. They will receive further training on the goals and objectives of Introduction to Honors, the Honors curriculum, basic principles and underlying philosophy of a liberal arts education, effective discussion techniques, and good pedagogy. The Honors student teachers, like the peer facilitators, will be paid for their services. They will also receive the advantage of scheduled, ongoing mentoring from the Dean and Associate Dean regarding best practices in teaching at the college level, effective facilitation of sophisticated discussion of intellectual matters, and assessment of classroom performance.

The fundamental objective of the course will be to ensure that Honors students, from the very beginning of their academic careers, are fully engaged in the ways of thinking, the global and interdisciplinary analytical process, and the intellectual drive that characterizes a modern, liberally-educated individual. Activities and/or topics in the Introduction to Honors course will include:

- Interdisciplinary-based discussion of the Convocation book
- Discussion about the basic tenets of the Liberal Arts and how the Honors curriculum reflects these tenets
- Reflection on ways of thinking and learning that characterize the best and most successful students and thinkers
- Introduction to the resources of the library for the purpose of high level research
- Engagement and leadership in the community through a structured service project
- Touring a museum/archive to understand the value of public resources in capturing history and culture

Student Support Services

While much of the planning for our Quality Enhancement Plan to create a new First-Year Experience for College of Charleston has been focused on curricular issues, we are well aware that important elements of student support must be a part of our plan in order for it to be

successful. The areas of student support that we have concentrated on are Residence Life, Orientation, Convocation, Advising, Service Learning, and learning support from the Center for Student Learning.

In the area of Residence Life, we are very excited about the fact that a new residence hall, including a new cafeteria, will open in Fall, 2007. With the addition of this residence hall (Liberty Street), we will finally have enough total residence hall space to house all of our first-year students. The lack of housing has been a problem area for the College for many years, but it has been systematically addressed with the purchase of Kelly House and Warren Place for upper-division students, the building of McAlister Hall and the remodeling of Berry Hall and McConnell Hall. The Liberty Street Residence Hall will allow us to decide whether to require all first-year students (with the exception of those who will live at home) to live on campus. The Department of Residence Life and Housing will re-study this decision before enacting it, but, in the meantime, Residence Life is supportive of first-year programs. Several living-learning communities for first-year students are being supported by Residence Life in McConnell and Liberty Street residence halls. Selection of Resident Assistants for those floors that house learning communities will be coordinated with New Student Programs. Programming will also be developed specifically for learning communities, and it is possible that some of the reflective seminars for living-learning communities will be held in the residence halls. Moreover, the QEP Executive Committee has requested two permanent lines for Residence Life Area Coordinators. Currently Area Coordinators are in full-time temporary lines with a stipend to cover benefits. It is difficult to attract well-trained student development professionals to residence life positions without permanent lines. The expectation is that the addition of permanent lines will facilitate continuing professional development for live-in staff in Residence Life.

In 2005, an Orientation Taskforce was formed to review our orientation plans and make needed adjustments. The number of orientation sessions was increased and the number of students coming to each section was decreased. Orientation sessions were scheduled for earlier in the summer time period. The role of departments and majors was increased as part of a plan to help students identify with a major or department as early as possible. In addition, a session for undecided students was instituted. Parent orientation was also revamped. These changes led to [greater satisfaction with Orientation](#)¹⁵ on the part of students and parents. With the changes proposed by the Quality Enhancement Plan, Orientation will continue to change as well. First,

the orientation program will support the curricular innovations of First-Year Seminars and Learning Communities by making sure that students and parents are well-informed about these opportunities. Small group sessions will be developed to explain the purpose and function of both of these curricular innovations to students and parents, so that students will know what to expect when they return in the fall. Second, the orientation program will make sure that students are aware of the purpose and focus of the Convocation for new students that is held each fall. Students will be given the Convocation book at Orientation and programs will be developed that will encourage them to read it and to be ready to respond to it when they return to campus. Overall, Orientation will be the first event in the First-Year Experience, not an isolated visit to campus by prospective students. It will prepare students to be fully-engaged participants in their own first year.

Convocation has been a successful program at the College of Charleston since 2002. Our Convocation for first-year students is meaningful and rich in tradition. At each Convocation, after the faculty procession, a greeting is given by someone who was an entering student fifty years ago. As is usual with convocations, the author of the Convocation book is often the principal speaker at the event. After our Convocation, students are led by faculty down George Street and through Porter's Lodge to the Cistern, where a reception is held for them. Students also sign a large book, symbolizing their acceptance of the responsibilities and privileges of being a student at the College. While we are pleased with the overall structure of Convocation, we would like to involve students more directly in discussions of the book chosen for it. Often this book is taught in our current Freshman Seminar, but with the changes proposed for the First-Year Experience, the new First-Year Seminar may or may not be an appropriate venue for the book. We will begin to develop a more comprehensive program of student-faculty discussions on Convocation day. The first students and faculty to be involved in this new program will be students in our 2007 Learning Communities. As the First-Year Experience expands to include more students, they too will be incorporated into discussion groups on Convocation day. These groups will allow faculty and students to make contact with each other even before classes start. In addition, departments will be encouraged to sponsor lectures and symposia that address some aspects of the Convocation book. This past year, the Political Science Department and the History Department both presented well-attended lectures and discussions. Overall, the focus on

discussion and analysis on Convocation day will convey our expectation of engaged participation while the colorful pageantry involves students in our more than 200-year tradition.

Like Orientation, our Academic Advising and Planning Center is in the process of change. In 2006, the College changed its advising policy to require advising of all entering students. The Advising Center also moved from a staffing plan that relied on part-time advisors, to one that required full-time professional advisors, thus increasing both training opportunities and accountability. The Advising Center has created an [advising syllabus](#)¹⁶ that has been featured in recent NACADA workshops and that will guide their work. In working to improve the first-year experience, the Advising Center will coordinate closely with the Director of the First-Year Experience and the Office of New Student Programs to make sure that all advisors and all new students are informed thoroughly about these options. As the First-Year Experience grows to encompass all first-year students, the Advising Center will move toward building student schedules before they come to Orientation, based on their choice of learning communities or first-year seminars. Building student schedules early will allow for a more relaxed but focused session with each student at Orientation and will help send a consistent message of high expectations. As the First-Year Experience grows, the Advising Center will experiment with assigning advisors to students based on their learning community or first-year seminar choice, so that all of the students who share a curricular innovation will also share an advisor. It is expected that faculty and advisors will work together in seamless and intentional ways to challenge and support students in their first year.

The Center for Student Learning houses our Writing Lab, Math Lab, Accounting Lab, Foreign Language Labs, as well as our new Speaking Lab, and provides tutoring for general education courses. Located in the new Addlestone Library, the Center for Student Learning has experienced accelerated growth due both to the quality of work it does with students and to its increased visibility. The CSL will continue to support all first-year students who seek their services and their outreach programming. In addition, the Center will work with faculty at the FYE training workshops in the spring of each year to make sure that faculty are aware of the learning support they offer. The Center will also begin to work with peer facilitators in learning communities. In these cases it might be possible to develop specific programs or support efforts keyed to individual faculty assignments or to peer facilitator needs. As with Advising, the goal

is to integrate the services of the Center for Student Learning with the needs of the First-Year Experience.

In the area of Service Learning, our plan is similar to our plan in Residence Life: to increase the number of professionals available to work with students. To that end, we have added a proposed position to allow for better support for service learning specifically for first-year students. Most learning communities will have a service-learning component in order to encourage meaningful civic engagement. Adding to the staff in the area of service learning will make it easier for learning community faculty and peer facilitators to coordinate their learning goals with a service learning project. It is also expected that many first-year seminars will also choose to employ service learning. By beginning to involve students in civic engagement areas early in their college careers, we plan to increase the importance of this area in their college experience.

Overall, the focus on student support services indicates that intentionality extends for us beyond the classroom. By developing specific goals for support services that coordinate with and strengthen the classroom experience, and by increasing key positions with the addition of student development professionals, we plan to develop and extend the idea of a learning campus to its full potential.

Conclusion: What About the “Year” in First-Year Experience?

While our student support services clearly extend beyond the first semester, it is also clear that the curricular innovations of our Quality Enhancement Plan are meant to be front-loaded, to provide entering students (including January admits) with a first semester of college that challenges them academically, that allows them to get to know and learn from each other, and that introduces them systematically to the resources available for them. But what about the second semester? Can we have a first-year experience that essentially ends after one semester? We all agree that this would be unwise. Yet, for many good reasons, we are not entirely sure what our second semester should look like. Indeed, many of our students will be sophomores by their second semester in college because of the dual enrollment, AP, and IB credits that more and more students bring to college. South Carolina is encouraging dual enrollment as well as an ambitious career development program for high school students called Personal Pathways to Success. Both of these efforts will result in acceleration, both in curricular and career decision

making. We also know that, despite the fact that our students are starting college with more credits and have more career information available to them, many of them are still unsure about the direction that they want their academic work to take and the career they want to pursue. We know too that persistence is a problem for students who remain unsure about these areas. We want our second semester program to address some of these problems, but we want to develop it, not exclusively as a first-year program, but as a program that bridges the first and second years and that takes into account the reality of a situation in which more and more of our first-year students will actually be sophomores. So we see our second semester of the First-year Experience as one focused on yet another transition, a transition that helps students move toward a greater understanding of what they want to study and what they want to do with the knowledge they acquire. The task of developing the complex curricular offerings of the first-year seminar and learning communities has been all-consuming for the past year, and we know we have much work ahead of us in implementing what we propose. We know that the First-Year Experience that we propose will change our students' expectations about their college careers and allow them to "go further faster" academically. We also know that front-loading can cause students to feel abandoned in the second semester. In our experiments with learning communities, we have been facilitating enrollment for students and faculty who wish to continue together for another semester, and we expect to do this also for first-year seminar students. We have also begun a focus on helping students define academic goals through developmental advising. At Orientation, we are focusing more and more on undecided students, and we are realizing that most students actually are undecided even if they know, or think they know, what they want to major in. So we plan to develop our second semester/sophomore transition around these issues. We will begin this spring with a taskforce of department chairs, advisors, and career development professionals. We will set several goals that have to do with creating "shadowing" opportunities for students to connect with upper-division students and explore the choice of a major through their eyes. We will also set goals of helping students understand the process of declaring a major and of simplifying the hand-off from the Advising Center to the departments. We will look at the prospect of beginning job shadowing and internships earlier in a student's career. We will have a second semester/third semester experience that continues to challenge our students and asks them to "go further faster" in new ways. In doing this we will truly

develop a First-Year Experience that is worthy of our venerable institution, worthy of our students and worthy of our best efforts.

¹ Learning Communities Survey Results Fall 2005, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Learning_Communities_Survey_Results_Fall_2005.pdf.

² Learning Communities Survey Results Spring 2006, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Learning_Communities_Survey_Results_Spring_2006.pdf.

³ Comments from Residential Learning Community Students Fall 2006-Spring 2007, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Comments_from_Residential_Learning_Communities_Fall_2006-Spring_2007.pdf.

⁴ Faculty Evaluations from Fall 2006 Learning Communities, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Faculty_Surveys_from_fall_2006_learning_communities.pdf.

⁵ DFW Report, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/DFW_Report.pdf.

⁶ Diversity Retreat Agenda, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Diversity_Retreat_Agenda.pdf.

⁷ Institutional Diversity Analysis, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Institutional_Diversity_Analysis_10-13-06.pdf.

⁸ Peer Facilitator Course Syllabus, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Peer_Facilitator_Course_Syllabus.pdf.

⁹ Learning Community Linked Courses, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Linked_Courses.pdf.

¹⁰ First-Year Seminar Committee Report, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/First-Year_Seminar_Committee_Report.pdf.

¹¹ Institutional Mission Statement, available in the 2006-2007 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 7, <http://www.cofc.edu/about/catalogs/UndergradCatalog06-07.pdf>.

¹² "Statement of Institutional Goals," available in the 2006-2007 Undergraduate Catalog, pp. 7-8, <http://www.cofc.edu/about/catalogs/UndergradCatalog06-07.pdf>.

¹³ Institutional Strategic Plan, available at <http://crmc.cofc.edu/plan/isp.htm>.

¹⁴ Minutes of the Faculty Senate, September 12, 2006, available at <http://www.cofc.edu/~senate/min091206.pdf>.

¹⁵ Orientation Evaluation Summary, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Orientation_Evaluation_Summary.pdf.

¹⁶ Advising Syllabus, available at https://drake.cofc.edu/qep/Advising_Syllabus.pdf.

VI. First Year Experience Implementation Timeline

Time	Task	Office Responsible
1985	FRSR 101 introduced	Office of Academic Affairs, Faculty
2001–2002, 2002-2003	FRSR 101 review and replacement plan proposed (no action taken)	Faculty Senate, Academic Planning Committee
Spring 2003	Board of Trustees approves Strategic Plan, including recommendation to implement a new First-Year Experience program	Board of Trustees
2003–2004	FRSR 101 review and replacement plan; proposal approved in principle (concept of new course approved) by Faculty Senate, April, 2004	Faculty Senate, Academic Planning Committee
Fall 2004	<i>Ad hoc</i> General Education review committee formed	Office of Academic Affairs and Faculty Senate
	<i>Ad hoc</i> First-Year Seminar implementation committee formed. Work deferred until any new General Education proposal is developed, no action taken	Faculty Senate
Fall 2005	SACS – QEP focus will be the First-Year Experience	Office of Academic Affairs
Spring 2006	QEP Executive Committee formed, Kay Smith, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Co-Chair	Office of Academic Affairs
	QEP Committees formed	Associate VP for the Academic Experience
	QEP-FYS Committee takes over work of the 2004 <i>ad hoc</i> FYS committee; holds organizational meetings and reviews history of first-year seminars at CofC and elsewhere	QEP-FYS Committee
Fall 2006	General Education Committee issues draft report, recommending new First-Year Experience as part of gen ed program; FYE will require either a first-year seminar or a learning community	General Education Committee
	QEP Committees continue work, studying models, meeting with affected constituencies, submit draft proposals to QEP Executive Committee	QEP Committees
Spring 2007	QEP submitted to SACS	QEP-Executive Committee

Spring 2007	Peer Facilitator Course begins (Express II)	New Student Programs
	Planning for FYE Faculty Training	QEP Executive Committee and Center for Faculty Dev.
	New course proposal for FYSM 101 submitted to Curriculum Committee, Academic Planning Committee and Budget Committee; review by Faculty Senate	QEP-FYS Committee, Curriculum Committee, Academic Planning Committee, Budget Committee, Faculty Senate
	General Education Committee proposal for the new First-Year Experience requirement considered by Faculty Senate	<i>Ad hoc</i> General Education Committee, Faculty Senate
	Proposals for administrative structures for general education program and first-year experience program considered by Academic Planning and Budget Committees and Faculty Senate	<i>Ad hoc</i> General Education Committee, QEP-FYS Committee, Academic Planning Committee, Budget Committee, Faculty Senate
	First-Year Experience Director appointed	Provost
	Transitional <i>ad hoc</i> First-Year Experience Committee appointed	FYE Director and Associate VP for the Academic Experience
	Regular FYE Committee elected, terms to begin August 15, 2007	Faculty Senate
	Request three new faculty lines to support the FYE program (one appointment effective 8/07 [in department of FYE Director], two appointments effective 8/08)	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Department Chairs, Deans, Provost
	2007-2008 FYE budget request submitted	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Provost
	Office space secured for FYE program (Director, staff, support services)	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Provost
May 2007	FYE Training Workshop offered	FYE Director, CFD Director
Fall 2007	FYE Committee convened	Faculty Senate
	FYSM 101 and LCs publicized – call for proposals, faculty recruited	FYE Director, FYE Committee
	15 sections FYSM 101/ 30 LCs approved for Fall 2008	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	2008-2009 FYE budget request submitted	FYE Director

Spring 2008	Planning for May 2008 FYE new faculty training workshop.	FYE Director & Committee
	Request two new faculty lines to support the FYE (appointments effective 8/09)	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Department Chairs, Deans, Provost
May 2008	FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director & Committee
Fall 2008	15 sections FYSM 101/ 30 LCs offered	FYE Director
	Call for FYSM 101 proposals for fall 2009	FYE Director & Committee
	Review & approval of new FYSM sections	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	FYE Assessment Plan written and data gathering begins	FYE Director & Committee, Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment
	2009-2010 budget request submitted	FYE Director
Spring 2009	Planning for May 2009 FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director & Committee
	Request two new faculty lines to support the FYE (appointments effective 8/10)	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Department Chairs, Deans, Provost
May 2009	FYE new faculty training workshop	
Fall 2009	25 sections FYSM 101 offered /45 LCs	FYE Director
	Call for FYSM 101/ LC proposals for fall 2010	FYE Director & Committee
	Review and approval of FYSM 101 sections	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	FYE Assessment data gathering	FYE Director & Committee
	2010-2011 FYE budget request submitted	FYE Director
Spring 2010	Planning for May 2010 FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director & Committee
	Request two new faculty lines to support the FYE (appointment effective 8/11)	FYE Director, Associate VP for the Academic Experience, Department Chairs, Deans, Provost
May 2010	FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director & Committee
Fall 2010	Work with Foundations of Excellence to review/assess FYE	FYE Director/Academic Experience office

Fall 2010	General Education FYE requirement implemented	Director of General Education
	34 sections FYSM 101/45 LCs offered	FYE Director
	Call for FYSM 101 proposals for fall 2011	FYE Director & Committee
	Review and approval of FYSM 101 sections	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	2011-2012 FYE budget request submitted	FYE Director
Spring 2011	Planning for May 2011 FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director and Committee
	FYE Assessment Report submitted	FYE Director
May 2011	FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director and Committee
Fall 2011	42 sections FYSM 101/ 45 LCs offered	FYE Director
	Call for FYSM 101 proposals for fall 2012	FYE Director & Committee
	Review and approval of FYSM 101 sections	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	2012-2013 FYE budget request submitted	FYE Director
	FYE Program Review and Impact Report prepared for SACS	FYE Director & Committee, Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment
Spring 2012	Planning for May 2012 FYE new faculty training workshop	FYE Director & Committee
Fall 2012	50 sections FY:SM 101/ 35 LCs offered	FYE Director
	Call for FYSM 101 proposals for fall 2013	FYE Director & Committee
	Review and approval of FYSM sections	FYE Committee
	FYSM 101 sections considered for general education credit	Committee on General Education
	2013-2014 budget request submitted	FYE Director

Timeline Notes

1. In each year, the number of sections of FYSM 101 listed is an estimate subject to revision after the course is introduced and evaluated.
2. The timeline assumes approval of the proposed General Education First-Year Experience requirement and implementation in the fall of 2010-2011. If the FYE requirement is not approved, FYSM 101 will continue to be offered as an elective recommended for first-year students. The number of sections offered will be adjusted appropriately.
3. A few sections of FYSM 101 may be offered in each spring semester and during summer school, depending on demand.
4. Depending on Faculty Senate approval of the new General Education First-Year Experience requirement, the administrative structure of the FYE may be revised, changing the office responsible for various tasks listed in the timeline.
5. The timeline assumes a steady-state will be reached by fall 2012-2013 for supply and demand for FYSM 101.
6. In Fall, 2010, College of Charleston will contract with the Policy Center on the First Year of College to participate in their Foundations of Excellence program to prepare for the SACS Impact Report
7. The timeline notes that the first FYE assessment report is due in the spring of 2011; this will allow for the first FYE program review to occur and SACS Impact Report to be prepared, as noted, in 2011-2012.
8. Assessment timeline can be found in the Appendix.

VII. Administration and Organizational Structure

College of Charleston's Quality Enhancement Plan for the First-Year Experience will be administered by the new Director of the First-Year Experience, in consultation with the new Committee on the First-Year Experience, the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience, and the Assistant Vice President for New Student Programs. If the College's general education program is revised to include a new First-Year Experience requirement, as mentioned above, then the administrative structure supporting the First-Year Experience will be aligned with the new general education program (See General Education Organizational Chart at the end of this section).

Director of the First-Year Experience

The Director of the First-Year Experience program:

- Administers all parts of the First-Year Experience (FYE) program: the First-Year Seminar and Learning Communities; consults on first-year student support services (working with the Office of New Student Programs) and assessment (working with the Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment);
- Is appointed by the Provost from among the faculty at the College and serves at the pleasure of the Provost;
- Reports to the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience and works with the deans of the schools and the Honors College, department chairs, the Office of New Student Programs, the Academic Advising and Planning Center, the Admissions Office, the Center for Student Learning, the Career Center, and the Registrar;
- Teaches at least one First-Year Seminar or Learning Communities course each year;
- Recruits faculty to teach in the First-Year Seminar program and in the Learning Communities program, and is responsible for offering a sufficient number and variety of sections of FYSM 101 and Learning Communities;
- Schedules sections of FYSM 101, in consultation with department chairs, deans, and the registrar;
- Plans and organizes yearly training workshops for new FYSM 101 and Learning Communities faculty and periodic meetings of FYE program teaching faculty;

-
- Serves as a resource for faculty teaching in the FYE program and oversees the common elements of the courses;
 - Works with the offices of Admissions, New Student Programs, and Academic Advising and Planning to insure that prospective and incoming students are informed about the program and specific course offerings each semester;
 - Consults with department chairs in the evaluation of the teaching of faculty participating in the FYE program;
 - Consults with department chairs when chairs evaluate the contributions faculty make to the FYE program, including teaching sections of FYSM 101;
 - Writes the annual report, including the assessment report, for the FYE program;
 - Works with the administration in securing appropriate internal and external support for the program, including an adequate budget;
 - Manages the budget of the First-Year Experience program;
 - Serves as an *ex officio* non-voting member of the First-Year Experience Committee;
 - Is compensated at the appropriate level according to College policy.

First-Year Experience Committee

The First-Year Experience Committee is a new standing faculty committee.

1. Membership

The committee will be comprised of seven roster faculty members. At least three members of the First-Year Experience Committee will be teaching in the First-Year Experience program. Preferably each academic school will be represented on the committee. The committee will have one voting student member selected by the Student Government Association. The Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience, the Assistant Vice President for New Student Programs, and the Director of the First-Year Experience program will be *ex officio* non-voting members.

2. Duties

- a. In consultation with the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience and the Director of the FYE program, to support, help administer and oversee the FYE program;

-
- b. In consultation with the Director of the FYE program, to review and assess the FYE program and to make recommendations for revisions to it;
 - c. To request and review proposals for FYE courses (sections of FYSM 101 and Learning Communities), and to forward recommendations to the Director of the FYE program;
 - d. To help the Director of the FYE program to recruit students for FYE courses and to recruit and plan the training for new FYE faculty and peer facilitators for learning communities;
 - e. To help the Director of the FYE program in program development, including budget requests and program support.

The new First-Year Experience Committee will call annually for proposals for sections of FYSM 101. Proposals must be approved by an academic department prior to submission to the First-Year Experience Committee. The FYE Committee will review each FYSM 101 proposal to ensure its appropriateness for the course, its academic rigor and its inclusion of all required elements. The Committee will recommend approval for sections of the course to the Director of the First-Year Experience, who is responsible for insuring that an appropriate array of First-Year Seminars is offered. It is assumed that successful sections of FYSM 101 will be offered more than once. Before a particular section covering the same topic is taught for a third semester, the class will be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. Thus, all FYSM 101 sections will be reviewed and approved by departments and the FYE Committee; FYSM 101 sections taught more than twice will be reviewed College-wide, as are all new courses at the College

Faculty – Training, Compensation, Workload

Each faculty member teaching a First-Year Seminar or in a Learning Community must participate in a one-week First-Year Experience training program in the summer prior to first teaching a FYE course. This workshop will be developed jointly by the FYE Director, the Office of New Student Programs, and the Center for Faculty Development. Faculty members teaching First-Year Seminars and in Learning Communities also participate in monthly meetings with other FYE instructors in the semester in which the class is offered. New First-Year Seminar faculty members receive a stipend of \$2000 for participation in the training workshop, developing the new course, and participating in the monthly meetings while teaching the course.

Normally, a faculty member may receive the stipend once only, in the summer prior to teaching his or her first First-Year Experience course. A faculty member may teach more than one First-Year Seminar in a semester (e.g., two sections of FYSM 101, normally each one on the same topic) and may teach a First-Year Seminar as part of a Learning Community. Participation in the First-Year Seminar program or in a Learning Community is part of the faculty member's regular teaching load. Documentation of teaching performance in FYSM 101 will be included in the evidence of teaching effectiveness considered in cases of annual evaluation and third-year, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure review. Other contributions to the FYE program will be considered in the appropriate areas in faculty evaluation and tenure and promotion reviews.

Office of New Student Programs

The Office of New Student Programs will also play a significant role in the organizational structure for the First-Year Experience. New Student Programs houses both Orientation and the Provisional Program for new students, including training and working with Orientation interns and New Student Programs interns. In addition, New Student Programs has been actively involved in recruiting students, handling enrollment issues, and monitoring the pilot learning communities. New Student Programs will have an important role to play in supporting the First-Year Experience. Their expertise in working with interns will help them develop the Peer Facilitator program for Learning Communities, and their growing understanding of how to recruit first-year students successfully for learning communities will expand as they take on responsibility for recruiting students for the First-Year Seminar as well. New Student Programs' ability to monitor and control the enrollment process will aid in building the First-Year Experience program on solid administrative ground. The QEP budget includes funding for creating a large student workspace for the peer facilitators. The First-Year Experience Director and the FYE administrative assistant will also be housed in the newly-remodeled New Student Programs building.

Office for the Academic Experience

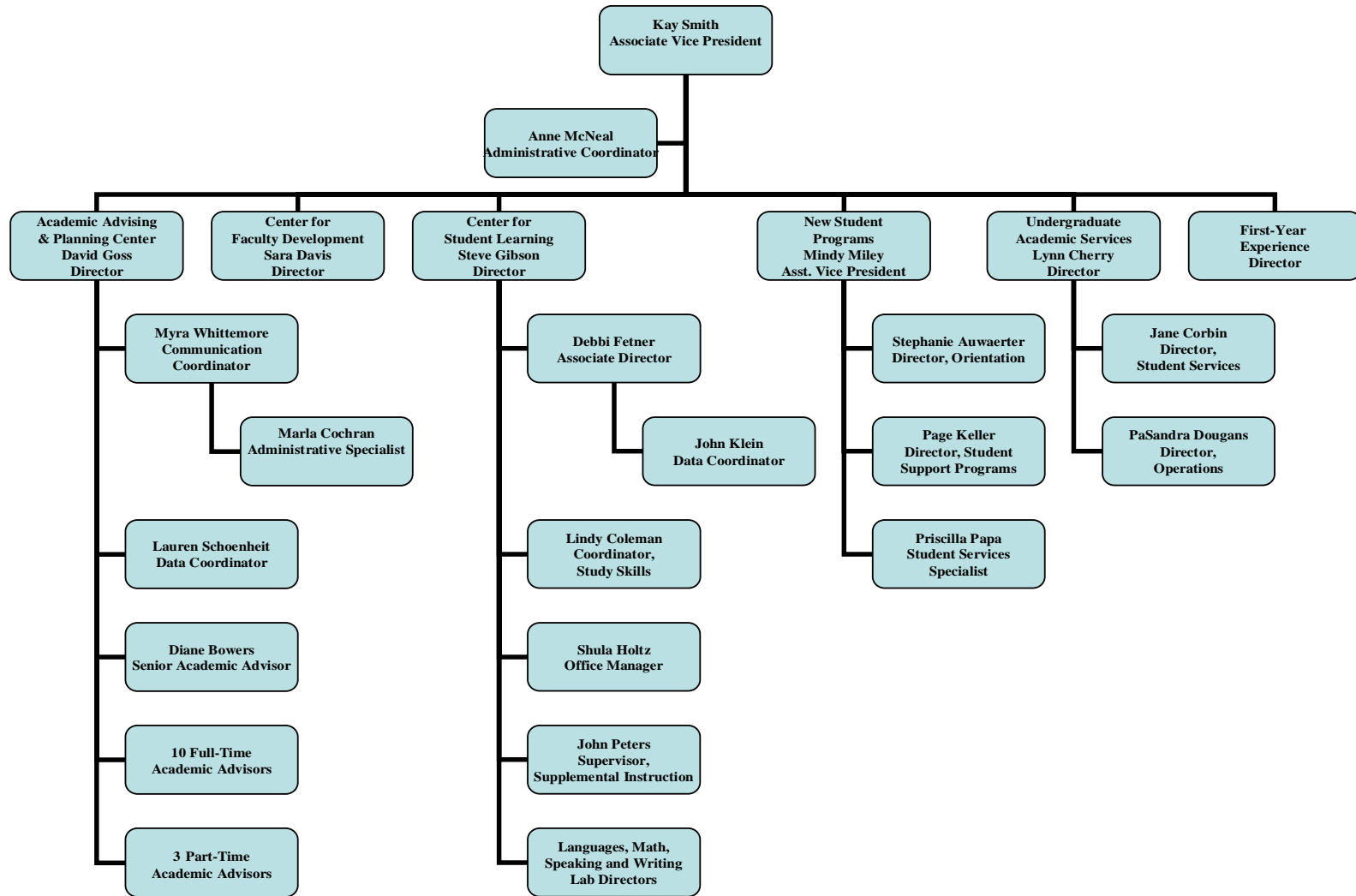
The Office for the Academic Experience will provide coordination of functions for the First-Year Experience. New Student Programs, Orientation, Advising, the Center for Student Learning, the Center for Faculty Development, and the Office of Undergraduate Academic

Services currently report to the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience, who in turn reports to the Provost. The First-Year Experience Director will also report to this office. Because so many of the administrative functions that will be vital to developing a robust First-Year Experience report to the AVP for the Academic Experience, this office will not only provide oversight but will also be a voice for garnering support for the program at the level of the Provost's office and above. Thus, the First-Year Experience Office will be folded into a mixture of other support services and functions that will guarantee its success and continuation (see Academic Experience Organizational Chart below).

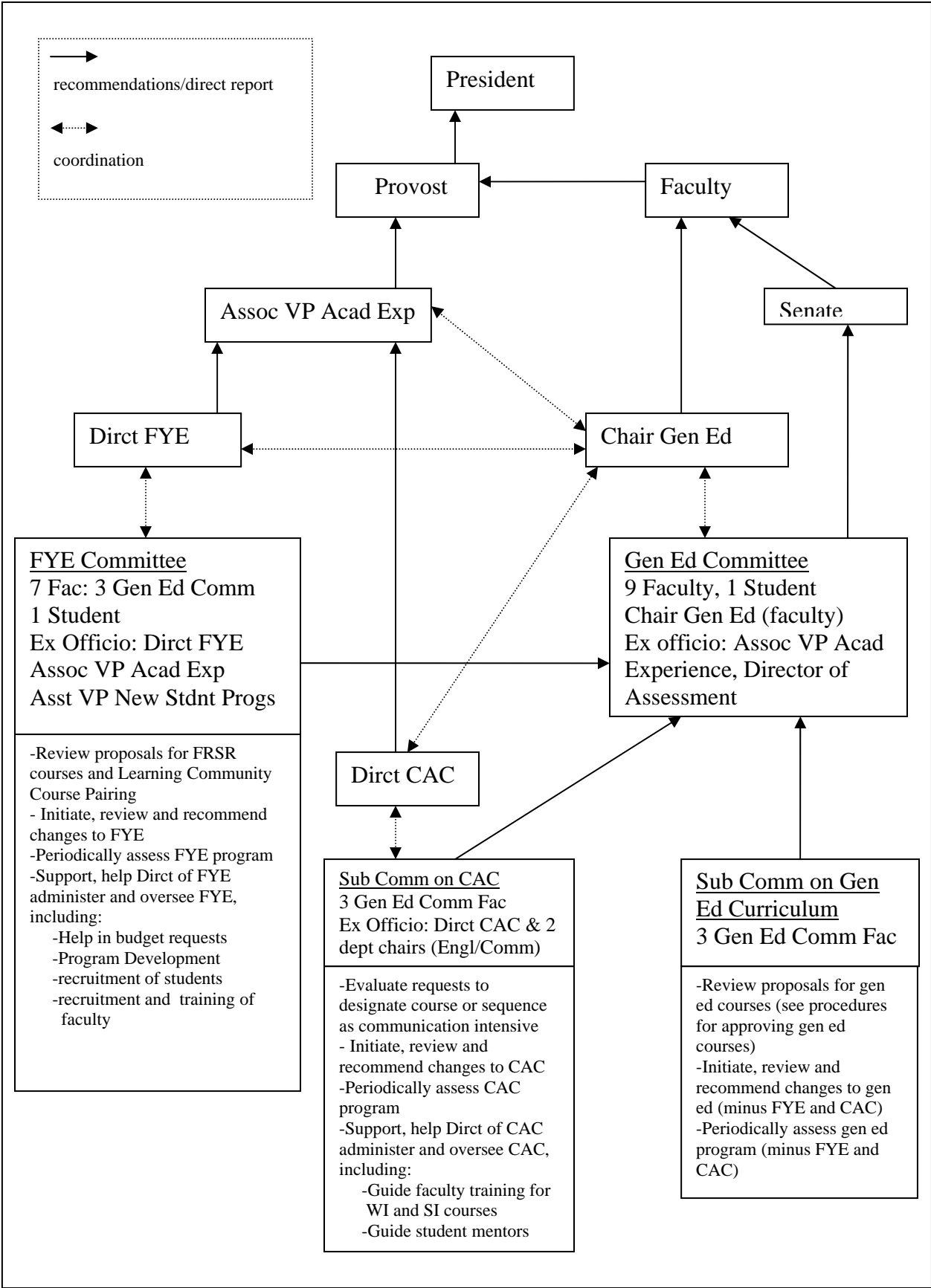
General Education and the First-Year Experience

In developing our Quality Enhancement Plan, we have been very fortunate to have been on a parallel track with the development of the College's new general education proposal. The First-Year Experience is a vital part, a cornerstone in fact, for the whole general education experience of our students. The rigorous introduction to a liberal arts education that students in Learning Communities and in First-Year Seminars receive will prepare them to "go further faster" in areas such as writing, speaking, research and critical thinking that are important parts of our general education proposal. However, we are also prepared to go forward with the First-Year Experience if the general education proposal is not supported by the Faculty Senate. If this is the case, a stand-alone proposal for the First-Year Seminar and for requiring the First-Year Experience will go forward to the Faculty Senate for approval. The Faculty Senate has indicated on several occasions and with the work of several committees that it wants and will support a First-Year Experience for College of Charleston.

Office for the Academic Experience



General Education Organization Chart



VIII. Budget

The budget for College of Charleston's First-Year Experience (see Appendix for budget worksheets) has been carefully planned so that it will support the FYE program without causing negative consequences to ongoing programs. For instance, often first-year programs that rely on roster faculty for staffing may actually cause an increase in the use of adjuncts as roster faculty are replaced in courses that support their major or interdisciplinary programs to teach first-year students. In order to avoid this unintended consequence, we are requesting an increase of two faculty lines per year for 2008-2012. This total of eight faculty lines will offset the decrease in class size necessary to offer a successful first-year seminar. These new faculty hires will not necessarily be designated exclusively for the First-Year Experience, but will go to departments which strongly support the First-Year Experience to increase those departments' capacity. The Provost, deans and department chairs, in consultation with the First-Year Experience director, will make the decisions about where faculty lines should be placed. While the faculty lines are a significant expenditure, they represent an opportunity for the institution to hire faculty in varied fields while still supporting the First-Year Experience.

Another line item, salary for peer facilitators, offers us the opportunity to train and pay upper-division students for their leadership in the reflective seminars for first-year students. We expect that some peer facilitators will become more interested and engaged students themselves as a result of this work. Studies show that students who work on campus persist and graduate at higher rates than students who work off campus. The peer facilitator program thus rewards both the student and the institution.

The final area we wish to highlight is the funding earmarked for professional development. We wish to establish an expectation that faculty teaching in the First-Year Experience both attend national conferences and make presentations that highlight for national audiences the work we are doing at College of Charleston. We expect that our First-Year Experience will be distinctive and will become a model for other institutions. The faculty who teach in the FYE program will have the opportunity both to learn from and to add to the national dialogue about the first-year experience.

IX. Assessment

The Assessment Subcommittee crafted the assessment plan for our QEP. The Assessment Subcommittee was hand selected by the QEP Executive Committee with the goal of developing a group that is reflective of a variety of constituencies of the College: faculty from across campus, student affairs, academic affairs, assessment and planning, and survey research.

The Assessment Subcommittee underwent a thorough process in developing the assessment plan for the QEP. The group began by reviewing best practices for assessment of the first-year experience through relevant literature, examples from other institutions, and measurement tools. Simultaneously, we examined our current assessment endeavors as they relate to programs and services for first-year students. The Assessment Subcommittee agreed upon a framework for structuring student learning outcomes and the assessment of these outcomes. This framework mandated that student learning outcomes from all QEP subcommittees should be concise; the [revised Bloom's Taxonomy](#)¹ should be used in each outcome to illustrate cognitive ability; and all outcomes should follow the same structure.

In an effort to ensure consistency using the above framework across all QEP subcommittees, the Assessment Subcommittee offered a training workshop to introduce and practice a model for writing student learning outcomes. The structure used was presented at a SACS pre-conference workshop given by Zerwas and Carrigan of UNC-Greensboro. Their "ABCD" model is a simple acronym that guides one in the necessary components of a measurable outcome: Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree. Workshop participants found the model easy to adapt and the feedback was extremely positive. The outcomes written at the workshop are the foundation of the learning outcomes present in our QEP.

To implement our QEP successfully, the Executive Committee determined that an implementation year is necessary; actions taken during this year will include assessment components. During the Spring of 2007, training will be offered for Learning Community faculty and peer educators which will be assessed through an evaluation form. During the 2007-2008 academic year, an extensive comprehensive analysis of first-year students will be drawn based on extant data, survey data, and other existing assessment tools. This baseline data will provide a benchmark by which we can gauge changes in our first-year students over time. Please see the QEP Assessment Timeline for more detailed information.

In the QEP assessment plan there are a variety of methods to assess student learning outcomes including qualitative, quantitative, direct, and indirect measures; nationally-normed standardized surveys; and in-house assessment tools. For each outcome, the Assessment Subcommittee included at least one direct measure. The sentiment of the committee was that direct measures provide concrete data as to whether or not a learning goal has been achieved. While direct measures are the most unambiguous form of assessment, the use of multiple measures ensures breadth and depth of information. Painting a multi-dimensional picture of the first-year student through diverse means of assessment will more clearly illustrate whether or not the College is offering a student-centered first-year experience.

Direct assessment measures make up the core of our QEP assessment plan. We will use rubrics to test acceptable and appropriate written communication skills as well as knowledge of information-gathering techniques and research skills. The latter will be measured in a discipline-specific manner. To gauge familiarity with the library and other academic support services, a common quiz will be developed to be utilized by all sections of First-Year Seminar and Learning Community courses. The First-Year Experience Committee will work with the various student support services to create a customized direct measurement that each office will incorporate into its assessment endeavors. These measurements will capture both the timeliness and the appropriateness of services sought. Please see the QEP Assessment Outcomes Matrix for more detailed information.

With regards to indirect assessment tools, the College will continue to employ the NSSE to indirectly measure first-year students' written communication skills, familiarity with library and other academic support services, and timely use of appropriate student support services. We will also incorporate the currently-used ACUHO-I Resident Survey to indirectly assess timely use of appropriate student support services. In addition, we plan to begin administration of CIRP's Your First College Year survey to indirectly measure written communication skills, familiarity with the library and other academic support services, and timely use of appropriate student support services. Please see the QEP Assessment Outcomes Matrix for more detailed information.

Extant data will provide another measurement of the achievement of the student learning outcomes. Beginning in Fall 2008 and every semester thereafter until full FYE implementation, Institutional Research will provide analyses of English 101 and 102 grades for students enrolled

in either a First-Year Seminar or a Learning Community as compared to those first-year students who are not enrolled in such courses. These analyses will contribute to the measurement of acceptable and appropriate written communication skills. Attendance records from library faculty will be utilized to ensure that all First-Year Seminar and Learning Community students attend a library instruction session as an indicator of students' familiarity with the library. The Academic Advising and Planning Center will provide data about the timeliness of advising appointments for Spring registration to show first-year students' familiarity with academic support services. Extant data relating to retention of students enrolled in a First-Year Seminar or Learning Community compared to those first-year students not enrolled in such courses will help indicate overall success of our QEP.

Upon the recommendation of the Student Support Services subcommittee, the Assessment subcommittee endorsed the application of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) quality assurance procedures to our selected co-curricular programs. CAS provides a "Self-Assessment Guide" (SAG) for each of the service areas identified in our QEP. Within each SAG are standards that are considered minimum requirements for good practice and guidelines on how to enhance the program under review. The implementation of a SAG involves a five-step process: developing a team of reviewers, designing standards and guidelines for practice (including learning outcomes), compiling documentation, assigning ratings according to a five-point scale ("not met" to "fully met"), and review of the results with suggestions for improvement. The successful implementation of a SAG takes on average two years.

Each set of standards, referred to as a functional area, contains the same thirteen sections: mission; program; leadership; organization and management; human resources; financial resources; facilities, technology, and equipment; legal responsibilities; equity and access; diversity; campus and external relations; ethics; and assessment and evaluation. None of the thirteen sections is rated more important than any of the other sections; each contains standards that represent essential elements of quality service for students.

In order to assure that we continue to develop appropriate learning outcomes, the College will contract with the Policy Center on the First Year of College to participate in their Foundations of Excellence program during the fourth year of implementation of our QEP. One component of this contract will be to develop more specific learning outcomes for the following

areas: using appropriate critical thinking skills and problem solving techniques in a variety of contexts; understanding the goals of a liberal arts and sciences education; understanding and respecting the values of academic integrity; using effective skills and strategies for working collaboratively; and engaging constructively in the College and local communities. Assessment measures for these learning goals will also be explored through our work with the Policy Center.

College of Charleston is also a participating institution in a two-year National Assessment of Learning in Learning Communities project sponsored by the [Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education](#).² “This national project (September 2006 - June 2008) aims to strengthen the national learning community movement by developing collaborative assessment practices that focus on the characteristics of student learning made possible by learning communities.” Other four-year institutions participating in the project include several schools with well established learning community and/or interdisciplinary programs, such as Temple University, Kennesaw State University and the University of Iowa.

The project involves using a protocol to examine student work to determine the degree of interdisciplinary understanding. Veronica Boix-Mansilla and her colleagues at Harvard’s Project Zero developed the protocol in an effort to guide institutions in creating and evaluating purposeful and integrative learning assignments. “[T]he framework integrates faculty insights around three core questions about student interdisciplinary understanding as exhibited in a piece of work. Whether student work takes the form of a paper, a thesis, a video, or a work of art, three questions can be used to assess its unique interdisciplinary qualities:

- Is the work grounded in carefully selected and adequately employed disciplinary insights?
- Are disciplinary insights clearly *integrated* so as to *leverage* student understanding?
- Does the work exhibit a clear sense of purpose, reflectivity, and self critique?”

Understanding of these three areas: 1) disciplinary grounding, 2) integrative leverage, 3) critical stance, is key to developing the ability to assess the interdisciplinary work produced in our learning communities. At this point in the three year project we are just beginning our work. We plan to use the learning outcome on writing shared by the First-Year Seminar and by Learning Communities to apply a rubric to writing assignments in the Learning Communities that will measure the three areas of interdisciplinary growth in knowledge and understanding.

We will also apply this rubric to other types of interdisciplinary assignments like those listed above.

The examination of student work from learning communities will facilitate the collective ability of faculty and staff to discuss the characteristics of integrative and interdisciplinary learning as evidenced in students' work. These discussions will also create a sense of appreciation for and the ability to develop assignments promoting learning across the disciplines. As an outgrowth of conversations about students' work, faculty and staff benefit from related conversations about designing assignments to support students in doing their best work. Best practices for teaching will be developed as the project discussions cultivate new and improved ways to use curricular and co-curricular resources through integrative assignments. A team of College of Charleston faculty and staff, the Learning Community Assessment Team (LCAT), will meet monthly to discuss examples of student work and methods for purposeful and integrative learning. This team will make several trips to the Washington Center to meet with colleagues from the other institutions involved in the project and to develop the ability to assess interdisciplinary work from the perspectives of disciplinary grounding, integrative leverage and critical stance.

Our QEP assessment plan incorporates multiple measures based on best practices for all student learning outcomes. Further, the multidimensionality of the plan is evidenced by the combination of the development of internally derived rubrics and measures, the use of widely-accepted CAS standards, participation in the grant-funded National Assessment of Learning in Learning Communities project, and involvement in the Policy Center on the First Year of College's Foundations of Excellence program. Because our plan uses a variety of techniques with a focus on direct measurement we have combined all types of assessment with an emphasis on the purest form. Therefore, we feel that we have created an assessment plan that is both rigorous and concise.

¹ Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, available at <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/slatta/hi216/learning/bloom.htm>.

² Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, available at <http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/project.asp?pid=78>.

Bibliography

- Barefoot, Betsy O., et. al. *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Kerr, Kathleen G. and James Tweedy. "Beyond Seat Time and Student Satisfaction: A Curricular Approach to Residential Education." *About Campus* 11.5 (2006): 9-15.
- Cornwell, Grant H. and Eve Walsh Stoddard. "Freedom, Diversity, and Global Citizenship." *Liberal Education* 92 (2006): 26-33.
- Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan, 1938.
- Keeling, Richard P., ed. *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*. Washington: American College Personnel Association, 2002.
- Kuh, George D., et. al. *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Laufgraben, Jodi Levine, et.al. *Sustaining and Improving Learning Communities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Learning Communities as a Strategy for Quality Learning & Educational Equity*. Olympia: Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, 2006.
- Learning Communities in Liberal Arts Colleges*. National Learning Communities Project Monograph Series. Olympia: Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, 2003.
- Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Student Achievement in College*. Washington: Association of American colleges and Universities, 2005.
- Liberal Learning and the Arts of Connection for the New Academy*. Washington: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995.
- Meiklejohn, Alexander. *The Experimental College*. Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, 1932.
- Smith, Barbara Leigh, et. al. *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Terenzini, Patrick T. and Robert D. Reason. "Parsing the First Year of College: Rethinking the Effects of College on Students." Philadelphia: Penn State Center for the Study of Higher Education, 2005.
- Upcraft, M.Lee, et. al. *Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

Appendix A: QEP Assessment Outcomes Matrix

Outcome	Direct Measurement	Indirect Measurement	Extant Data
<p>1. By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will complete at least one paper which demonstrates acceptable and appropriate written communication skills as understood in the discipline and as measured by a rubric approved by the FYE Committee.</p>	<p>Students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will have higher average scores (based on a thinking and writing skills rubric, such as the CLAQWA) than students not enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community.</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin assessment in Fall 2008 and conduct every Fall semester thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Committee will choose rubric; FYE Director will coordinate administration.</i></p>	<p>First-year students will show an increase in positive ratings relative to previous years' data and benchmark institutions on NSSE, questions 11c ("thinking critically and analytically") and 11e ("writing clearly and effectively").</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Spring 2008 and every 2 years thereafter. The Spring 2008 data will serve as baseline data for FYSM 101.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with AAPA.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will show higher frequencies when self-rating at "above average" or "highest 10%" as compared to students not enrolled in such courses on YFCY, question 11 ("writing ability and critical thinking skills"). (Note: YFCY is not currently used by College of Charleston but is being considered for annual administration by the FYE Committee.)</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Spring 2009 and every year thereafter.</i></p>	<p>Students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will have higher ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades than students not enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community.</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Fall 2008 and every semester thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with Institutional Research.</i></p>

		<p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Committee will decide on use; AAPA will administer if the instrument is chosen; FYE Director will work with AAPA to prepare necessary reports.</i></p>	
<p>2. By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of familiarity with the College library, information technology resources, the Center for Student Learning, the Academic Advising and Planning Center, and other appropriate academic resources.</p>	<p>Three-quarters of students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will score at least 80% on a common quiz evaluating familiarity with each academic resource and student support service.</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Fall 2008 and every semester thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Committee and FYE Director</i></p>	<p>First-year students will show an increase in positive ratings relative to previous years' data and benchmark institutions on NSSE, questions 10b ("providing the support you need to help you succeed academically") and 10g ("using computers in academic work").</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Spring 2008 and every 2 years thereafter. The Spring 2008 data will serve as baseline data for FYSM 101.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with AAPA.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will show higher frequencies with regards to being "completely successful" and "somewhat successful" as compared to students not enrolled in such courses on YFCY, question 10: developing effective study skills, adjusting to the academic demands of college, managing your time effectively, and utilizing campus services available to students. (Note: YFCY is not currently used by College of Charleston but is being considered for annual administration by the FYE Committee.)</p>	<p>All students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will attend a library instruction session as measured by bibliographic instruction statistics.</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Fall 2008 and every semester thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with appropriate library staff.</i></p> <hr/> <p>All students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will meet with their advisors in order to register for spring semester classes at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Fall 2008 and every semester thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with Advising Office.</i></p>

		<p>Timeline: Begin Spring 2009 and every year thereafter.</p> <p>Responsibility: FYE committee will decide on use; AAPA will administer if the instrument is chosen; FYE Director will work with AAPA to prepare necessary reports.</p> <hr/> <p>Students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will show higher frequencies with regards to “frequently” using the internet for research or homework and “frequently” using the library for research and homework compared to students not enrolled in such courses (YFCY, question 12). (Note: YFCY is not currently used by College of Charleston but is being considered for annual administration by the FYE Committee.)</p> <p>Timeline: Begin Spring 2009 and every year thereafter.</p> <p>Responsibility: FYE committee will decide on use; AAPA will administer if the instrument is chosen; FYE Director will work with AAPA to prepare necessary reports.</p>	
<p>3. By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge of information gathering techniques and research skills as appropriate in the discipline.</p>	<p>The FYE Committee will develop discipline-specific rubrics using definitions of research based on discipline-specific national standards to measure level of knowledge.</p>		

	<p>Timeline: Fall 2008 and every Fall semester thereafter.</p> <p>Responsibility: FYE Committee will coordinate with appropriate people on campus to develop rubric(s); FYE Director will coordinate administration and reporting.</p>		
<p>4. First-year students will choose to use, in a timely manner, appropriate student support services when a need arises.</p>	<p>FYE Committee in coordination with FYE Director will work with relevant services to develop a method that will provide direct measurement of this outcome.</p> <p>Timeline: Development in 2007-2008 academic year. Begin administration in Fall of 2008.</p> <p>Responsibility: FYE Committee and FYE Director.</p>	<p>First-year students will show a greater level of satisfaction on the following questions when compared to baseline data collected in spring 2007 on ACUHO-I, questions 1 (“level of satisfaction with RA regarding availability”) and 5 (“level of satisfaction with RA regarding their ability to help with a problem”).</p> <p>Timeline: Start Spring 2008 (to allow FYE Committee an opportunity to enhance collaboration among relevant offices) and every spring semester thereafter.</p> <p>Responsibility: FYE Director in collaboration with Residence Life and Housing Director.</p> <hr/> <p>After gathering baseline data in the first year of QEP implementation, students will show higher frequencies with regards to being “completely successful” and “somewhat successful” as compared to the baseline data on YFCY, question 10 (“utilizing campus services available to students”). (Note: YFCY is not</p>	

		<p>currently used by College of Charleston but is being considered for annual administration by the FYE Committee.)</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Spring 2009 and every year thereafter.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE committee will decide on use; AAPA will administer if the instrument is chosen; FYE Director will work with AAPA to prepare necessary reports.</i></p> <hr/> <p>First-year students will show an increase in positive ratings relative to previous years' data and benchmark institutions on NSSE, questions 10d ["helping you cope with your nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)"], 10e ("providing the support you need to thrive socially"), and 10f ["attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)"].</p> <p>Timeline: <i>Begin Spring 2008 and every 2 years thereafter. The Spring 2008 data will serve as baseline data for FYSM 101.</i></p> <p>Responsibility: <i>FYE Director will coordinate with AAPA.</i></p>	
--	--	--	--

5. Using appropriate critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in a variety of contexts	<i>College of Charleston will contract with the Policy Center on the First Year of College during the fourth year of implementation of our QEP. One component of this contract will be to develop more specific student learning outcomes in regards to the ideas presented as outcomes 5-9.</i>
6. Understanding the goals of liberal arts and sciences education and the core values of College of Charleston	
7. Understanding and respecting the values of academic integrity, including the College Honor Code	
8. Using effective skills and strategies for working collaboratively	
9. Engaging constructively in the College and local communities	

Appendix B: QEP Assessment Timeline 2007-2012

Timetable	Outcome/Assessment	Measure(s)	Administered By	Assessor
Spring 2007	Assessment of week-long training sessions for Learning Community faculty	Evaluation to assess both faculty satisfaction and learning outcomes of training experience	Training Instructors	Assistant VP of New Student Programs (NSP)
	Assessment of course offered for Learning Community peer educators (EDFS 560.085)	Student course evaluations	Training Instructors	Assistant VP of NSP
Fall 2007-Spring 2008	Comprehensive analysis of background and characteristics of first-year students (demographics, level of academic preparation, areas of need, etc.)	Extant data from Institutional Research, AAPA, and Admissions	Director of Institutional Research (IR), Director of Survey Research, Director of Technology in Admissions.	FYE Director and FYE Committee
	Comprehensive analysis of campus climate for first-year learners (academic environment inside and outside the classroom, quality of life in the residence halls, safe and inclusive environment, etc.)	Campus Climate Survey, NSSE, ACUHO-I resident survey; CORE alcohol and drug survey; student orientation evaluations	AAPA; Residence Life and Housing; Substance Abuse Services	FYE Director and FYE Committee
	Comprehensive analysis of satisfaction of first-year students with their collegiate experiences	National Student Voice, NSSE	AAPA	FYE Director and FYE Committee
	Analysis of student retention	Extant data from Institutional Research	IR	FYE Director
	Assessment of week-long training sessions for First-Year Experience faculty	Evaluation to assess both faculty satisfaction and learning outcomes of training experience	Training instructors	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1: By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will complete at least one paper which demonstrates acceptable and appropriate written communication skills as understood in the discipline and as measured by a rubric approved by the FYE Committee.	Thinking and writing skills rubric (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2: By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of familiarity with the College library, information technology resources, the Center for Student Learning, the Academic Advising and Planning Center, and other appropriate academic resources.	Common quiz that assesses familiarity with academic resources (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee and FYE Director	FYE Director

	QEP Outcome 3: By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYSM 101 or a Learning Community will be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge of information gathering techniques and research skills as appropriate in the discipline.	Specific rubrics regarding research skills (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee and other appropriate parties	FYE Director
Fall 2007-Spring 2008	QEP Outcome 4: First-year students will choose to use, in a timely manner, appropriate student support services when a need arises.	Direct measurements for each service (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee and other appropriate parties	FYE Director
Spring 2008	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	NSSE (Indirect Measurement) Begin Spring 2008; 2010, 2012, 2014	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 4	ACUHO-I resident survey (Indirect Measurement) Begin Spring 2008 and conduct every Spring semester	Residence Life and Housing	FYE Director
August 15, 2008	Annual Assessment Report Due	Summary report of outcomes for 2007-2008	FYE Director	FYE Committee
Fall 2008	QEP Outcome 1	Thinking and writing skills rubric (Direct Measurement) Begin in Fall 2008 and conduct every Fall semester	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
	QEP Outcome 3	Research skills rubric(s) (Direct Measurement) Begin in Fall 2008 and conduct every Fall semester	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data) Begin Fall 2008 and conduct every major semester	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement) Begin Fall 2008 and conduct every major semester	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data) Begin Fall 2008 and conduct every major semester	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data) Begin Fall 2008 and conduct every major semester	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement) Begin Fall 2008 and conduct every major semester	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director

Spring 2009	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	Your First College Year (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1	Begin Spring 2009 and conduct every Spring semester Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
Spring 2009	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 4	ACUHO-I resident survey (Indirect Measurement)	Residence Life and Housing	FYE Director
August 15, 2009	Annual Assessment Report Due	Summary report of outcomes for 2008-2009	FYE Director	FYE Committee
Fall 2009	QEP Outcome 1	Thinking and writing skills rubric (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Research skills rubric(s) (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
Spring 2010	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	NSSE (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	YFCY (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director

	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 4	ACUHO-I resident survey (Indirect Measurement)	Residence Life and Housing	FYE Director
August 15, 2010	Annual Assessment Report Due	Summary report of outcomes for 2009-2010	FYE Director	FYE Committee
Fall 2010	QEP Outcome 1	Thinking and writing skills rubric (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Research skills rubric(s) (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
Fall 2010-Spring 2011	QEP Outcome 5 QEP Outcome 6 QEP Outcome 7 QEP Outcome 8 QEP Outcome 9	Policy Center on the First Year of College	FYE Director with Policy Center	FYE Director
Spring 2011	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	YFCY (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 4	ACUHO-I resident survey (Indirect Measurement)	Residence Life and Housing	FYE Director

August 15, 2011	Annual Assessment Report Due	Summary report of outcomes for 2010-2011	FYE Director	FYE Committee
Fall 2011	QEP Outcome 1	Thinking and writing skills rubric (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
Fall 2011	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Research skills rubric(s) (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with FYSM 101 and Learning Community faculty	FYE Committee or appropriate assessment panel
Fall 2011-Spring 2012	SACS Five Year Report Due	Summary Assessment Report	FYE Director	SACS
Spring 2012	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	NSSE (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1 QEP Outcome 2 QEP Outcome 4	YFCY (Indirect Measurement)	AAPA	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 1	Study of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 grades (Extant Data)	IR	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Common quiz (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Bibliographic instruction statistics of attendance at library sessions (Extant Data)	Library staff	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 2	Tracking of timely advising (Extant Data)	Advising center	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 3	Tracking of timely use of services (Direct Measurement)	FYE Committee with staff from relevant services	FYE Director
	QEP Outcome 4	ACUHO-I resident survey (Indirect Measurement)	Residence Life and Housing	FYE Director

Appendix C: QEP Budget

QEP Funds for 2007-2012 Budget Summary			
Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$50,000	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$11,111	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$432,000	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012 (total of 8)	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$40,000	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$40,000	New salary for permanent administrative support (1 line)	R
Training Materials	\$7,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$232,000	One-time stipend for faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$120,000	One-time stipend for faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$60,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$216,000	PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$37,500	PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$125,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$4,000	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$21,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$18,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$5,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$1,419,111		
Data ports	\$10,500	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$13,382	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$20,000	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$43,882		
Overall Total	\$1,462,993		

QEP Funds for 2007-2008

Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$50,000	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$11,111	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$0	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$40,000	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$20,000	New salary for temporary administrative support	R
Training Materials	\$1,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$52,000	One-time stipend for 26 faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$0	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$5,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$18,000	15 PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$7,500	5 PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$25,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$800	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$2,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$1,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$1,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$234,911		
Data ports	\$10,500	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$13,382	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$0	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$23,882		
Overall Total	\$258,793		

QEP Funds for 2008-2009

Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$0	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$0	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$108,000	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$0	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$20,000	New salary for permanent administrative support (1 line)	R
Training Materials	\$1,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$60,000	One-time stipend for 30 faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$10,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$36,000	30 PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$7,500	5 PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$25,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$800	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$4,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$2,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$1,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$305,800		
Data ports	\$0	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$0	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$0	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$0		
Overall Total	\$305,800		

QEP Funds for 2009-2010			
Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$0	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$0	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$108,000	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$0	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$0	New salary for permanent administrative support (1 line)	R
Training Materials	\$1,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$60,000	One-time stipend for 30 faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$15,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$54,000	45 PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$7,500	5 PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$25,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$800	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$5,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$5,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$1,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$312,800		
Data ports	\$0	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$0	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$0	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$0		
Overall Total	\$312,800		

QEP Funds for 2010-2011			
Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$0	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$0	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$108,000	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$0	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$0	New salary for permanent administrative support (1 line)	R
Training Materials	\$1,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$15,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$54,000	45 PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$7,500	5 PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$25,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$800	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$5,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$5,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$1,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$282,800		
Data ports	\$0	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$0	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$20,000	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$20,000		
Overall Total	\$302,800		

QEP Funds for 2011-2012

Expense Item	Cost	Notes	R/NR
Director Replacement	\$0	New salary for 1 visiting line to replace director's salary in director's home department	R
2/9 Replacement	\$0	For director to move to 11 month vs. 9 month contract	R
Faculty Lines	\$108,000	New salary for 2 faculty lines for each year 2008-2009 to 2011-2012	R
Residence Life Lines	\$0	2 staff lines (Residence Life has the funding for these 2 lines)	R
Service Learning Line	\$0	New salary for 1 staff line	R
Administrative Support	\$0	New salary for permanent administrative support (1 line)	R
Training Materials	\$1,500	For faculty training sessions	R
Training Workshop (LC's)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for Learning Communities @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Training Workshop (FYSM)	\$30,000	One-time stipend for 15 faculty for FYSM @ \$2000/faculty member	R
Professional Development	\$15,000	Conference and external training (national conference attendance for faculty)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary	\$54,000	45 PF @ 10.00/hr for 8 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for FRSR and LCs)	R
Peer Facilitator Salary - Honors	\$7,500	5 PF @ 10.00/hr for 10 hrs/week for 15 weeks fall term (primary semester for Honors Seminar)	R
Assessment Instruments	\$25,000	To assess each of the parts of the QEP annually	R
Telephone	\$800	NSP/peer facilitator workroom	R
Supply Budget	\$5,000	Includes recruiting materials and mailings	R
Co-Curricular Stipend	\$5,000	Faculty and peer facilitator to use for enhanced interaction with students	R
Technology Updates	\$1,000	Annual updates for software, etc.	R
Reoccurring Total	\$282,800		
Data ports	\$0	NSP/Data Ports for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Desktop computers	\$0	NSP/10 Desktop Computers for peer facilitator workroom	NR
Policy Center Foundations of Excellence	\$0	External assessment of programmatic aspects of total QEP	NR
Non-Reoccurring Total	\$0		
Overall Total	\$282,800		

Appendix D: QEP Committee Chart

<p>QEP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Kay Smith, Academic Experience Pam Niesslein, AAPA</p>	
<p>Demetria Clemons, Board of Trustees Hugh Wilder, Philosophy- First Year Seminar Committee Fran Welch, Education- Learning Communities Committee Jeri Cabot, Student Affairs- Assessment Committee Karin Roof, AAPA- Assessment Committee</p>	<p>Mindy Miley, New Student Programs- Student Support Committee Lynn Cherry, Undergraduate Academic Services- Student Support Committee Amy McCandless, Graduate Studies- Historian Anne McNeal, Academic Experience- Admin. Support</p>

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR	LEARNING COMMUNITIES	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES	ASSESSMENT
<p>Hugh Wilder, Philosophy</p>	<p>Fran Welch, Education</p>	<p>Mindy Miley, New Student Programs Lynn Cherry, Undergraduate Academic Services</p>	<p>Jeri Cabot, Student Affairs Karin Roof, AAPA</p>
<p>Mary Burkard, Academic Advising Angela Cozart, Foundations, Secondary and Special Education Jon Hakkila, Physics and Astronomy Jim Hittner, Psychology Susan Kattwinkel, Theatre Todd McNerney, Theatre Shawn Morrison, French Bill Olejniczak, History John Peters, Biology Howard Rudd, Management and Entrepreneurship Trish Ward, English Kay Smith, Academic Experience (Admin. Support) Anne McNeal, Academic Experience (Admin. Support)</p>	<p>Deanna Caveny, Mathematics Lauren Collier, Student Affairs Bruce Fleming, Internship Director Lynne Ford, Political Science Page Keller, New Student Programs Lauren Kennington, New Student Programs Mindy Miley, New Student Programs Alison Piepmeier, English Kay Smith, Academic Experience (Admin. Support) Anne McNeal, Academic Experience (Admin. Support)</p>	<p>Stephanie Auwaerter, New Student Programs Andrew Bergstrom, Student Affairs Lauren Collier, Student Affairs Jane Corbin, Undergraduate Academic Services Heather Dykes, Residence Life Steve Gibson, Center for Student Learning David Goss, Academic Advising Page Keller, New Student Programs Lauren Kennington, New Student Programs Susan Morrison, Academic Affairs Scott Peebles, English Phil Powell, Library Kate Tiller, Student, New Student Programs Pam Niesslein, AAPA (Admin. Support) Anne McNeal, Academic Experience (Admin. Support)</p>	<p>Eunice Bakanic, Sociology and Anthropology Ijuana Gadsden, Student Affairs Page Keller, New Student Programs Shawn Morrison, French Lisa Ross, Psychology Debbie Vaughn, AAPA Pam Niesslein, AAPA (Admin. Support) Anne McNeal, Academic Experience (Admin. Support)</p>

