

**University of South Carolina**  
**Quality Enhancement Plan Proposal Committee**  
**Minutes**

March 31, 2010

11:00 a.m.

**Attendees:** Helen Doeringhaus (Ex-Officio), Michelle Faucett (student), John Gardner (by phone), Susanne Hicklin (Institutional Assessment), Sarah Krivak (International Programs), Jed Lyons (CTE), John McDermott (Business), Phil Moore (Ex-officio), Bruce Nims (Lancaster), Dennis Pruitt (Ex-Officio), Irma Van Scoy (Education/Chair).

**Absent:** Val Littlefield (History),

1. The minutes of the last meeting (March 15, 2010) were distributed and are to be approved at the next meeting.
2. The agenda and objectives for today's meeting were discussed. The primary objective is to hear from 2 QEP proposers. After this, everyone will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on how the proposals fit together. The committee will divide into subgroups to work between meetings, and report back. An item to address is how to get more student input before the end of the semester.
3. Dr. John Gerdes joined the meeting and made a short presentation on the QEP proposal "Using Student and Course Profiles to Improve Student Success." The goal of this project is to create a multidimensional profile of courses and students that can be used for advising, self-advising, and also for assessing courses and curriculum. The purpose is to improve student success. The profile would include a number of dimensions, including those from Bloom's Taxonomy as well as reading, writing, workload, and other variables. The proposal would extend research that Dr. Gerdes has done on a college level to the entire university.

Discussion topics and highlights:

The course profiles are developed by reviewing syllabi. This can be done by trained people (grad students). There is an algorithm to create the student profiles automatically once the courses are profiled, which is based on student performance in courses. The program needs training to get the student profiles, which limits its use with freshman and sophomores. This could be addressed by surveying early students to develop their self-perceived profiles.

The potential impact on the university was discussed. The program could help students find courses that would meet their needs. For example if they have to take a science course, the program could be used to direct students to the course that best fits them.

The program can also help the administration look at curriculum and see if there are any holes. E.g. Do we have enough writing in the curriculum?

The question was asked “Is the goal to move the students towards self-advisement?” That is not entirely the case, but is to help students move towards being self-informed. In addition, this will give more information about courses than is in catalog course descriptions.

The potential to build inertia into the students program of study was discussed. For example, if students know what they do well, then this could encourage them to keep doing what they are doing well to improve GPA, not develop other skills. However, different people will have different objectives. Maybe a student needs to get GPA up. Or if a required course is coming and it will be a challenge, the student could schedule it when he or she is solid and awake and ready to work on it.

The need to go down to the level of different sections of courses was discussed, as different professors may emphasize different skills. While this could play a role, that situation might mean that the professors are not teaching to the master syllabus. Using Bloom’s Taxonomy may present a challenge as the creating level implies they are good at different levels. How to separate someone who is creative from one who is not may require looking at different dimensions.

Committee discussed that if there is not a lot of choice presented to the student, then the impact of the project will be small. One reason people have to withdraw from courses is because we’re not offering enough classes for them to select the courses right for them. Students need a 3.0 and 30 hours/year to keep their financial aid. A tool to identify who is at risk, what the classes are like, what the professors will teach, what level of rigor, how much reading, etc. would help these students.

This proposal has to do with advisement. A committee member recalled that the university has considered this topic in the past, but did not include it as a major focus for a self study. This proposal could be a component of a more comprehensive approach to revising advising. One of the things this would help us measure, assuming we can isolate variables, is the impact on retention and graduate rates. SACS would find this important, but wants the QEP’s to be focused on learning outcomes.

4. Dr. Gerdes left and the committee was joined by Drs. Michael Matthews and David Miller, two of the authors of the proposal “The Tenth Dimensions: An Integrative Learning Environment.” A committee member had to leave early and was given the opportunity to make comments before the proposers discussed their project.

Discussion topics and highlights:

The proposal has great potential. However, areas for further consideration include that it could reference how we can change how we market the university. For example, this project would transform how we do orientation to the university. The proposal has huge implications for the regional campuses. The plan needs to state explicitly that it involves all students, clarify the meaning of the title earlier in the document, develop a more explicit timeline, and address cost and budget. Dr. Miller stated that such issues have been considered and could have been better articulated if a longer proposal was solicited.

Drs. Miller and Matthews discussed the proposal, stating that this is an ambitious project and we need to start with a prototype to show it will work. It will be important to select the focus for a prototype, like the Honors College or the Horseshoe. We cannot buy this retail. The purpose is to use infrastructure to make an integrated experience, both a curriculum and a campus life that is not fragmented and is coherent. This is not the only goal. The process of building the 10<sup>th</sup> Dimension is part of the goal. For example, a computer science course has students building apps for Android based on simulations of the Horseshoe. There are apps for virtual tours. But to get down deep we need faculty and students to interact. There is an awareness missing among students about the connection between classes. This lets students and advisors know why they are here.

The committee discussed that this will be a challenging project. For example, for 10 years we've tried to get the computer system to not let students take courses without prerequisites. It was stated that this seems even more ambitious than that.

The proposers have had success in funding in the past. The Humanities Gaming Institute is a project that proposes to develop different games for pedagogical and research activities in the humanities. That is a funded program.

The integrative learning environment concept was discussed, including the difference between learning from an iPhone (for example) and learning about what opportunities are out there. This is not a proposal about distance education. This project would not replace the classroom, but connects it to other domains. Augmented reality might take the form here of planning virtual tags all over campus. This project would let you take a picture of the observatory with a phone and get back a paragraph that tells the history.

This could be a tool that supports advising. We still want students to talk with an advisor. This can help advisors learn what is out there too. An advising tool is a game called "future selves." Students pick what they want to be in 10 years. The game would tell them what they need to do to position themselves for that.

The committee discussed the learning outcomes for this proposal. The project is a connector and is not about learning outcomes. One thing that could be assessed is the student's ability to see relatedness between areas. There is a benefit to having students

become lifelong learners. Students will capture what they did here and carry it with them, like a yearbook. This project does not connect to learning outcomes the way a course does. However, the learning outcomes of the Carolina Core would be the framework /structural principles for the development.

It was stated that SACS will want baseline data. We need to show we have a problem now and that we will address it. Is the problem now that the student experience is not integrated? We need to state “the purpose of the QEP is too....” And then we will figure out how to assess it.

5. Drs. Matthews and Miller left, and the committee discussed the four QEP projects together. Comments that were expressed during the discussions with the proposal writers were reiterated. The service learning and global engagement proposals are viewed as the most likely areas to impact student learning. The 10<sup>th</sup> Dimension proposal is viewed as something that can incorporate many of the ideas suggested. A strength of the two proposals presented today is that they are already underway. The committee members were asked to join subgroups to look at what other institutions are doing that might be similar, and what resources we might have here on campus.

6. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.