

Spring Forum on the Quality Enhancement Plan

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

1. Introductions – Sandra Kelly and Amber Fallucca

2. Overview

- a. The QEP is a student-focused initiative, and the last proposal was submitted in 2011
- b. UofSC has chosen to deepen and build upon the success of the previous QEP (which was focused on integrative learning)
 - i. The CIEL office (previously USC connect) is now a fully mature office (six full-time staff, one graduate assistant, and two undergraduate interns)
 - ii. UofSC will make good use of resources in a resource-constrained environment
- c. The new proposal is due in 2021

3. QEP Timeline

- a. Early 2021: Submit early proposal to SACSCOC
- b. March 2021: On-site visit by SACSCOC

4. QEP Components

- a. Identify topic through ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation process
- b. QEP has a broad-based support of institution constituencies
 - i. More than 30 outreach events this year so far
- c. Focus on student learning/success
 - i. Focus on reflection
- d. Committed resources to initiate, implement, and complete QEP

5. First QEP (2011) information

- a. USC Connect – Focus on integrative learning, with its most recognizable program, Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD)
 - i. Undergraduate students self-select
 1. All majors
 2. All colleges
- b. Learning takeaways
 - i. Demographics
 1. A pretty homogenous population participates in GLD – heavily female, but slightly more diverse than the general student body. The student populations from the PCCs help to diversify GLD.
 - ii. We mirror other engagements on campus (i.e. study abroad)
 - iii. We see students who struggle with reflection
 1. “I haven’t been asked to think this way before.”
 2. We are hitting a subpopulation at the end of their college career
 - a. Reflection helps build critical thinking skills and lifelong learning

6. Direction of the new QEP

- a. We’re allowed to build upon an existing theme
 - i. 5-year plan for implementation
 - ii. Focusing on high-quality experience and associated reflection
- b. We would like feedback
 - i. USC Connect – focuses on culminating experience and integrative learning; how do we:

1. Engage students who we have not reached yet
2. Start earlier: we don't have to wait until the end of their career
3. Broaden our reach and how do we reach those who are not engaged with us

7. Five QEP Subcommittees

- a. Over 30 faculty and staff participates
- b. Prior to fall 2019
 - i. Presentations and info gathering
- c. Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
 - i. Forum in September; focus groups; faculty senate; faculty & staff meetings; provost retreat; SAAS directors group
- d. Risk management Subcommittee
 - i. Question of liability and scale or requirement (experiential learning)
- e. Technology & assessment Subcommittee
 - i. Researching existing assessment that we can embed and complement what we're doing to help with reflection
 - ii. Vendors who can build tools into blackboard
- f. Marketing Subcommittee
 - i. Thinking about audience, who we can tailor to, and targeting certain populations. Understanding touch points (specifically with first-year students).
- g. Professional development Subcommittee
 - i. Identify current PD opportunities in relation to QEP
- h. Pilot project Subcommittee
 - Multi-campus; Circular and co-curricular; Considering how reflection is already embedded within these experiences

8. Learning from feedback

- a. Engagement complements college experience and academics
- b. Barriers
 - i. Realistic and tangible
 - ii. Financial limitations
 1. Examples: Application fees for study abroad; transportation needs for a mandatory internship
 - iii. "White noise"
 1. Students are getting a lot of communication from everyone on campus
 - a. They're trying to think about guidance and what engagements matter and what they should be doing in relation with their academics
 2. Can we help think how to digest messaging?
 - iv. Processes are inconsistent across departments
 1. Example: Study abroad scholarship applications are due, then full amount of funds must be paid by student; then the student finds out about whether they got scholarship money after they've already had to pay the full amount
 - a. Can we revisit how to tailor to student experience?
 - v. Value proposition (Emerging strong)
 1. Consumer friendly student body
 2. Wants to know what are the outcomes of engaging – if I engage in an internship, why is it valuable? Do you have data to support that this is a good thing?
 - a. We need to describe/articulate the value of experiences and bigger picture of why experiences are important
 - vi. Concerns about capacity and support

1. We don't want it to feel like an "add on"
 2. We can target budget to more meaningful things
 3. Budgetary interventions for students/faculty to encourage reflection
- vii. Narrowing topic: Meaningful engagement

9. Initial focus was on student populations traditionally in participation

- a. Frame of institutional outcomes and success metrics
 - i. Transfer students; First generation; Male; Pell grant eligible; and Graduate students
- b. Intervention frame
 - i. Retention; Graduation; and First job post-college

10. Student learning focus

- a. Critical reflection vs temporal reflection
 - i. Critical: Think about experience and analyze; connect to personal growth; or academic enhancement. Timing is important. It could be anticipatory, parallel to the experience, after-the-fact, and meaning making/reflecting
 - ii. Can be assessed across all areas

11. Define "Engagement"

- a. We have experiential learning opportunities (ELOs) – there is a proposal process involved
 - i. Criteria: Time on task of 40 hours or more, expectations are set on the front end, reflection, and feedback
 1. Should we re-visit? Do we open opportunity for more students if we do?
 2. Idea: Academic advisors for second-year students and beyond, capacity permitting
 3. Expanding beyond academic advisors to mentorship roles
 - a. Faculty who organize student organizations to mentor
 - b. Faculty mentorship program
 - c. Program advisors
 4. Providing structure and learning resources on campus
 5. Budget for QEP could target funds that benefit faculty/staff
 - a. Faculty grants to develop meaningful engagement or reflection
 - b. Students at peer institutions submit proposals and requests for funds (typically, about \$200 usually). The committee reviews and makes decision about fund allocation. Or, we could push funds to units (such as providing funds to the Office of Study Abroad to cover or minimize application fees)

12. Audience – Questions, Comments, Concerns, and Ideas

- a.

Discussion, Comments, & Questions

1. Comment (University Library)

- a. There are opportunities available, but how do people find about them? For example, we have an engagement which is grand funded and there has been proven success in employment outcomes.
- b. I've been frustrated because I've been doing this for five to six years and I'm just now hearing about this.
 - i. **Response** – You can connect with this CIEL office and discuss GLD involvement
 1. **Commenter** – My point is that it shouldn't be just me. The library employs many students. We don't seem to be part of the process

- a. **Response** – We can discuss with the dean of how to get involved. This may be happening across many areas of campus and we need to identify better across all areas of campus

2. Comment (History Department)

- a. I'm concerned that this (experiential learning) would become a requirement. The requirement conversation was front and center last year, but it has receded, but it seems to be an underlying goal. My concern is capacity. Can you speak more concretely about how to address the capacity problem? How many advisor hours are involved in helping students through the process of finding opportunities, having students reflect, and then giving feedback?
 - i. **Response** – There will never be a requirement without faculty senate approval. We heard concerns from faculty, staff, and students about the requirement. The requirement might develop as we build capacity. The engagements subcommittee has been trying to figure out the capacity issue. As a large university, we need to work on this. We're not going for a requirement unless we hear faculty call for one, but that doesn't mean we can't try to get 100% student involved. Some focus groups wanted a requirement but that ultimately didn't percolate to the top. In terms of the budget, we're still waiting to hear. If we don't have the budget to build *up* capacity, we will build *to* capacity.
 - 1. **Commenter** - We can figure that out based on GLD. How many hours go into that process? If we take X number of students and multiply that by the number of hours, we can anticipate the capacity needed.
 - a. **Response** – We don't want 100% students to earn GLD. We don't want that to be the goal. What about engagements that require less capacity and guidance? We haven't decided what that would be.
 - i. There is a difference between what we've done and what we will do. We know we want to be student driven without course format. As for GLD, for those who do complete on their own, they put in approximately 50-60 hours on average into the reflection (ePortfolio) and gets support from advisor who reviews drafts. It varies student by student and it's difficult to distill down to a specific number. For some students it's more natural of a process and we provide guidance. There are reviewers who are trained to review (6 hours to review total number of assigned); and serve as a quality control measure.

3. Comment (Library and Information Science)

- a. There is a need to define engagement or come to a common understanding. Additionally, we need to consider how to reach populations who are not typically engaged. If the QEP is a five-year process, is it realistic to think about an initial target population and then scale it up?
 - i. **Response:** The goal would be dependent upon the total number within that population. We will need to consider what matters most to those specific populations as well.

4. Comment (Student affairs)

- a. In terms of language, are engagements still defined as within or beyond the classroom? Do we need to refine and update them?
 - i. **Response** – We have criteria associated with engagement, but it's worth revisiting. If we think about how to scale to populations, how do we involve co-curricular and curricular environments? We don't want to assume that what we've been doing is what we need to be doing going forward. What matters most in the engagement definition?

1. **Commenter** - Is the assumption that professional staff will help students to define this? Can students who are not as involved or engaged bring engagements from non-traditional realms (different from the academic environment) or off-campus realms if they still meet the requirements?
 - a. **Response** - What is your reaction? Beyond the traditional, what do we need to envelop?
 - i. **Commenter** - What I do, I want students to engage, but not everyone can do that. I want to trust that there are wise students and colleagues that connect to other areas and they need to figure that out. If we have the right construct built, students who don't traditionally engage (such as males, or whether it's due to finances or otherwise), they find themselves doing something. They'll match up into something they find important.
 1. **Response** – Then, we are asking students to make the case that their engagement is meaningful. We define engagement on front end so students can see what exists. Let's talk though this in the moment.
 2. **Response** - It might be that we want to have more student focus groups with students who are not as engaged to discover what they feel is impactful and defining it with guidance and flexibility.
 - ii. **Additional commenter** (University Library) – Why do you feel that males do not engage, because in my project, that's been 75% of participants. I've been trying to involve more female students.
 1. **Response:** National literature says that with college age males, there seems to be a disconnect between meaningful engagement. Our own data mirrors that. GLD is key indicator of this too. We're trying to understand why we're missing a population. There are two key findings with highly engaged males that are not completing GLD: (1) Reflection is too "touchy feely" – we need to think carefully about framing and how this helps move forwards; and (2) they feel their network is strong enough post-college outcomes and they don't have a need for the guidance. This has created some pause within office in terms of how we're marketing reflection in a way that resonates.
 2. **Response** - Fewer young men are coming to college; graduation rates are lower; more young women engaging than men; puzzlement about this issue; happening earlier than college (middle school)
 3. **Response** - Fewer young men are coming to college; graduation rates are lower; more young women engaging than men. There is puzzlement about this issue, and we are finding it's happening earlier than college (middle school).
 - iii. **Additional commenter** (Student life) - We battle with gray area of student-led initiatives that aren't directly related to any staff, such as experiences with student government. We don't have professional staff in there all the time to verify. It's hard for us to stay to them "it isn't considered".

5. Comment (Engineering)

- a. As for male-engagement (I'm from a male-dominated department), we have a high number of students (male and female) who are highly engaged, but it's the reflection piece that they don't understand regarding value. In some ways, that's our fault within the curriculum. Courses can embed opportunities more commonly across curriculum, and maybe over time, that would change the perception of value.

When defining and tracking engagement, I've talked a bit about "non-starters". We need to define engagement that starts with getting student to engage in conversation with a faculty member or in the career center or the Office of Undergraduate Research. Targeting those critical first- and second-year students, just getting them to just go talk to someone, which is engagement in and of itself. Then, we could build on that. Student will have a conversation and may choose not to engaged, but then will have legitimate reasons of why they chose not to pursue (which is also valuable).

I've also seen an issue that some students don't feel like they're ready to engage, even though we have plenty of internship sites who willing and ready to accept them. It's an issue of self-confidence that students don't feel ready or capable. How do we deliver these messages to our first- and second-year students?

- i. **Response** – This idea of confidence – Students seem to ask themselves "am I ready" even if the engagement states "for first year students". It takes some self-convincing. Value rubrics - initiation of experience, framed in creating outcomes, recognizes that starting a conversation is a step towards engagement and we could be looking for learning outcome language.

6. Comment (Student life)

- a. Regardless of experience, we as an institution need to be better prepared to commit to reflection and prepare them for next chapter. How can we ramp up ability and capacity as an institution to have those conversations and help them process? Are there touch points and conversations or ways to frame to help faculty/staff be prepared to do this?
 - i. **Response** - How we're framing engagements and finding moments for reflection. Pedagogy grants are an option to create/build reflection across disciplines and asking faculty how they're incorporating reflection. The description of reflection is vast and there is not a one size fits all. We could create a repository of reflective prompts to be used, not as boiler plates, but to at least get that conversation going, and we could be collecting examples that are organically occurring.

7. Comment (French; Preston residential college)

- a. Faculty life communities work a lot with a lot of first year students and are a key area to start conversations about engagement. Students sometimes don't have conversations with faculty in class, but they will engage with us instead, not realizing we are faculty.

8. Comment (University Library)

- a. We put a lot of terms on things (e.g. research; engagement; etc). We could just start with asking the student about their curiosity, passion, or what they're interested in. You can show them how to engage based on those answers. Sometimes words and language can be barriers. "What are you curious about?" (ask), then, get them at orientation and engage with them.

9. Comment (Engineering)

- a. We could direct people to their undergraduate directors (all departments have this), or start by asking who do you talk to in your department if you're interested in or need information about engagements, undergraduate research, etc.? If you want to bring this on a level that's equal for within-the-classroom

and beyond-the-classroom, we can have people to be dedicated contact points within departments and tell students, so they know who those people are.

10. Comment (Student of UofSC and outreach intern)

- a. What are the ideas for removing barriers for access for those who need to traditionally engage?
 - i. **Response:** That is part of the budget. We hope that the budget, in part, will be removing financial barriers; transportation barriers; etc. There could be professional development for faculty and staff, but more dedicated and direct help could be available for students, faculty and staff. For transfer students, who want to get done in two years, and low income and not PELL-eligible (work full time) students, we want to help them engage while also having place to live and food to eat.

11. Comment

- a. Is there a venue to share ideas?
 - i. **Response:** Yes - CIEL website & comment box, as well as Amber's contact information