

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

1/19/2010 DRAFT

WHAT IS A QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

A mandatory part of the 2010 reaffirmation of accreditation process by SACS is the development and funding of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). SACS lists the following elements of a successful QEP: (a) focused theme; (b) broad appeal across campus; (c) focused on improving student learning; (d) success can be assessed throughout 5-year period; (e) financial feasibility.

Our Team was primarily interested in developing a QEP that promoted a creative, energetic and meaningful learning experience for students and thus, was a real opportunity to have a direct impact on student learning over the next decade.

Our QEP is focused on looking forward and seeing what we as an institution can do better; in doing so, our goal is to markedly and demonstrably increase the quality of student learning.

The QEP is the result of a long process. We actively solicited input from the UGA community, including faculty, students, alumni and staff, as to what QEP we might pursue. This was a grass-roots effort on behalf of the UGA community. The Leadership Team approved the QEP theme and has been consulted during the process.

During this spring semester, our Team is developing the final plan including details on how we will implement and assess the success of the QEP. The final QEP will be delivered to the Leadership Team in April, 2010 and will be submitted to SACS in Fall, 2010.

GENESIS OF UGA's QEP

The University of Georgia began its search for a Quality Enhancement Plan in the spring of 2008 with a campus-wide meeting to explain the process and to announce the committees that would do the work. In fall 2008, the team charged with finding possible topics for consideration began to meet, renaming themselves the Student Learning Enhancement Team (SLET). The Team (Appendix 1) had faculty, students, administrators, staff and alumni representatives.

Through the 2008-09 school year, the SLET met with faculty, staff, and students to solicit ideas. An important tool was a website that invited participation. All members of the campus were invited to submit short "pre-proposals" on what the QEP should be. These pre-proposals were short (1-2 pages) and could be singly or multiply authored. Pre-proposals were available online as they were submitted so that anyone could read them. The website allowed comments to be posted on any pre-proposal. The results were gratifying: by January 2009, 85 faculty, staff, and students had submitted thirty-one pre-proposals.

In addition to the website, the SLET used a variety of ways to reach the academic community. In all, the SLET held campus-wide forums twice for faculty and once for staff (though all members of the university community were welcome at all forums). The SLET also conducted a survey of alumni with the help of the Alumni Association and set up tables in the dining halls through the Student Government Association to get student input.

In the spring 2009, the SLET worked through those pre-proposals, hearing from the campus at large in a lunch session with the University Teaching Academy and in a large forum, as well as holding eleven meetings with a wide range of invited guests. Pre-proposals were examined, combined, and re-thought; surveys were analyzed, and everything was discussed at length. At the end of the term, the SLET rewrote four of the proposals to incorporate the spring term work and sent the four to the QEP Leadership Team, which chose the First-Year Seminar as UGA's Quality Enhancement Plan.

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PROGRAM DESIGN

Goals

The three interwoven goals of the QEP are to:

- Engage entering first-year students in an academically rigorous experience that encourages critical thinking and enhances communication skills;
- Introduce first-year students to the research, public service, and international missions of the University, and how these missions are manifest in the regular activities of faculty;
- Create lasting bonds between first-year students and tenure-track faculty.

Transformative

The scale of engaging over 5,000 first-year students in an academically rich experience with a tenure-track faculty member has the potential to transform the campus.

Feasible

The Franklin College First-Year Seminar program offers approximately 175 seminars per year. That program compensates Franklin College faculty \$400 in research support funds for each seminar offered.

Requirements

- Mandatory for all first-year students (except transfer students).
- Taught primarily in the fall semester.
- Students may take only 1 seminar.
- Must be completed by students during their first year.
- Seminars to begin Fall 2011.

Structure

- 15 students (18 max) per class (will require approximately 300 seminars each year)
- Taught by tenure/tenure-track faculty (including emeritus faculty).
- One credit hour (faculty can volunteer to teach a 2 credit academically-focused seminar but will only be compensated for a single credit hour)

Focus

- Seminars have an academic focus (see Appendix 2).
- Academic focus of each seminar determined by faculty but encourage topics that are tied to the faculty's own scholarship and to the mission of the university. Ideally, each seminar would explore how UGA contributes to research and/or service in this area, both locally and globally.
- Each seminar should include a class period (taught by UGA library staff) that provides guidance as to how to obtain and critically assess information (information literacy).
- Each seminar should include a class period where the research, public service and international programs at UGA are discussed (a 20 minute video will be prepared in consultation with the corresponding UGA offices).
- Faculty will be encouraged to introduce students to the concept of a portfolio and how a portfolio might be created and used over the course of the student's tenure at the university.

Workload

- There should be a consistent student workload and attendance policy across seminars

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- Each seminar should include a substantial and graded writing assignment at least one reviewed draft that allows students to improve their writing.
- Each seminar should include some opportunity for students to refine their ability to speak effectively.
- All students will be graded on A-F scale.

Instructor Resources

- Each year, a faculty workshop will be organized to train faculty in best practices (including teaching of writing and oral communication) as well as provide an opportunity to share successes and failures.
- An online site will be developed to allow faculty to share teaching resources.
- The online site/listserv will also feature activities on campus that might be of particular interest to participants in the seminar program.
- The Writing Centers on campus will provide floating student writing assistants to assist students in their writing assignments.

Mentoring

- Faculty are encouraged to meet individually with each student in the first weeks of the course.
- Faculty are encouraged to include at least one “social” experience with the students (*e.g.*, dinner at a faculty home), with reasonable costs reimbursed by the program.
- Faculty are encouraged to continue informally in a mentoring relationship with students beyond the fall semester, including meeting as a group in the spring semester.
- Faculty who wish to serve a more formal advising role could be appointed as an adviser to students within the discipline and be allowed to “clear” students.

Compensation

- Faculty compensation will be \$2500 per seminar
- Funds can be used for salary supplement or research/scholarly support (including travel, supplies, salary for a research assistant, *etc.*).
- Funds will be available to offset the costs of informal meals with students as well as provide opportunities for special events or activities.

Administrative Structure

- Faculty director
- Faculty steering committee
- Administrative assistant
- Writing teaching assistants housed in Writing Center

Extending the Effects

A. Linked Introductory Courses

First-year students often take the same courses. A number of faculty could be encouraged to design a set of first-year seminars specifically tied to a course. All students in the seminars would also be enrolled in the linked course. For example, SOCI 1101 could be the focus of a number of seminars, each seminar dealing with a different aspect of sociology (*e.g.*, poverty, prisons, gender).

B. Linked Follow-up Courses

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Faculty may wish to extend the first-year seminar with another course, linked by content to the original seminar. That follow-up course might be another 1 credit course or a 3 credit course. The course might include or be focused on an extended field trip or even a study-abroad experience. Faculty and departments might find that the first-year seminar could act as an attractive entry point into an underexplored major.

C. Common Campus Experience

A number of seminars could focus on common campus events, such as a common book, a lecture by a prominent speaker or a theatrical performance. Based on the University of California, Berkeley's "On the Same Page" Program, UGA's First-Year program could, in conjunction with other campus groups, choose a common book and fund a major speaker and linked events on campus. Faculty could formally propose such a book and linked set of events and be funded to bring in a speaker. In exchange, the faculty would agree to offer a number of seminars linked to that common book or major speaker. This would link the first-year seminar program to the entire campus.

D. Intentional Engagement

Students will be required to attend at least 3 campus events during the fall semester that highlight some aspect of the mission of the university. These might include a theatrical performance, a musical performance, or a lecture. The program will work with campus programs to provide opportunities for interested students to learn about various opportunities on campus (*e.g.*, CURO, Service Learning, Study Abroad).

E. Connection to campus-wide first-year efforts

The University of Georgia presently has a wide number of programs designed to ease the transition of high school students into the first year of university life. The Office of Student Affairs administers many of these programs. Although some of these programs are academic in nature, they cannot reach a substantial number of students. Therefore, a common academically focused seminar would greatly supplement the considerable efforts already devoted to the first-year experience. The first-year seminar program director would be able to better coordinate the academic experiences with these other efforts.

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Appendix 1. QEP Team

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* Resigned; To be replaced

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Appendix 2. Sample Seminars

Bioenergy and Bioproducts from Biomass.

We will go beyond the headlines to better understand the potential that biomass offers for producing sustainable, economically viable transportation fuels in the U.S. on a scale that significantly reduces dependence on fossil fuels. We will consider the role of different types of biomass and explore the various challenges that must be overcome, including basic technical hurdles as well as land-use and feed-versus-fuel concerns. The potential for producing other value-added bioproducts from biomass and the related topic of carbon recycling will also be discussed. Along the way we will learn what UGA does to support research and to ensure that discoveries reach the market place, and we will also review opportunities for undergraduates to get involved in research. We will also learn about UGA outreach activities designed to foster a bioenergy industry in Georgia.

A Cure for Cancer: Where Are We?

It has been nearly 40 years since President Richard Nixon declared “war on cancer” and initiated the remarkable build up in cancer research that exists in the U.S. today. Yet there are many who would argue that we have made surprisingly little progress. In this seminar, we will learn the fundamentals of cancer in order to understand the challenges to preventing or even treating this collection of diseases. We will also consider the advances that have been made and the benefits that have accrued, and we will learn about promising current strategies to prevention or treatment. We will also consider some of the cultural disparities in cancer treatment that exist across Georgia and what might be done to mitigate these disparities. Along the way we will learn what UGA does to support research and to ensure that discoveries reach the market place, and we will also review opportunities for undergraduates to get involved in research as well as public service/outreach.

Genetically Modified Plants: the Globe’s Salvation or Your Worst Nightmare?

Scientists now possess the technology to genetically modify many plants of agricultural or commercial significance. Genetic modification can yield pest resistance or drought tolerance, increase the yield or size of food or bioenergy crops, or produce other desired or valuable traits. Some believe these deliberate alterations will help feed an ever-expanding planet, preserve agriculture in the face of dramatic climate changes, and increase both the efficiency of agriculture and plant growth acreage in developing countries. Others believe we may be unleashing plants that will have unknown or grave consequences for our agricultural and ecological systems. In this seminar we will learn the basics of plant genetic modification, examine some of the current examples of crop manipulation, and discuss what threats if any these plants pose. Along the way we will learn what UGA does to support research and to ensure that discoveries reach the market place, and we will also review opportunities for undergraduates to get involved in research.

Comparative Health and Healthcare Systems in the Developed World: Is the U.S. the Best?

In this seminar we will review major health statistics and disease trends across the developed world, and we will examine the organization and financing of health care systems in these same countries. Why are costs so much higher in the U.S. and life expectancy less? What role do disparities and social determinants play in this? How is medicine practiced? Our goal will be to get beyond the headlines and sound-bytes in order to better understand and participate in the current national health care debate. How can the U.S. health care system be reformed from policy, systems, and financial perspectives? Along the way we will learn about research being conducted to address these issues in the new UGA Center for Global Health as well as the new

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College of Public Health, how UGA supports this research, and how undergraduates can get involved. We will also connect this focus on health and health care systems in other countries to international education opportunities at UGA.

Page to Stage.

Each fall the Department of Theatre and Film Studies produces a literary classic. We shall center our study around this term's production. First the class shall read and analyze the literary original. We shall compare it with several other works, both for stage and screen, to discover its particular strengths and how productions have altered in a mass-market culture. Then different students will present their findings about different aspects of both the history and the ideas that the play presents. Performers and staff from the production will visit to describe how to balance aesthetic and pragmatic decisions. The class will have a night out at the theater to see the production. Finally, we shall conclude with some consideration of what role the arts play in this and other communities.

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