Minutes
QEP Steering Committee
April 11, 2011

In attendance: Geri Kilmer, Mario Incorvaiai, Robert LeFavi, Suzanne Carpenter, Nancy Remler, Faith Washburn, Lynn Long, John Kraft

The committee met to review the QEP extended proposals. While the goal was to make recommendations to the SACS Executive Committee, the steering committee determined that it needed answers to follow-up questions before deciding which proposals to recommend. Committee members’ comments, concerns, and questions are as follows?

Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement

- Puzzled by the course requirement and how enrollment will affect students’ programs of study. Do practica in upper level courses qualify as civic engagement? In other words, could we extend the project beyond the core? On a matter of semantics, the word fragmented does not seem to be the most appropriate word to use to describe the climate of Armstrong’s campus.

- Loves civic engagement and is a big fan of FYE. Proposal indicates that the impact on finances is minimal, but that indication seems unrealistic. Getting administrators involved in the project might be problematic. Reducing class sizes will be costly, as will requiring faculty to take overloads. However, the idea overall is great.

- Will everyone be involved in this project? If not, who exactly is considered professional staff? Have they been consulted about this project? How will bringing in professional staff eliminate the silo effect on campus? The proposal does not follow format guidelines (but none of them do). Of the three proposals, this one will be cheap—not as cheap as the authors think, but cheaper than the others. Because the tagged courses are core courses, COLA and COST stand to be unfairly overworked.

- Some of the problems noted in this proposal seem to be issues that orientation programs address. Also, this project seems to be something from which students will, if forced to participate, not garner any real benefit.

- The proposal didn’t articulate how critical thinking and civic engagement would develop from this project. Had really hoped to see the guts of the project and would have liked to see some examples. Research does show that FYE’s are beneficial, but how does this project result in such benefits? The proposal does not indicate whether administrators have expressed support of it.

- What is the requirement of this project? Is it FYE across the board? Or does it target only traditional freshmen?
- This project does not attach itself to one or a few departments; instead it targets courses across the core. It’s modeled after other QEPs, and it seems feasible in that it proposes no drastic changes to the core curriculum. But how does it affect student learning? How will civic engagement result in improved critical thinking skills?

**Student and Faculty Engagement**

- The high price tag raised her eyebrows. The project is pretty involved too. Is AASU ready to implement this project?

- This project struck him most as the RPG proposal—so focused on RPG that it needs to be refocused. How do you measure research across disciplines equally?

- The project assumes that if you get students involved in research then it will naturally result in retention. Doesn’t like the proposal that much because it has a high price tag. Can’t help thinking about previous research and scholarship discussions on campus. When we try to beef up the research on campus, other stakeholders reply, but we’re not a research institution.” We should remember who we are and who we are not. Although the budget is big, most of it is going to faculty.

- This is actually two proposals: active learning, etc and then undergraduate research. Therefore, it lacks focus and covers too much ground. Concerned about the new faculty learning community because of differences in teaching disciplines. Armstrong Teacher Scholars program will be a tough sell for some seasoned faculty. Not convinced that these projects will result in students seeking research opportunities.

- Awkward that the authors kept putting the same numbers down for each year but came up with different totals. Didn’t quite grasp the concept of the project.

- Where is the administrative support? Of the three proposals this one has the greatest potential for transformative impact, but is this concept feasible in all classes?

- Having a mentor would have been nice for this committee member during her first year teaching.

- Appreciates that it facilitates darn good teaching and involves faculty and student learning. Appreciates that the intent is to solidly support faculty development on Armstrong’s campus when for many years now, it’s had only feeble support. At the same time its broad scope makes this committee member wonder if it means changing a lot of faculty members’ teaching styles. Is the project encroaching on academic freedom? Lots of administration/assessment involved. Assumes that if
we expose students to active learning then they’ll become stronger critical thinkers. Would have liked to see some documentation of that claim. Finally, AASU is currently searching for a new faculty development director. How would that administrative addition affect this project?

**Information Literacy**

- This committee member is not sure how the project will be implemented. The three phases seem like work that’s already done. Seems like this project wouldn’t be difficult to do. It’s not a grand scale project that the others are.

- Would this project have a grand impact on student learning outcomes? What’s the long-term outcome?

- This one has most potential for being useful. Even graduate level students don’t know how to use a modern library today. This project has potential for really helping students be better students. It has been a successful topic at other institutions. Authors were asked to provide examples during the round table discussion; they haven’t done so. Our library staff would be dedicated to this project.

- The proposal needs to be more specific and needs someone to coordinate the project. It needs more work.

- This project is different in that the first two are trying to elevate the top, whereas this one seeks to raise the bottom. It will be useful to everyone.

- This committee member loves this proposal. It goes beyond “here’s how to get on this database.” The library is underutilized, so this proposal is a wonderful opportunity.

- This committee member loves the statement that librarians can be assigned as research coaches. Assessment instruments are readily available. Proposal is vague. Three concerns: 1) is there a documented need? 2) teaching students about scholarly research is not feasible in all core courses 3) changing tenure/promotion requirements is problematic.

- This committee member thinks on one hand this project is her favorite, but at the same time she cannot support it for the following reasons:
  - While much data shows that students need to improve their IL skills, the proposal seems grounded in the assumption that students’ lack of skills is because they’re not being taught such skills. No evidence in the proposal indicates that the librarians have surveyed faculty in the disciplines to determine what IL skills are already taught.
  - The authors mention core courses that all students must take: freshman comp and HIST/POLS 1100. They identify such courses as starting points
for IL instruction, but nothing in the proposal indicates that faculty of those departments have been approached about this initiative or are supportive of it. LLP dept. head says no one from the library has mentioned this proposal to him. The same concern applies to departments offering courses in Core Area B, which the proposal identifies as an area where the second stage of an IL initiative happen.

- Because a method has not been specifically outlined (see my concern below), the proposal does not indicate specifically what the library faculty will do to implement and maintain this QEP. Much of the endeavor is designed to take place in core courses, in which the librarians aren’t directly involved.
- Finally, the proposal does not concretely outline a QEP method, claiming instead that the university first be on board with an IL QEP before a method be proposed. This reasoning reads like a cop out.