

QEP Update: Feb. 13, 2008

The topic of our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is "Re-imagining Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century." This topic was chosen by the QEP leadership team—headed by President Brodhead and composed of representative senior administrators, faculty, and students—following extensive conversations with groups of faculty, staff, and administrators including A&S Council, Engineering Council, Deans Cabinet, and the Alumni Board last spring and summer. A committee consisting of university-wide faculty, students, and administrators, and co-chaired by Tolly Boatwright from Classical Studies and Prasad Kasibhatla from the Nicholas School, was then charged with developing the QEP document. The QEP committee has to date met 7 times during the Fall 2007 – Spring 2008 semesters, and has engaged in broad discussion on topics ranging from the meaning and goals of a liberal arts education to the current liberal arts education landscape at Duke and the educational goals and aspirations of Duke for the coming years. Committee representatives have engaged in discussion with several, relevant groups on campus including the QEP leadership team, DSG, GPSC, the Inter-Community Council, the Library Advisory Council, and the Board of Trustees. Such outreach is continuing.

Several broad goals relevant to the QEP have emerged from these discussions, including: (1) the need for a transformative educational experience; (2) the centrality of critical thinking, adaptability, evidence-based reasoning, ethicality, self and group identity, and citizenship as goals of a liberal arts education; (3) the demonstrated acquisition of core knowledge and competencies including an ability to communicate effectively; (4) the need for an in-depth understanding of important, contemporary issues in the context of the history of the world's civilizations and today's globally-interconnected world; and (5) the need for understanding technological trends that are profoundly shaping the world. There was also general agreement that several aspects of the Duke undergraduate experience – among them the freshman FOCUS program, the Research Experience for Undergraduates program, Independent Study, and the Study Abroad program – either already work well towards these goals or have the potential to contribute even more substantially. However, in terms of the current landscape, the committee believes that Duke is not taking advantage of its rich array of professional schools, has not sufficiently addressed the so-called "sophomore slump," and does not have an integrated, coherent educational model to help students develop into global citizens.

Over the course of the last month, four sub-committees further examined specific approaches for enhancing the Duke undergraduate liberal educational experience. Three of the sub-committees focused on the broad concept of 'global citizenship,' addressing three different approaches. One sub-committee explored the idea of developing an academic framework consisting of courses and field study for sophomores to set the stage for enhanced student engagement in programs such as Study Abroad and DukeEngage, with a view towards encouraging international perspectives. A second sub-committee explored the idea of engaging professional schools in undergraduate teaching at the upperclass level as a way of providing an integrated, capstone experience focused on contemporary societal issues of importance. A third sub-committee explored the idea of

developing a curricular component that would span all four years and which would have technology, identity, ethicality, and evidence as specific foci. The fourth sub-committee further explored mechanisms by which sophomores could be provided information and guidance, to enable them to fully develop and pursue their interests at Duke and beyond.

We expect to synthesize the initial suggestions from these sub-committees and develop an integrated draft of the QEP document in the coming months. At this point several key elements are emerging from our discussions and will likely be a part of the final QEP document. These include (1) a so-called "University Curriculum" component comprising traditional and non-traditional course offerings that are not tied to specific departments; (2) better integration of professional schools in undergraduate education; (3) better vertical integration of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty; (4) more effective horizontal integration of the curricular and co-curricular experience. In the next three weeks, we will begin crafting a unified plan that articulates specific, attainable goals consistent with the broader aspirations outlined in paragraph 2 above. The plan will combine the work of the subcommittees and move towards our goal of a full draft by May 2008.