



The Quality Enhancement Program Dillard University

Communication Skills Enhancement Grounded in Critical Thinking

Executive Summary

Dillard University's mission, as formulated in its Mission Statement, is "to produce graduates who excel, become world leaders and are broadly educated." As a result of discussions of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) since 2006, and, after analyzing institutional data, surveying constituents, conducting focus groups, and reviewing the literature, the majority of the DU community affirmed the following QEP topic as being consistent with the university's mission: *Communication Skills Enhancement Grounded in Critical Thinking*. Out of the same discussions emerged the goal, i.e., to ensure the success of all students by enhancing communication skills grounded in critical thinking, and the objectives for designing and implementing the QEP:

- I. As a result of acquiring enhanced critical thinking skills, students through engagement, will be able to offer solutions to real-world problems by: a) reading analytically; b) writing critically and; c) speaking and presenting effectively.
- II. Enhance student engagement in co-curricular and multidisciplinary learning experiences through the application of critical thinking skills.

Broad-based input throughout the process resulted in a program design which meets the needs of all stakeholders. An enhanced first-year experience familiarizes incoming students with the mission of the university and the values of the Dillard community, while preparing them to meet the demands of the larger world. The first-year experience is redirected into an innovative program across campus, the LC³ (Learning Communities, Critical Thinking, Communication) Program. Dillard's QEP strengthens the current curriculum, especially in the freshman year, with an enhanced 1st through 4th year experience (F-FYE), offering all core courses within two years, placing freshman students into LC³ cohorts and linking two-to-three courses for integrated-skills assignments with an outcome of effective critical thinking. The program culminates in a senior-year capstone research project or portfolio with critical-thinking artifacts housed in an electronic portfolio. Dillard recognizes this QEP as a powerful transformation.

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