

El Centro College Quality Enhancement Plan

CT³: Critically Thinking Things Through – A Journey to Develop Student Critical Thinking

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for El Centro College (ECC), CT³: Critically Thinking Things Through, is an institutional effort to improve student learning by developing students' critical thinking skills. The college's QEP focuses on three initiatives: Strategic Assessment, Professional Development, and Explicit and Engaged Instruction. Enhancing students' critical thinking abilities will improve student success. Faculty development and institutional level involvement are crucial supports for better student engagement. The QEP goals (to ensure that students are provided learning opportunities to acquire critical thinking skills, to provide faculty and staff professional development opportunities, and to foster critical thinking at the institutional level) support the institution's mission of "changing lives through higher education" by enhancing students' ability to think critically in their personal, professional, academic, and civic lives.

To implement the college's QEP goals effectively, a standard definition of critical thinking was developed. **El Centro College defines critical thinking as a disciplined and continuous process of asking the right questions and practicing logical thought processes to come to justifiable conclusions.** Based on this definition, ECC's QEP intends to promote initiatives that will help the institution achieve the following QEP student learning outcomes:

1. Apply critical thinking terms within a given context.
2. Formulate pertinent questions that clarify and focus an issue.
3. Evaluate quality and relevance of information.
4. Formulate well-reasoned conclusions and solutions.
5. Implement continuous improvement in thought processes, through reflective thinking.

The college's QEP has an implementation plan that begins with a pilot of target courses and will, within five years, be expanded to the General Education Program. The first cohort includes those enrolled in Student Success courses (EDUC 1300 and PSYT 1313), Developmental Reading (DREA 0093), English Composition (ENGL 1301), and Psychology (PSYC 2301). The QEP implementation initiatives include a CT³ Academy professional development program for faculty of all target courses, a faculty driven compilation of "CT³" toolkits for discipline specific content, campus wide student events, administration of the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) to gather baseline data, and use of CT³ toolkit items for outcomes based assessments.

El Centro College's QEP assessment plan includes direct and indirect assessments that align with the institution's pre-existing assessment processes, the HOLA! (Honing Outcomes and Learn Assessment) processes. The assessment plan calls for the use of a nationally normed test for critical thinking, in-class pre and post toolkit assessments, student surveys, focus group interviews, use of the CT³ Rubric, and a modified Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The CCTST (California Critical Thinking Skills Test) has been identified as an appropriate assessment tool for baseline data, benchmarking, and institutional assessment. Other local, faculty developed assessment tools will also be used for the assessment of the five student learning outcomes, such as the pre-tests and post-tests for specific toolkit items.

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