Preparing Problem Solvers For Life

HOW OUR QEP Really Improved My Class

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
Annual Meeting
December 2-5, 2017
Dallas, Texas

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What We Want You To Learn from this Workshop

• Differentiate between “checkbox” QEP Implementation and true QEP buy-in
• Recognize how institutional change impacts students in an individual course
• Detect substantial change in students’ problem analysis and solution generation

As a Result of this Workshop...

• Be Empowered to Employ Strategies from this QEP session in developing a Quality Enhancement Plan on YOUR OWN campus
• Report to your colleagues how to effectively implement an experiential learning Quality Enhancement Plan
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**What’s Required**

CS 3.3.2: The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that
(1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP;
(2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and
(3) identifies goals and a place to assess their achievement.

**Quality Enhancement Plan**

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**What CAN Result**

(1) LONG-TERM Change
(2) New infrastructure for lasting impact
(3) Better faculty
(4) Better-prepared students

(TRUE Quality Enhancement Across the Institution)

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**TIMELINE**

- **2013-2014** QEP Implementation Committee Meets (Served as a member) to develop Experiential Learning QEP
- **June 2014** First QEP Director hired
- **Spring 2015** ELO (Experiential Learning Opportunity) Pilot
- **March 2015** SACSCOC Onsite team declares QEP “Acceptable... No recommendations”
- **2015-2016** Experiential Learning Faculty Workshops offered
- **January 2016** Second QEP Director hired
- **Fall 2016** My ELO Development; Planning as QEP Fellow
- **Spring 2017** My ELO offered
- **2017-2018** Currently serving as Professional Learning Community Facilitator for Fall 2017 Cohort of Learning in Action Fellows

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High-quality experiential learning helps UA undergraduates develop strong problem-solving skills and connect coursework to real-world contexts.

Six Best Practices of High Quality Experiential Learning Opportunities
1. Intentionality
2. Preparedness
3. Regular Monitoring & Feedback
4. Reflection
5. Assessment
6. Evaluation
WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PROBLEMS ABOUT WHICH MASS MEDIA STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN?

2012

The Class- Communication & Diversity

- Upper-level elective with “W” (Writing instructive) designation
- “MC” course for majors in journalism, telecommunication, film, public relations, broadcast news, and advertising
- Became a “SL” (service-learning) course in 2010
- Enrolls about 30 students each spring

Overview- MC 413

• Upper-level “W” instructive course on all types of diversity (Race, gender, class, disability, religion, age/gender) for advertising, public relations, media production and journalism majors
• Re-launched as “service learning” (SL) course in 2010
• Students required to do 30 hours of community service, maintain journal of experiences
TRANSITION to new learning outcomes - Spring 2017 (Now)

1. Develop familiarity with differences
2. Under role of communication messages in shaping perspectives on diversity
3. See poverty as problem and media role to solve it
4. Demonstrate sensitivity to difference through service learning
5. Execute writing assignments with proficiency required in “W” course

PREVIOUS LEARNING OBJECTIVES

NEW LEARNING OBJECTIVES (SP 2017)

1. Understand/Recognize three dimensions of problem-solving in diversity course
2. Articulate community problem and role UA may play in finding a solution
3. See, articulate problem-solving capacity of media organizations
4. Execute writing assignments on problems solved through serving

THREE DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM-SOLVING

PROBLEM of PLACE (Alabama’s Black Belt)

PROBLEM of MEDIA PRACTICE (Handling Diversity Issues)

PROBLEM of PEOPLE (Needs of mentees, students being tutored, helped)

This is a Problem-Solving Course Where Diversity is a PRIMARY TOOL to help understand, unpack and articulate the problem while beginning to offer possible solutions

Identify a Problem Associated with Your Particular Service Assignment

- “There has been a knowledge barrier between our team and the clinic”
- “The times the clinic is open conflicts with my classes”
- “It’s difficult to bond on a visceral level with the kindergarteners”
- “The relationship with my mentee isn’t really going anywhere”
- “I am having an extremely hard time connecting with my mentee”
- “There is a miscommunication of control in Al’s Pals Mentoring Problem… The teacher can’t let go”

FROM THE FALL 2016 Class
THE WRITING PROMPT

• Describe the educational status of YOUR SCHOOL, search the DATA CENTER of Alabama Department of Education Website (minimum of three statistics)

• Discuss 3 things YOU can do to improve educational status of students in YOUR area

• Discuss 3 things the media can do to bring attention to issues in your community

NOW--- Spring 2017

1st Graded Writing Assignment

• “I feel like they don’t see/know much outside of Moundville. I think I need to try and make it more fun to learn instead of telling them why they need to learn”

• Greene County High School is on Alabama’s list of failing schools. Many of these students are from single-parent homes and no other members (of household) have post-secondary Ed

• “I believe I can help the students prepare for the standardized test by helping them with general test strategies like how to study without cramming, familiarizing themselves with their calculators, how to prepare the night before/morning of”

• “The city of Aliceville has a charming and well put together website, but very little is mentioned about education”

• “The Alabama GEAR UP program is an incredible, already tangible entity improving the educational status of communities. I can help the program by continuing to volunteer even after the semester ends”

NOW--- Spring 2017

Service Journal Reflection PROMPTS

BEFORE (2015)

• DESCRIBE YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNER in terms of type of service, needs, assets

• List TWO (2) Cultural connections made

• Assess your Intercultural Sensitivity at this point in semester

AFTER (Spring 2017)

• Concrete Experience – Describe an interaction

• Reflection Observation - How do you feel when you reflect on interaction

• Abstract Conceptualization – Explain the nature of your partnership in terms of fault lines, privilege

• Active Experimentation - changed your view of “service”
FROM VOLUNTEERING, Reflecting

FALL 2016

TO Going to Statewide Hunger Summit, Dialoguing with Others, Presenting back at class (February) and to CAMPUS COMMUNITY (on April 14)

SPRING 2017
Audience for Gulf South Summit Talk

March 23, 2017
Greensboro, NC

MC 413 Students Present to GEAR UP Alabama Steering Committee

April 21, 2017
Montgomery, Ala

HOW THE QEP CHANGED MY CLASS

- BETTER WRITING PROMPTS that help achieve "W" instructive goals
- INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT for service learning strategies
- FOCUSED REFLECTION for students on the significance of their service that was couched as "problem-centric" content
- ADVANCED FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT intentionally done as part of university-wide effort

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
TWO APPROACHES TO THE QEP

“CHECKBOX” APPROACH
1. Compliance-Driven
2. Short-lived shifts
3. Lacks sustainability
4. Once people change, status quo returns
5. Limited change in students, faculty in culture

TRUE CHANGE FOR BETTER
1. Compliance-Initiated, Embraced by Institution
2. Change in culture, faculty approach
3. Buy-in creates infrastructure for sustainability
4. New players adapt to culture of institution ("this is how we do it")

TIME FOR YOUR QUESTIONS
D.E.E.P.E.R. Problem Solving

Define the problem
Explore alternatives and possibilities
Examine options
Pick a solution or strategy
Evaluate the solution
Reflect on learning

D.E.E.P.E.R. Problem Solving involves students thinking strategically how to solve a problem by identifying what the problem is; exploring all alternatives, examining options and possibilities; picking the best solution; evaluating their thinking and reasoning; and reflecting and reporting on what they have learned through their education and experience. The ultimate goal is to find an acceptable or appropriate resolution or solution to an ill-defined problem.