

**The Quality Enhancement Plan:  
An Evaluator's Perspective**

**SACS-COC Institute on Quality Enhancement  
and Accreditation**  
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**Virginia S. Lee & Associates, LLC**

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**Your Biggest Concern**

Please take a moment to think about and write down your biggest concern for your institution about the QEP.

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**My Background**

- Associate Director, Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning, NC State University
  - Inquiry-guided learning initiative
  - Steering Committee, QEP
- On-site Review Committee, QEP Evaluator
- Consultant to five institutions at various stages of QEP

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## [ My Perspective ]

- The QEP as a formative process
- The QEP as an opportunity
- The QEP as a reform/change initiative
- "If you want to understand something, try to change it."
- Change is both exciting and difficult.

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## [ Reform Initiatives at the Periphery of Institutions of Higher Education ]

# Why?

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## [ Characteristics of Learning Centered Institutions: A Framework ]

- Achieving clarity about learning outcomes
- Coordinating teaching & assessment to promote student learning
- Aligning structures & resources to serve student learning
- Working continuously to improve the environment for learning

From Doherty, Riordan & Roth (Eds.) (2002). *Student learning: a central focus for institutions of higher education*. Milwaukee, WI: Alverno College.

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[ Four Cornerstones of a Learning-centered Environment ]

- Intention
- Alignment
- Inquiry
- Community

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[ A Very Helpful Resource ]

- “The Quality Enhancement Plan” to be included in the revised *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*. Available at <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/QEP%20Handbook.pdf>

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[ Other Helpful Resources ]

- Read the QEPs of peer institutions, some of which may be available at [http://www.sacscoc.org/inst\\_forms\\_and\\_info1.asp](http://www.sacscoc.org/inst_forms_and_info1.asp)

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[ Selecting the Topic ]

- A sense of urgency
- Engagement of faculty
- Support of administration
- Scope: Bigger is not better; more is not better; small is beautiful; small is do-able.

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[ Defining the Student Learning Outcomes ]

- **Very** important
- Outcomes that **really** matter

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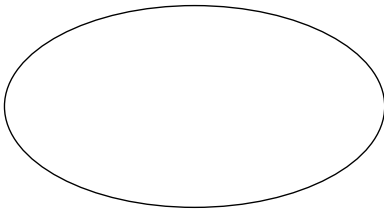
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[ Identify Hopes for Our Students ]



Adapted from Bill Kirkwood, East Tennessee State University

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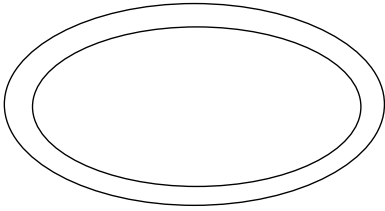
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Express Hopes as Intended Learning Outcomes



Adapted from Bill Kirkwood, East Tennessee State University

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Defining the Student Learning Outcomes cont'd

- **Very** important
- Outcomes that **really** matter
- State outcomes as **specifically** as possible
- **Clarify** the relationship between the topic and the outcomes

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Researching the Topic

- A literature review is important,
- **BUT**
- Consult current practitioners, too.

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## Aligning Instructional Practices and Organizational Structures

- Coordinate teaching & assessment to promote student learning\*
- Align structures & resources to serve student learning\*

From Doherty, Riordan & Roth (Eds.)(2002). **Student learning: a central focus for institutions of higher education**. Milwaukee, WI: Alverno College.

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## Identifying Necessary Resources

- Time for planning, meeting, assessing
- Faculty and professional development
- Faculty/staff/administrative positions to support the plan
- Policies and procedures consistent with the plan

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## Alignment of Organizational Structures at Alverno College: An Evolutionary Process

**Mission:** Alverno College is an institution of higher education to educate women. The student, her learning, & her personal & professional development are the central focus of everyone associated with Alverno.

- Designed a parallel academic administrative structure that included discipline departments & interdisciplinary ability-based departments
- Created periods of time for extended discussions, workshops, & evaluations by redesigning the instructional schedule
- Established an Educational Research & Evaluation office
- Revised guidelines for faculty development & promotion
- Designed a comprehensive advising program
- Developed an assessment center & recruited & trained 100s of external assessors

From Alverno College. **How Institutional Transformation Works and Becomes Visible**.

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## Assessing the Success of the QEP

- Because the QEP is a reform initiative, assessment is critical to its success.
- Think of and promote assessment as a form of inquiry.
- Align assessment with student learning outcomes to increase its effectiveness and meaning.
- Make assessment ongoing, formative and widespread, using it to adjust and keep the QEP on track.
- Help faculty members understand the meaning and power of assessment and give them the tools to practice it in their classes.
- Encourage a scholarship of teaching and learning around questions and issues arising from the QEP.

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## Building Community around the QEP

- Make the launching of the QEP a social event that underscores widespread buy-in to the plan.
- Incorporate food and drink into faculty development events.
- Consider forming and funding faculty learning communities around the QEP.
- Plan periodic publications/events that make innovations in teaching and learning related to the QEP public: campus newsletters, website, on-campus conferences, symposia, poster sessions.
- Practice the skills of community including listening, conflict resolution, and incorporating viewpoints different from one's own.

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## Common Pitfalls

- The institution views the QEP as a reaffirmation requirement rather than a reform initiative in which it has a deep investment.
- Administrators select the topic of the QEP and/or there is not widespread buy-in to the plan, particularly from faculty members.
- The topic is too broad.
- The student learning outcomes are either too broad or not clearly stated.

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[ Common Pitfalls cont'd. ]

- The learning outcomes do not drive the plan.
- The institution underestimates the resources required including **time** and personnel.
- The institution does not align instructional and organizational structures consistent with the desired changes in student learning.
- The institution underestimates the magnitude of the change for faculty, and therefore, the resources needed for faculty development.

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[ Common Pitfalls cont'd. ]

- Because learning outcomes, teaching, and/or assessments are not aligned properly, assessment is both difficult and not as meaningful as it could be.
- Faculty members do not really understand assessment and consequently, are resistant to it.

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[ Questions ]

- Have we addressed your biggest concern about the QEP?
- If not, what additional concerns do you have?

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[ Please feel free to contact me: ]

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