



# Hollins University

A Quality Enhancement Plan  
Case Study

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## Building a Foundation for Reaccreditation

- Begin early
- Review the status of the university's strategic planning efforts
- Develop/revise the strategic plan after broad campus involvement
- Develop a QEP that evolves out of the strategic plan

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## Strategic Planning: 2005-06

- Reaffirmation of mission statement:

*"Hollins is an independent liberal arts university dedicated to academic excellence and humane values. Hollins University offers undergraduate liberal arts education for women, selected graduate programs for men and women, and community outreach initiatives. The Hollins curriculum and cocurricular programs prepare student for lives of active learning, fulfilling work, personal growth, achievement, and service to society..."*

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## Strategic Planning, Continued...

- How can Hollins offer a distinctive and successful undergraduate program for women in the liberal arts and sciences in the twenty-first century?

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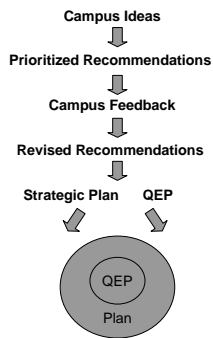
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## Planning Process



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## Strategic Plan Results: Hollins

“Our university will redefine itself as preparing women to make a difference in the world by innovation and responsiveness to key issues of the twenty-first century. Building on a comprehensive liberal arts tradition, Hollins will emphasize four interconnected hallmarks of its undergraduate experience:

- Leadership development
- Global and intercultural understanding
- Environmental and cultural sustainability
- Creativity”

(From the university's working strategic plan)

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### Developing the QEP, 2006-2007

- Surveys (spring 2006)
- Formation of a faculty group to review QEP ideas (spring 2006)
- Development of a “working paper” to share with the campus (summer 2006)
- Campus-wide discussion of the “working paper” (fall 2006)
- Approval of the QEP idea (fall 2006)
- Preparation of the QEP document for the SACS site visit (spring 2007)

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### Faculty Group Discussions, Summer 2006

- Reviewed surveys
- Examined the curriculum for areas of improvement/enhancement
- Debated first-year experience versus first-year seminar
- Selected first-year seminars
- Focused throughout on student learning outcomes, how to assess the new program, budgetary feasibility, and institutional capacity

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### Involving the Community, Fall 2006

- Groups consulted for responses to and suggestions for improving the “working paper”:
  - ✓ Faculty
  - ✓ Governance entities, including the President's Cabinet
  - ✓ Students
  - ✓ Alumnae Board
  - ✓ Parents Council
  - ✓ Board of Trustees
- “Working paper” revised by faculty planning group
- QEP approval by the faculty, October 2006

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### Hollins University's QEP

- "...Hollins First-year Seminars: Shaping Women's Voices for the Twenty-first Century seeks to improve student learning at a critical early stage in the undergraduate experience."

(From Hollins University's QEP document submitted to SACS, spring 2007)

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### First-year Seminars: Pedagogical Goals

- Instill a passion for learning
- Create a collaborative learning environment
- Teach students to make connections among ideas and share information with each other
- Encourage active learning
- Encourage creative problem solving
- Create a peer mentoring relationship
- Offer two general education skills in each course

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### First-year Seminars: Assumptions

- Seminars will be limited to 15 students
- Seminar instructors will be the students' advisors for the first year
- Seminars should tie in with one or more of the four broad themes of the strategic plan
- Instructors will determine whether or not there will be a common theme
- Instructors will work together to allow interactions to take place between sections
- Instructors will attend workshops to develop their seminars

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### **First-year Seminars: Assumptions**

- Each course will satisfy the Applied Research Techniques skill and one other skill as defined in the Education through Skills and Perspectives (ESP) program
- Seminars will be department/discipline based and capable of counting toward either a perspective (ESP) or a major
- Student peer mentors will be available to assist seminar instructors
- All faculty members will be invited to participate in the first-year seminar program

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### **First-year Seminars: Other Potential Benefits**

- Ease the academic transition to college
- Develop bonds within a seminar group, a cluster of seminar groups, and the first-year class as a whole
- Develop a faculty connection early on with the help of the advisor/instructor
- Develop sisterhood with the help of an upper-class peer mentor
- Work collaboratively with Student Affairs on the broader first-year experience program
- Improve retention

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### **QEP: Budget Assumptions and Considerations**

- When building a budget, don't underestimate the costs (direct and indirect)
- Be realistic and consider institutional capacity
- Institutions must demonstrate a financial investment in the new program
- Get financial affairs and external relations involved early in the process

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### QEP: Building an Assessment Plan

- Keep this at the forefront of the planning process
- Establish a baseline for comparison
- Use qualitative and quantitative approaches
- NSSE, CIRP, YFCY, enrollment data, etc. can be very useful
- Tie in to already existing assessment tools
- Use multiple approaches, but don't overdo it

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### QEP: Implementation Schedule

- Should reflect how the process evolved and community involvement in that process
- Establish a time line
- Discuss what has been done (by whom, when)
- Outline next steps for implementation (including individuals who are responsible for completion of the steps and deadlines for completion)
- Student learning outcomes, assessment, budget, and institutional capacity should be constants throughout the implementation schedule
- The implementation schedule is crucial to the planning process and the plan itself

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### Conclusion: Tips for QEP Success

- Start early
- It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel
- Don't be overly ambitious
- Research your topic thoroughly
- Involve all campus constituents
- Keep coming back to the question of student learning outcomes (what will benefit your students' educational experience the most?)
- Be realistic about your budget and institutional capacity

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**Conclusion: More QEP Tips**

- Approach assessment from many angles, but try to keep it simple
- When writing your plan for SACS, go back to the *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*
- If possible, begin implementing the plan before the site visit
- Enjoy the site visit (if you are well prepared, your evaluators will become more like consultants)

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