What is a QEP?

The letters stand for “Quality Enhancement Plan,” and refer to an approach for improving student learning. The QEP is related to Reaffirmation of Accreditation and the university’s strategic plan.

What’s “Reaffirmation of Accreditation?”

Every 10 years, an accredited college or university undergoes a rigorous review of its programs, resources and processes. The University of West Florida, regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Commission on Colleges, is now in the process of reaffirming accreditation. Accreditation is important because it allows the university to participate in certain Federally funded programs, such as student financial aid. Most graduate or professional schools and some jobs require that applicants be graduates of regionally accredited institutions. Most importantly, the university’s reputation for quality depends upon its accreditation status.

What does Reaffirmation involve?

The SACS reaffirmation process has two major parts. The first is a Compliance Certification in which we produce evidence to support our statements of compliance with more than 70 SACS Standards dealing with curriculum, faculty qualifications, library/learning resources, student services, financial resources, and many other institutional components. The second is the Quality Enhancement Plan that looks forward by addressing an area in which the university proposes to improve. The review process culminates in a site visit during which external reviewers gather more information and consult with members of the campus community. SACS will make a decision on our Reaffirmation in December 2005.

What’s the focus of our QEP?

The theme of our QEP is “Creating Communities of Learners through Active Learning and Student Engagement.” We want to provide more opportunities for students to engage actively in their studies especially by interacting with other students, faculty, staff, and the community. Examples might be special projects, internships, service learning, “hands-on” technological enhancements, field trips or other activities that involve doing something with what one is learning.

What are the goals of our QEP?

■ Improve student learning
■ Improve our statements of what students will learn and our ways of measuring learning
■ Increase the use of active learning and student engagement instructional strategies
■ Increase collaboration in the learning process among students, faculty and staff
■ Help faculty to become more skilled in guiding and measuring active learning

For more information about the Reaffirmation of Accreditation process at the University of West Florida, contact the UWF SACS Office 850-474-2501, Building 78-121, or visit the Reaffirmation of Accreditation Web site at http://nautical.uwf.edu/accreditation/main.cfm?fuseaction=uwf_intro

For more information about our QEP, visit http://nautical.uwf.edu/accreditation/main.cfm?fuseaction=uwf_qep
How will our QEP work?

- Academic departments and Student Affairs units will be able to apply for funding for projects aimed at increased active learning and student engagement. There will be five or six funded projects per year for the next five years.

Proposals must include:
- Statements of expected learning outcomes for students
- Explanation of how the project relates to the Academic Learning Compact or other existing student learning outcomes
- Description of how the project’s success will be measured
- Specific strategies intended to increase active learning and student engagement
- How successful projects will be shared and continued
- Resources needed and project timeline

- Undergraduate and graduate programs and the General Education program will develop Academic Learning Compacts outlining what students will know and what they will be able to do after successfully completing the program.

- Faculty and staff may attend workshops or conferences related to the goals of the QEP presented elsewhere or on campus by visiting experts.

What data are being used to plan and evaluate our QEP?

- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered to students in upper quarter, compared to average for the state and the nation
- Faculty and Chairs’ Survey of active learning/student engagement strategies and related measurements
- Evaluation of student learning in individual unit projects
- Recommendations from five-year reviews of academic departments
- Information from strategic plans of academic and student affairs units

When do we get started?

As soon as possible after the Reaffirmation Committee reviews our plan and recommended changes are made. Meanwhile, four exploratory projects are underway.

The College of Professional Studies is developing a computer-based system for tracking student learning outcomes. We hope other units will be able to use this system to summarize and manage information about their students' learning.

The College of Arts and Sciences and the University Libraries are collaborating on a project related to the General Education program and Information Literacy.

The College of Business, in its undergraduate capstone course, is developing a way to enhance and measure students’ learning about how to run a business.

The Division of Student Affairs and the Advising Center are developing instructional modules and a handbook for engaging students in the first-year experience.

The UWF SACS Leadership Team:

- Coordinates and manages the internal review process, including structure and timelines.
- Oversees the institutional review of the extent of compliance with the Principles of Accreditation and the documentation of evidence supporting the extent of compliance.

The UWF SACS Leadership Team:

- Oversees development of any responses by the University.
- Oversees the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).
- Ensures that the university community is engaged in and informed about the review process and its progress.
- Oversees arrangements for the on-site visit.

The QEP Steering Committee:

Co-chairs: Subhash Bagai, James Hurd
Facilitators: Carl Backman, Rosemary Hays-Thomas

Members: Jacqueline Berger, George Ellenberg, Sandra Flake, Deborah Ford, Jane Halonen, Alberto Hernandez, Laura Hiltabrand, Marcia Howard, Gary Howard, Melissa Kelly, Claudia King, Julie Kunsman, Charles Lombardo, Kay Mackenzie

The QEP Leadership Team

Chair: John Cavanaugh, President
Members: Carl Backman, Sandra Flake, Deborah Ford, Jerry Norris, Dean Van Galen, Patricia Wentz, Harold White, Cornelius Wooten

The QEP Leadership Team

- Coordinates development of the Quality Enhancement Plan
- Requests and acts upon input from the QEP Steering Committee
- Keeps the university community informed about progress of the QEP
- Submits recommendations regarding the QEP to the UWF SACS Leadership Team

The QEP Steering Committee:

- Assists the QEP Leadership Team in developing the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
- Provides broad-based input into the development and implementation of the QEP
- Evaluates proposals for unit-based projects and recommends funding
- Evaluates results of unit-based projects and recommends institutionalization if appropriate