



Annual Report #3, Quality Enhancement Plan:
Making Critical Connections

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QEP: Making Critical Connections

- Connected curriculum
- Undergraduate research
- International activities

Implementation Committee

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Goals

- **Connect learning** in the classroom with what happens outside – and enhance the connections between and among courses
- **Make research a critical connection** between the curriculum and the faculty and the students
- **Internationalize** the undergraduate experience

I. Connected Curriculum

- **Maymester: 3-week intensive class/field experiences**
 - 2008: 204 students, 15 courses
 - 2009: 311 students, 18 courses, such as -
 - Introduction to Museum Studies
 - Tragic Dimension in Classical Literature
 - N.C. Estuaries: Environmental Processes and Problems
 - Analyzing Public Opinion
 - Childhood Disorders

I. Connected Curriculum

- **Clusters: 3-classes around a theme, interdisciplinary, 8 created so far, examples:**
 - Border Crossings
 - Global Environmental Change
 - World Wars
 - Evolution

More clusters being developed in Honors and other areas

II. Undergraduate Research

- **Distinguished Term Professors in Research and Undergraduate Education:**
 - Drew Coleman (Geology)
 - Jane Danielewicz (English)
 - Donald Reid (History)
 - Elin O'Hara Slavick (Art)

II. Undergraduate Research

- **Graduate Research Consultant (GRC) Program**
 - Faculty incorporate student research projects into regular courses with assistance of a GRC
 - GRCs are advanced graduate students who “coach” undergrads on research design, methods, and communicating results
 - Class time devoted to products of student inquiry
 - Program is growing: 217 courses, 31 departments, 6924 undergrads since 2003

II. Undergraduate Research

- Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURFs): 75 awarded, up 18%
- Carolina Research Scholars: 16
- College faculty mentored 1,310 research projects and 56% of graduating seniors received credit for at least 1 research-intensive course
- 161 faculty publications were co-authored with undergraduates, and 91 undergraduates presented work at professional conferences

Accomplishments:

III. Internationalization

- Filled 2 ESL positions in Writing Center (still not enough to meet demand)
- *Strategic Roadmap for International UNC-Chapel Hill* developed by Chancellor's Global Leadership Circle and endorsed by BOT in March 2009
- **Good news:** The College recently hired 11 new faculty with international expertise
- **Bad news:** At the same time, our high-visibility international scholars are being actively recruited by other institutions, vulnerable due to budget cuts

Does connected learning enhance knowledge?

- **Does participation in connected curriculum opportunities, undergraduate research and/or international studies enhance students' ability to:**
 - Integrate and apply knowledge from various disciplines?
 - Make connections between classroom learning and the outside world?

Assessing Outcomes:

We're measuring the impacts

Methodology:

- Longitudinal study of entering first-year class of 2006, comparing outcomes to pre-2006 cohorts
- Tracking course-taking patterns and out-of-class activities
- Intensive interviews of sophomores and seniors
- Focus groups and surveys of faculty and students

Assessing Outcomes:

Cohort Study

2006 and 2007 cohorts were more likely than previous cohort to:

- Integrate ideas/concepts from different courses in their assignments and discussions
- Take coursework that emphasized applying theories/concepts to practical problems in new situations
- Plan to work on research with faculty beyond program requirements
- Take foreign language courses
- Plan to study abroad

Source: Responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement
Spring 2005, 2007, 2008

Assessing Outcomes:

Cohort Study

- **2006 & 2007 cohorts also were more likely to report:**
 - Positive relationships with faculty and other students;
 - University contributed greatly to students knowledge, skills, personal development in solving complex real-world problems

Source: Responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement
Spring 2005, 2007, 2008

Making Critical Connections

Interviews showed:

- The students were able to take what they learned in one or more courses and apply it to other courses and to their personal lives.
- Making these connections often gave students new perspectives on how topics were interrelated and/or gave them a deeper understanding of the subject matter.
- First Year Seminars have a powerful impact on new students' academic and social engagement.

Making Critical Connections

“I always wanted to do something with Biology, maybe Med School...Through my First Year Seminar I met a professor from Biostatistics and found out what they do. I had never thought about taking Biology in that direction. Now I've got a part-time job on a research project, and I changed my major to Public Health.”

Making Critical Connections

Interviews with sophomores showed:

- Active learning activities (research, internships, study abroad, service learning, independent studies) challenge students to connect the concepts learned in various courses and use them in real-life problem solving.....

Making Critical Connections

“ Research is no longer limited to.... being cooped up in a lab with test tubes....I realized it can be engaging and dynamic...not just with the intellectual gains that you’ve made, but even in your connections with people....”

Making Critical Connections

“I took a course in Geology just to get the requirement out of the way...The professor took us [on a field trip to California] to help collect samples for an environmental research project. It turned out to be one of the most fascinating things I’ve done in college. I got to be part of a real research project, and it made the stuff I learned in some other classes...come to life for me...”

Making Critical Connections

“[After I had taken a Spanish class] we had to do some work at a local school [for another class], and it turned out that many of the children were Hispanic and their parents didn’t speak English. Being able to use my Spanish to help out was great, but it also gave me some insights about people with a language barrier that will help me someday as a physician.”

What about Maymester?

- Students became more deeply engaged in course topic:

“I was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The class was small and intimate...providing a learning environment that encouraged intense and highly academic class discussion.”

What about Maymester?

- Instructors found it professionally rewarding:

“This three-week course has been among the peak teaching experiences of my 30-year career.”

Internationalizing the Curriculum

- Taking courses with international focus:
 - Helped students develop a greater sense of global citizenship
 - Provided opportunity to reinforce knowledge/skills from prior courses and to make connections between their international experiences and courses taken afterward

Internationalizing the Curriculum

- Studying abroad
 - A transformative experience that influenced students' choices of majors and careers
 - Gave them increased sense of independence and self-reliance in moving between cultures

Undergraduate Research

- Brought to life concepts/principles learned in courses
- Helped them practice applying the scientific process in their own research
- Gave them opportunities to connect with faculty and acquire mentors
- Increased their critical thinking/analytical skills
- Developed their writing and editing skills (when they co-authored research papers)

Making Critical Connections

Is making a significant difference in the quality of the Carolina undergraduate experience and helping to prepare our students for lifelong learning, discovery and engagement



Questions?