



Making Critical Connections

Quality Enhancement Plan

Annual Report #2

Board of Trustees, September 24, 2008



Making Critical Connections

- The Quality Enhancement Plan, “Making Critical Connections” was developed and adopted in April 2006 as part of the University’s decennial reaffirmation of accreditation process. It focuses on innovative educational programs, undergraduate research, and international activities. The full report is available at: http://www.unc.edu/inst_res/SACS/sacs.html
- An implementation committee was appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in May 2006 and met twice, on November 12, 2007, and on April 9, 2008. It also maintains a listserv.



Implementation Committee

- Danielle M. Allen, *undergraduate student, Public Policy and Economics, Class of 2009* (as student at large)
- David Bevevino**, *undergraduate student, Political Science and Spanish Class of 2010* (as student at large)
- Peter A. Coclanis, *Albert Ray Newsome Distinguished Professor of History and Associate Provost for International Affairs* (as Associate Provost for International Affairs)
- Margaret Jablonski, *Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs* (as Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs)
- Lydia Lewallen**, *undergraduate student, Women's Studies and Sociology Class of 2011* (as student at large)
- Bobbi Owen, Chair, *Professor of Dramatic Art and Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education* (as Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education)
- Patricia Pukkila, *Professor of Biology and Director of the Office for Undergraduate Research* (as Director of Undergraduate Research)
- J. Steven Reznick, *Professor of Psychology* (as Academic Affairs faculty member-at-large)
- Gwendolyn Sancar, *Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics* (as Health Affairs faculty member-at-large)
- Jay Smith, *Professor of History and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula* (as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula)
- Lynn Williford, *Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment* (as Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment)
- Jan Yopp*, *Professor of JOMC and Dean of the Summer School* (as Dean of the Summer School)

- *1-1-2008 replaced James Murphy, *Professor of Economics and former Dean of the Summer School*
- **9-1-2008 replaced Michael T. Tarrant, *Political Science and Communication Studies, Class of 2008*



Leadership

- Peter Coclanis, Albert R. Newsome Professor of History and Associate Provost for International Affairs, leads the internationalization implementation;
- Patricia Pukkila, Professor of Biology and Director of the Office for Undergraduate Research, leads the research implementation;
- Jay Smith, John Van Seters Professor of History and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula, leads the curricular innovation implementation;
- Jan Yopp, Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and Dean of the Summer School, is implementing Maymester;
- Lynn Williford, Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment, leads the assessment effort.



Goals

- Connecting the learning expected inside the classroom with what happens outside it – and enhancing the connections between and among courses;
- Making research a critical connection between the curriculum and the faculty and the students;
- Internationalizing the undergraduate experience.



Accomplishments: Curricular Innovations

Maymester

- Maymester 2007 ran 19 courses (263 students)
- Maymester 2008 ran 15 courses (204 students)

Interdisciplinary Cluster Program

- 7 clusters have been created and 4 more are in progress (this interdisciplinary program is highlighted in the campus response to the UNC-Tomorrow report);
- Obstacles remain due to the amount of faculty time needed to develop and teach the clusters. Developing them is expensive.



Accomplishments:

Undergraduate Research

- Through the “Making Critical Connections” initiatives, we expect that research will become a distinctive feature of a Carolina education for increasing numbers of our undergraduate students, as appropriate for a research university.
 - Two new term-based Professors, Donald M. Reid, Professor of History and Elin Slavick, Professor of Art have been named; two more, (Humanities, Natural Sciences and Mathematics) will be appointed next year;
 - The Graduate Research Consultant program has had a significant impact, and the number of course offerings in which students carry out original research projects has already exceeded the five year projection;
 - *Carolina Research Scholar* transcript designation has been approved.



Accomplishments: Internationalization

- Embedding internationalization as deeply as possible in the curriculum is critical in our global society.
 - Funded a second fulltime ESL position (Nigel Caplan) in the Writing Center, effective July 1, 2008;
 - Continued to improve UNC-Chapel Hill's "international infrastructure" by supporting programs and people, launching a superb new web portal in January 2008 (global.unc.edu), and launching a new *international partners'* electronic database (a searchable compilation of UNC's international MOUs and funded international research).



Assessing the Effectiveness of the QEP Initiatives

Maymester: Results of surveys and focus groups

- **Students** reported that the intensive focus on a single theme:
 - Encouraged them to become more deeply engaged in the topics of study
 - *“Through Maymester, I was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (modern Italian culture). The class was small and intimate... providing a learning environment that encouraged intense and highly academic class discussions.”*
 - Challenged them to think more broadly about the implications of issues and connections/relationships to other fields of study.
 - 87% agreed Maymester stimulated them to make connections between the knowledge and skills acquired in different courses they had taken.
- **Instructors** reported that this unique teaching/learning experience was very professionally rewarding
 - *“I found the Maymester experience satisfying to me as a researcher, edifying as a scholar, and enjoyable as a teacher.”*



Connecting Academic Experiences

Individual Interviews with Sophomores: Reflections on Most Important Learning Experiences So Far

- **The variety of courses and learning opportunities at Carolina** enticed students to explore different topics connected to their primary fields of interest. *“When I first came to Carolina I thought it was amazing, the variety of classes and just all the different subjects I could take that I never even thought of!!”*
- **Active learning activities** such as research, internships, Study Abroad, and independent studies challenged students to connect the concepts learned in various courses and draw upon them in problem solving.
- **First Year Seminars** had a powerful influence on students’ academic and social engagement. Early exposure to subjects outside the intended major facilitated interest in a wider variety of disciplines. Lasting bonds were formed with faculty and with other students as a result of the shared learning experiences.
- **Service learning and community involvement** added greatly to students’ ability to recognize real world applications of the concepts learned in their academic studies.



Comparisons with Prior First Year Student Cohorts

2006 Cohort was more likely than the 2004 Cohort to report:

- Putting together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions;
- Taking coursework that emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations;
- Working on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements;
- That faculty members were available, helpful, and sympathetic;
- That the university contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in solving complex real-world problems;
- Plans to study abroad

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



Questions?

