

Part II. Enhancing Student Learning: Engaging Students with Communities Other than their Own



INTRODUCTION

Western's QEP will be implemented through a five-year plan to engage students with communities other than their own as part of their *Western Experience*. Our vision is to link community and classroom, living and learning, thought and action, preparedness and passion. We believe that, by bringing contemporary world issues into the curriculum, extending the reach of students' learning opportunities into the broader community, and cultivating students' experience within a living and learning environment rich in diversity of ideas, challenges and peoples, we will enhance their professional development, broaden their worldview, and promote their development as intentional learners, educated and responsible citizens.

Our concept is built upon the following premise:

The more students are more actively engaged in and by a broad educational experience, the richer their learning will be and the greater their potential to contribute to society in positive ways.

We can translate this premise into a central QEP learning goal:

Students will engage with communities other than their own in purposeful learning activities that explicitly address their capacity and responsibility to contribute to community and society.

Associated with this learning goal, we will target three attendant student learning outcomes:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

What do we mean by "communities other than their own" ?

There is not a single definition of this concept; it differs for each person, as each individual comes to Western with a unique collection of perspectives and experiences. Engaging in such communities may involve interacting with individuals from different backgrounds or cultures, holding alternative viewpoints, offering unique opportunities, or facing unfamiliar challenges. Likewise, the manner in which students interact with these new communities is variable, involving such things as intellectual discourse, independent research or scholarly activity, service to a cause, leadership, or simple exposure to a new situation. The unifying characteristic of these examples is that engaging with communities other than one's own involves stepping outside the traditional boundaries of one's past experience or training, and doing so with an open mind and in a reflective manner. In the process, learning is inevitable.

An essential feature of a university education is that, in addition to providing knowledge and skills, it broadens one's perspectives and worldview. We believe both of these objectives are best accomplished through active involvement with different people or groups, new challenges, unfamiliar and (in some cases) uncomfortable situations. If done correctly, such interactions are potent forces in developing graduates who are critical thinkers as well as global citizens.

ACTION INITIATIVES (IMPLEMENTATION ENABLERS)

While recognizing that we will undoubtedly generate additional or even enhanced enablers over the course of implementation, we have initially identified 10 action initiatives designed to directly impact student learning at Western. We feel these initial action initiatives are consistent with our QEP learning goal and attendant outcomes. Each of these actions represents a new direction or new synthesis of programs and opportunities, and is linked to one or more targeted student learning outcomes. In some cases, direct implementation is supported by activities that establish associated institutional infrastructure or human capacity to implement these actions. Below we outline some of the key components of each action as currently envisioned.

Action 1: Create an engagement-based University Honors Program experience that will serve as a model of engaged learning and attract academically-talented students nationwide.

The goal of this initiative is to establish a learning model under the rubric of the University Honors Program that exemplifies engaged learning. We intend to design an honors curriculum that enhances students' personal and professional development by (a) strengthening the relationship between the honors experience and students' training in their primary discipline(s), expanding opportunities to link experiential opportunities with students' individual professional and personal interests, and (c) providing thematic integration of honors coursework, independent creative activity and experiential opportunities (study abroad, community service, leadership). We seek to create an honors paradigm that serves as a model of engaged learning for the university, and which enhances the intellectual climate of the university through involvement of current students and increased recruitment of outstanding new students.

Expected learning outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.
- Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.
- Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Establish McLean Hall as the new honors residence. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Hire a full-time Honors Director through a national search process. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Dedicate resources necessary for programmatic initiatives. | 2005-2007 |
| 4. Begin implementation of an engagement-based Honors learning model. | 2006-2007 |
| 5. Create processes leading to regular nomination of students for national scholarships. | 2007-2008 |

Action 2: Incorporate consideration of professionalism, professional ethics and ethical aspects of the discipline into major programs of study and/or general education.

The goal of this initiative is to bring greater curricular emphasis to the relationship between conceptual and technical training in a subject discipline and the practice of that discipline. We intend to enhance students' understanding of the role of their subject disciplines in modern society by (a) developing and implementing strategies to bring explicit discussion of professionalism and ethics into courses and curricula, and (b) implementing reflective components that allow students to consider or demonstrate their understanding of these issues. We seek to produce graduates who are able to thoughtfully articulate the implications of course/program subject matter for modern society, and the responsibility of practitioners of that discipline in contributing to the vitality and success of modern society.

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 2. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Incorporate experiences relevant to Action 2 into major programs and/or general education. | 2007-2009 |
| 3. Expect syllabi to include relevant meta-learning goals for students in courses. | 2008-2009 |

Action 3. Align the outcomes of service learning in the discipline with the knowledge and skills developed through the curriculum.

The goal of this initiative is to better link service learning activities undertaken by students with curricular training in their primary field(s) of study. We intend to enhance students' skills in bringing their academic training to bear on real-world issues by (a) developing and implementing strategies to tie service learning to conceptual/technical training in the students' major programs of study, and (b) implementing reflective components that allow students to consider or demonstrate their understanding of these issues. We intend to produce graduates who are able to thoughtfully articulate the relationship between the study of their discipline and its application to addressing societal issues.

Expected learning outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.
- Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.
- Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 3. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Continue to advance the American Humanics Project. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Foster expanding involvement of undergraduates in meaningful independent research and scholarly activity. | 2005-2006 |
| 4. Expand opportunities for experiential learning through internships, co-ops, KWSP and volunteer opportunities. | 2007-2008 |
| 5. Incorporate experiences relevant to Action 3 into major programs. | 2007-2008 |
| 6. Expect syllabi to include relevant meta-learning goals for students in courses. | 2008-2009 |

Action 4: Ensure availability of experience relevant to students' degree program that includes consideration of the relationship of the discipline and its practitioners to society and the broader community.

The goal of this initiative is to better elucidate the role of students' primary fields of study and its practitioners to modern society. We intend to enhance students' understanding of the implications of their subject disciplines to modern society by (a) developing and implementing strategies to bring explicit discussion of the application of the subject discipline into major programs of study, and (b) implementing reflective components that allow students to consider or demonstrate their understanding of these issues. We seek to produce graduates who are able to thoughtfully articulate the role of their major discipline in modern society, and their role as practitioners of that discipline in contributing to the state of modern society.

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 4. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Continue to advance the American Democracy Project. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Foster expanding involvement of undergraduates in meaningful independent research and scholarly activity. | 2005-2006 |
| 4. Incorporate experiences relevant to Action 4 into major programs. | 2007-2008 |
| 5. Expect syllabi to include relevant meta-learning goals for students in courses. | 2008-2009 |

Action 5: Initiate civic or social involvement, discussions of social responsibility and personal autonomy as elements of the Freshman Experience to establish expectations and patterns of engagement by students.

The goal of this initiative is to stimulate awareness and interest on the part of first-time, full-time students in social issues. We intend to enhance the range and depth of students' knowledge of relevant issues in modern society and expand their frame of reference about the world by (a) introducing into the Freshman Experience discussions or activities that deal with contemporary social issues, and (b) educating students about opportunities for involvement in community service, volunteerism, and leadership as part of their *Western Experience*. We seek to cultivate in students a pattern of commitment to and involvement with social issues from the beginning of their educational career onward.

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 5. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Launch a fully-developed chapter of the National Society for Collegiate Scholars. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Incorporate experiences relevant to Action 5 into Freshman Experience. | 2006-2007 |
| 4. Provide physical and virtual spaces to house information dissemination systems related to engagement. | 2006-2007 |

Action 6: Orient Winter, May and/or Summer Term offerings to provide diverse opportunities for study abroad and other experiential learning opportunities to all groups of students.

Our goal in this initiative is to provide expanded range and scope of opportunities for experiential learning by students, and to do so in a delivery format that increases access by diverse student populations. We intend to enhance students' global understanding, appreciation for diverse viewpoints and the multidisciplinary aspect of relevant issues by orienting January and May Terms towards offerings (a) promoting study abroad or other aspects of internationalism, (b) highlighting project-based or other experiential learning opportunities, (c) approaching subject matter from a multidisciplinary perspective, and (d) implementing reflective components that allow students to consider or demonstrate their understanding of these issues. We seek to create innovative, dynamic three-to five-week terms that catalyze the growth of an engaged learning climate at Western within the context of a delivery format that increases access to experiential learning opportunities for diverse student populations (full-time, part-time, non-traditional, alternative delivery, etc.).

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 6. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Financially compensate faculty teaching courses through CCSA, KIIS and other study abroad programs. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Assist in advancing recommendations of the International Task Force to expand opportunities for internationalism and ethnic/cultural awareness. | 2005-2006 |
| 4. Incorporate opportunities relevant to Action 6 into course offerings. | 2006-2007 |
| 5. Encourage innovation in use of technology for engaging students. | 2006-2007 |
| 5. Expect syllabi to include relevant meta-learning goals for students in courses. | 2008-2009 |

Action 7: Develop a co-curricular resume/passport system to promote, record and document students' participation in experiential and service learning activities as well as educate students to the value of active learning, with opportunities to link to a developmental checklist for students.

Our goal in this initiative is to establish a mechanism for recording students' involvement in experiential learning activities during their *Western Experience*, as a means of both recognizing and promoting the value of active learning to their personal and professional development. We intend to enhance students' skills in bringing their academic training to bear on real-world issues and understanding of the implications of their subject disciplines to modern society by (a) expanding opportunities for experiential involvement (see Action 8), (b) implementing a mechanism to provide graduates an official record of their involvement, and (c) creating resources that identify linkages between experiential involvement and students' development as intentional learners. We seek to produce graduates who can demonstrate to graduate/professional schools or employers a record of involvement in experiential learning activities and have developed both the capacity and the commitment to take an active role in their own learning and in modern society.

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 7. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Develop online career exploration service. | 2006-2007 |
| 3. Collaborate with external constituents to provide career related events and mentoring opportunities. | 2006-2007 |
| 4. Encourage regular, university-wide participation in National "Make a Difference Day." | 2007-2008 |
| 5. Encourage student-run ventures across campus relevant to the QEP. | 2008-2009 |
| 6. Develop a co-curricular resume passport system. | 2008-2009 |

Action 8: Establish comprehensive points of entry for students' involvement in community service, service learning and leadership activities.

- a. Institutionalize the Alive Center as a vital, long-term link between the university and the community supporting volunteer, service or civic initiatives.
- b. Utilize the Leadership Center as an organizing unit for leadership studies, courses and activities.
- c. Utilize capacities of Career Services, Student Life, Housing and Residence Life, and Academic Advising.

The goal of this initiative is to establish ready points of entry that facilitate students' access to community service, service learning or leadership activities as part of their Western Experience. We intend to enhance students' skills in bringing their academic training to bear on real-world issues and deepen their awareness of and commitment to service on behalf of a cause by (a) organizing related experiential opportunities under appropriate administrative units, (b) promoting availability of experiential opportunities in a cohesive manner, and (c) facilitating placement of interested students with internal and external groups that will benefit from their involvement. We seek to create a system whereby students have a clear knowledge of how and where to seek access to experiential learning opportunities, as well as can gain assistance in initiating meaningful involvement in those activities.

Expected learning outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.
- Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.
- Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Determine personnel and operating needs to institutionalize the Alive Center in support of QEP priorities. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Provide support for fully operationalizing the Leadership Center in Cravens Library. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Create a Student Success Center in DUC. | 2005-2006 |
| 4. Expand opportunities for experiential learning through internships, co-ops, Kentucky Work Study Program and volunteer opportunities. | 2007-2008 |

Action 9: Establish a Class Legacy Program whereby each student cohort adopts and addresses one significant university, social or civic issue during their tenure at Western.

The goal of this initiative is to foster a culture of social and civic involvement on the part of students at Western while actively making positive contributions to the university, surrounding community or to society. We intend to enhance students' commitment to and involvement with university, social or civic issues and skills in bringing their academic training to bear on real-world issues by (a) creating a mechanism whereby student cohorts can identify and take meaningful action on a relevant issue of their choosing. We seek to produce graduates who recognize their responsibility as educated citizens in modern society and are committed to identifying and taking an active role in addressing social or civic issues.

Expected learning outcomes:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Initiate discussion with Student Government and other student regarding feasibility of a Class Legacy Program. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Increase use of students as presenters in university, civic and social programming. | 2006-2007 |
| 2. Initiate civic or social involvement, discussions of social responsibility and personal autonomy as elements of the Freshman Experience. | 2006-2007 |
| 3. Encourage regular, university-wide participation in National Make a Difference Day. | 2007-2008 |
| 4. Establish a system whereby well-conceived student-generated initiatives can be incorporated into university planning and policy. | 2007-2008 |
| 5. Establish a Class Legacy Program. | 2008-2009 |

Action 10: Institute or orient first-year activities to initiate students to university opportunities and expectations and highlight the passage of first-year students from high school to the university environment, with expectations for engagement.

The goal of this initiative is to establish a ceremonial onset to students *Western Experience* that articulates to first-time students the opportunities available to and expectations of them as they undertake university study. We intend to enhance students' perspectives about the world and their role as educated citizens by (a) emphasizing the rarity and significance of the learning opportunities before them, (b) establishing a pattern of inquiry and thought that is multidisciplinary and integrative, and (c) challenging students to be proactive in seeking out opportunities to become actively engaged as part of their educational training.

Expected learning outcome:

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

Associated implementation elements and timeline:

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| 1. Incorporate into unit strategic plans strategies to implement Action 10. | 2005-2006 |
| 2. Utilize Freshman Assembly to highlight passage of first-year students from high school to the university environment. | 2005-2006 |
| 3. Re-energize Humanities Semester and develop similar integrated, multidisciplinary programs. | 2005-2006 |

A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

While we can readily identify components of an invigorating education, and may well prove adept at implementing strategies to promote those elements, demonstrating their effectiveness in valid, measurable ways represents an additional, significant challenge. A recent statement by the Board of Directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U 2004) highlights the accountability gap that has troubled higher education for at least 20 years. This report points to a nearly universal reliance on standardized, one-measure approaches as a critical flaw in designing accountability criteria for educational institutions. The AAC&U Board fully supports the view that institutions must be accountable for their programs and strategies, but argues that this is best accomplished by focusing on key outcomes that emerge from a broad, liberal education.

According to AAC&U, appropriate outcomes emerge from an intentional, systematic approach to promoting engaged learning, one that spans students' entire academic career. Further, it is essential to both cultivate and assess these outcomes in a curricular context, recognizing the different meanings of these outcomes to different populations of students and settings. That is, desired outcomes must be translated into goals that are locally owned, developed by and relevant to individual units' particular contribution to the overall university strategic priorities.

We see valuable insight in the AAC&U position, and feel its captures the spirit and mission of a vibrant, comprehensive institution such as Western. Allowing (and expecting) individual units to implement strategies for addressing university priorities in locally-meaningful ways, we will assess progress of the QEP at the institutional level by asking and answering questions directly related to our three targeted student learning outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.
- Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.
- Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.

We recognize and celebrate the perspective put forward by SACS that student learning is diverse in its meaning and context, including advancement of students' knowledge, skills, behavior and values. As such, we will allow individual units great latitude in determining how their activities will impact student learning, and the most appropriate ways to quantify those potential impacts. That being said, we will also adopt a set of guiding principles upon which the assessment process will be based. It is our intent to:

- a. Expect all departments and units to translate university QEP priorities into specific goals, activities and student learning indicators relevant to their particular discipline and/or mission.
- b. Utilize existing data and reporting vehicles, thereby avoiding placing the burden of additional reports on individuals and units.
- c. Create administrative support positions and systems judiciously so as to not increase workload on faculty, staff and units.
- d. Recognize that the assessment process is not static, but will evolve over time.
- e. Ensure that student learning, not ease of assessment, remains the goal that drives our actions and priorities.

Assessment at the Institutional Level

In one sense, success in a global society is ultimately determined by what students do after they leave school. This issue will require concerted attention to maintaining contact with our graduates in order to evaluate and improve the engagement component of university programs. Working to make this happen will be a central challenge of the Leadership Team from its inception. However, reaching a point where establishment of such connections between program units and their alumni yields statistically-meaningful data will likely fall outside the five-year QEP implementation window.

In the meantime, however, at least two types of near-term indicators are already available and relevant. First, if increased student engagement is as effective as we anticipate, it will be reasonable to expect existing measures of student retention, standardized test scores, graduation, certification, and placement rates to improve. Second, increased student engagement should produce positive responses concerning personal learning outcomes on assessment tools such as the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), and the Western Kentucky University Student Engagement Survey (WKUSES).

From the point of view of theory and practical results, our participation in NSSE will be especially important to gauging the QEP's impact on the institution as a whole. In the first place, NSSE sets a high value on student engagement, and rightly so. To quote the NSSE annual report for 2002:

There are two ways to think about student engagement. The first is a proxy for collegiate quality, reflecting the degree to which students take advantage of the learning opportunities their institution offers. The second is that student engagement is itself an important outcome of college. Taking part in educationally purposeful activities builds the foundation for acquiring and integrating other essential skills, such as learning how to learn, being able to independently identify problems, developing and testing potential solutions, and synthesizing and applying information. Thus, students who are involved in a variety of educationally purposeful activities during college are developing the habits of mind that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning.

NSSE results reveal the number and variety of engagement activities related to our QEP theme that students experience. Like graduation and retention numbers, NSSE figures, which go back to 2001, also provide a baseline from which to measure our institutional progress. In the past, Western has participated in NSSE only every other year, but partly in response to our growing emphasis on student engagement we are now scheduled to do annual administrations in 2005 and 2006. Sample items and results in [Appendix 5](#) illustrate the types of information NSSE can provide that would be pertinent to Western's success in carrying out our QEP. In some cases, they also indicate how far we have yet to go.

The WKUSES instrument is a questionnaire administered to students annually and contains items pertinent to specific departments and colleges. Data from this survey will be useful for QEP assessment as well. In fact, because it is locally generated, WKUSES may provide a vehicle for the QEP Leadership Team and particular programs to investigate QEP issues as they emerge (see [Appendix 6](#)).

Assessment at the Program Level

Assessment at the program level provides a direct link between engagement and student learning outcomes, namely what students know, think, or are able to do as a result of their educational experiences. No doubt individual programs will define engagement in their own unique ways. However, consistent with our QEP theme, we expect each academic program to develop engagement activities that promote and document our touchstone student learning goal and learning outcomes:

Students will engage in communities other than their own in purposeful learning activities that explicitly address their capacity and responsibility to contribute to community and society.

In our sense of the phrase, “community and society” encompasses a spectrum of issues affecting civic, business, industrial, social, cultural, health, education, and other groups. We hope to contextualize student learning and make it personal through meaningful engagement, encouraging students to experience issues at first hand in order to see for themselves what their education can mean to them as individuals, professionals, and citizens. We believe this goal is sufficiently focused to be effectively evaluated, yet flexible enough to be pursued in a variety of ways by individual areas and programs.

A key responsibility of the QEP Leadership Team will be to assist academic, student support, and service departments in identifying appropriate student engagement activities and accounting for their success in implementing them. As is the case with academic programs, we anticipate that this unit-level reporting can be seamlessly incorporated into existing university strategic planning and outcomes assessment processes.

Western’s strategic planning process already embraces the entire institution. All units develop individual action plans and performance indicators keyed to at least one of the university’s five strategic goals, including departmental objectives for each relevant goal and specific activities to achieve them. Unit plan activities must specify who is responsible for carrying out the activity, the timeframe for completion, and budget implications. For the purposes of the QEP, all units will be expected to expand their action plans to include engagement activities and assessment of the results.

New student engagement efforts will mesh equally well with Western’s performance review processes, which include Annual Performance Reviews, Year-End Progress Reports, and Unit Productivity Awards. Each of these assessment mechanisms can easily be expanded to include engagement initiatives, their impact on student learning, and future plans for the area.

The relationship between engagement and learning will be documented through the university’s outcomes assessment process. Faculty in each academic program annually identify intended educational outcomes: what program faculty intend students to know, think, and be able to do when they have completed the program. Programs regularly assess for these outcomes using a variety of tools, including norm-referenced, standardized examinations, locally developed examinations, oral examinations, performance appraisals, simulations, portfolios, written surveys and questionnaires, and exit and other interviews. Qualitative or quantitative criteria for success must be appropriate and clearly defined, and assessment activities must lead to specific improvements designed to address documented needs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT

In designing a system that will appropriately and with high integrity measure the progress and success of the QEP, we need to consider:

- a. What are the germane data ?
- b. How can we most reliably and efficiently report these data ?
- c. What patterns in the data would be indicative of progress ?

Each of the 10 new initiatives outlined in Action Initiatives above address one or more targeted student learning outcomes. We do not expect our implementation process to be limited to only these 10 identified actions. Building on our guiding principles, we will expect units addressing individual action initiatives to develop specific performance indicators along with implementation plans for the new initiatives. Below we consider categories of indicators units will draw on as they develop performance indicators, as well as expected outcomes associated with assessment indicators.

The university's existing strategic planning process will serve as the structure within which QEP activities will be implemented and assessed. As part of this process, all units in the university develop action plans and performance indicators consistent with university priorities but directly relevant to each role in the university community. For the purposes of the QEP, each unit will be expected to purposefully consider ways to incorporate engagement activities into its action plan and determine activities and performance indicators supportive of associated student learning goals and outcomes. Appendix 7 provides sample initiatives illustrating how these provisions might be implemented.

Additional data on the relationship between engagement and learning will be documented through the university's outcomes assessment process. Currently, each academic program identifies intended educational outcomes, defined as "what program faculty intend for a student to know, think, and be able to do when they have completed the program." These cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, respectively, are consistent with the SACS' definition of student learning as encompassing impacts on knowledge, skills, behavior and values. Units regularly assess the achievement of these outcomes using a variety of appropriate assessment tools, including norm-referenced, standard examinations, locally developed examinations, oral examinations, performance appraisals, simulations, portfolios, written surveys and questionnaires, exit and other interviews. These indicators will be incorporated into QEP assessment as appropriate.

At the institutional level, a number of global indicators of student engagement will be utilized, including NSSE and WKUSES results, the Motivated Student Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), course evaluations, student retention and graduation rates.

It will be the responsibility of the QEP Leadership Team to define and derive appropriate assessment data from these various reporting structures and to ensure that relevant data are readily accessible. Progress will be assessed by tracking vectors of improvement using relevant indicators including but not necessarily limited to those described above.

What are the germane data ?

Appropriate data for this question will derive from reflective evaluation of initiatives designed to positively impact students' knowledge, skills, behavior and values in ways consistent with targeted student learning outcomes. While the available research data indicate that creation of an appropriate context for engaged learning will in fact advance students' growth as educated citizens (i.e., by demonstrating existence of appropriate processes that incorporate desired learning goals), it remains incumbent upon us to demonstrate this connection through measurable change in indicators of student learning (i.e., by quantifying progress in advancing student learning outcomes). **In the broad sense, relevant data are those that indicate whether we have engaged students with communities other than their own as part of their *Western Experience*, and have consequently better prepared students to think critically, serve generously, and lead responsibly.**

We will consider such variables as (a) integration of engagement themes into program learning outcomes, (b) involvement of students in active and experiential learning opportunities, (c) personal development of students as intentional learners, and (d) academic success of students throughout their career at Western and beyond.

As we carry out this process, we must continually evaluate our actions with respect to the following questions: (a) Does the activity/initiative in question implement one or more identified student learning goals; and (b) Does the activity/initiative in question advance development of students' knowledge, skills, behavior or values in ways consistent with targeted student learning outcomes ?

How can we most reliably and efficiently report these data ?

Data for this question will be extracted from:

- a. Unit planning and progress reports
- b. Unit outcomes assessments
- c. Students' co-curricular transcripts
- d. Attendance figures reported for cultural events and student life programming
- e. Responses as part of NSSE, FSSE and WKUSES processes
- f. Student responses on voluntary online self-assessment tools, including MSLQ and SDTLA
- g. Student retention and graduation rates

As part of the QEP implementation process, document templates will be modified to facilitate inclusion and extraction of data that will assist assessment of the QEP process. Templates will be developed in collaboration with divisions, colleges and units during the first year of implementation (2005-2006).

As part of yearly planning, progress and outcomes assessment documents, units will be expected to identify and report on their contributions towards enhancing the professional and personal growth of our students in manners consistent with QEP priorities. Units will be expected to reflectively consider ways to incorporate such activities within their academic mission and/or unit productivity goals. Similarly, proposals for unit productivity and other special funding awards should address the units' success in advancing relevant QEP goals and outcomes within the context of their particular discipline or role.

The Leadership Team will track institutional measures of student success, such as retention and graduation rates, as indicators of progress in QEP initiatives. This report will be made available to all members of the university community, accompanied by the opportunity for individuals to participate in a survey for use in subsequent assessment cycles. The survey will explore faculty and staff awareness and perceptions of QEP initiatives, the extent to which they feel these have positively impacted institutional effectiveness, faculty/staff development and student learning.

What patterns in the data would be indicative of progress ?

The following would be indicative of an increase in our capacity to prepare Western students to be productive citizens in a global society:

- a. Increased involvement and success of students in engagement activities through
 - i. growth of independent research, internship, co-op, service learning and leadership programs
 - ii. expanded impact of experiential learning programs as those above
- b. Increased success in unit student learning outcomes measures such as
 - i. proficiency of student cohorts on program exit exams, portfolios and other performance appraisals
 - ii. placement success of students following graduation
- c. Expansion of students' co-curricular resumes as indicated by the co-curricular transcript

- a. Increased attendance at cultural events and student life programming
- b. Increases in students' personal development and academic maturity evidenced through voluntary online self-assessment
- f. Increased NSSE, FSSE and WKUSES scores on questions related to student learning outcomes
- g. Increased university retention and graduation rates

Examples of process and learning indicators for targeted outcomes might include:

Outcome	Process Indicators	Learning Indicators
1. Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply knowledge and training to address relevant concerns in community or society.	<p>Integration of action initiatives into the curriculum.</p> <p>Expansion of opportunities for student research, scholarly activity, service learning, project-based learning, etc.</p> <p>Increased participation of students in above activities.</p> <p>Incorporation of reflective components designed to assess learning.</p>	<p>Increased proficiency on exit exams, national exams, or reflective components.</p> <p>Increased involvement of students as presenters, coauthors, project leaders, etc.</p> <p>Expansion of experiential learning aspects of students' co-curricular transcripts.</p> <p>Increased scores on student self-assessments of growth as intentional learners.</p> <p>Increased scores on relevant NSSE, WKUSES items.</p>
2. Students will demonstrate respect for diversity of peoples, ideas and cultures.	<p>Integration of action initiatives into the curriculum.</p> <p>Incorporation of reflective components designed to assess learning.</p>	<p>Increased proficiency as evidenced through reflective components.</p> <p>Increased scores on relevant NSSE, WKUSES items.</p> <p>Increased scores on student self-assessments of growth as intentional learners.</p>
3. Students will demonstrate awareness of their opportunities as responsible citizens living and working in a global society.	<p>Integration of action initiatives into the curriculum.</p> <p>Incorporation of reflective components designed to assess learning.</p>	<p>Increased proficiency as evidenced through reflective components.</p> <p>Increased involvement of students in socially-responsible activities related to the discipline.</p>

Utilizing the QEP as a vehicle for spawning external funding proposals and research projects examining the relationship between engagement initiatives and student learning at Western.

Establishing a causative link between our efforts to promote engaged learning and increases in student learning and subsequent success in a global society is admittedly the most difficult task of our (or any) assessment paradigm. As the university undergoes its institutional transformation, we anticipate shifts in student demographics, increased competitiveness of the incoming student classes, and a change in the culture of the university; each of these variables will likely impact our indicators of student learning along with those engagement initiatives we aim to assess. In addition, we do not presume to have identified all the indicators of student learning from the outset; we will come to appreciate other potentially valuable indicators as implementation proceeds.

While the literature base indicating a relationship between engagement and student learning and student success is strong, we feel it will be essential to directly evaluate this link in a local context; that is, we will attempt to demonstrate the strength and nature of this relationship at Western and for our particular set of student demographics. This will allow us to reliably judge our initiatives while simultaneously assisting our reflective consideration of the progress we have made and must yet make.

We also cannot ignore the opportunity to use the QEP as a research model to advance the broader understanding of an engagement paradigm and alternative strategies thereof. Such a focus will allow Western to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of engagement in student learning, and provide a vehicle for interested faculty and staff to pursue the scholarship of engagement as part of their professional development and growth.

Thus, we propose to establish robustly-designed internal research studies to validate the efficacy of engagement initiatives undertaken as part of the QEP. Facilitation of this research arm will initially be undertaken by the QEP Leadership Team. It will be essential to develop guidelines for submission of research proposals, assure reasonable support for viable proposals, and integrating appropriate portions of the resultant data into the QEP assessment process. It is our hope that this research arm of the QEP will (a) help us better evaluate the impact of our engagement actions on student learning, (b) enhance the human capacity for engagement by our faculty and staff, (c) provide a mechanism for facilitating pilot studies that may ultimately support grant proposals to external funding agencies, and (d) encourage faculty participation in the scholarship of engagement.

BUDGETARY COMMITMENTS

Western Kentucky University is committed to providing significant resources in support of all activities associated with the Quality Enhancement Plan. This commitment will be in terms of financial, physical and human capital as well as direct support from the areas of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research.

Financial resources have been budgeted to support costs associated with QEP start-up plans as well as to sustain the process over the next several years. Effective July 1, 2005, additional reoccurring budget allocations totaling \$450,000 will be in place to develop and advance QEP related activities. The QEP Leadership Team will recommend funding for activities that address the goals set forth in the QEP to the Provost through processes currently in place. Examples of funding opportunities include such areas as:

- Development of Student Leadership and University Honors Programs
- Direct support of student engagement activities
- Funding for infrastructure to advance QEP and engagement goals
- Support International Programs and Study Abroad
- Training and professional development
- QEP support staff and faculty time
- Civic Engagement activities
- Faculty and Student Applied Research activities
- Student Success Support initiatives
- Assuring adequate assessment of targeted outcomes

Further, Western's QEP will receive indirect benefits from increased dollars currently earmarked for increased funding for various Academic Quality initiatives. Among these initiatives are:

- Graduate assistantships and student workers
- Instructional equipment and technology
- Classroom renovations
- Operating budgets
- Addressing market competitiveness for faculty/personnel salaries

These allocations made to support Western's Academic Quality initiatives include added opportunities to support the QEP implementation.

We believe our QEP is adequately funded at this point in time, and that sufficient dollars have been designated to initiate those activities essential to establishing a strong QEP. Our initial funding allows for start-up costs associated with personnel, facilities, equipment, and baseline measures. Full implementation funding for the QEP will be made possible by institutional assurances, coupled with a rigorous budgetary review process. Western's QEP is an institutional priority and as such will receive strong institutional commitment.

Certain budgetary requirements can be linked to specific action initiatives in Implementation above. However, many activities will be funded through discretionary resource pools established to promote QEP-related goals. This will allow individual units the flexibility and opportunity to tailor requests to their particular needs or missions, and allow the university to be responsive to emerging opportunities to reinforce QEP goals. Allocation of such resources will be dynamic and based on yearly evaluation of the progress of QEP implementation as well as consideration of the evolving priorities outlined in the Strategic Implementation Timeline below.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERSIGHT

The university will establish a Leadership Team to oversee implementation (including assessment and reporting) of the QEP. This committee will be appointed by and report to the Provost, and will consist of members representing a broad spectrum of facilitators and stakeholders in the QEP implementation process. The committee will also include some individuals who are very familiar with the QEP development phase; this will facilitate a smooth transition from development to implementation. As implementation proceeds, committee composition will change as needed to reflect naturally evolving priorities and focus of the QEP.

The QEP Leadership Team will be charged with developing implementation schedules for 2005-2006 and beyond, recommending budgetary and human resource needs to facilitate QEP initiatives, and communicating QEP objectives and opportunities to faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends. This committee will further be responsible for extracting relevant data from reporting instruments to support assessment of the QEP, and to develop annual progress reports for major stakeholders (including the university administration, external agencies, as well as faculty, staff and students).

The coordination for the Leadership Team will be assigned from within the Office of the Provost. This individual will be responsible for integrating QEP priorities, activities and processes with existing policies and procedures regarding academic programs and personnel, planning and assessment, budget and resource allocation, and enrollment management. The Chair (in conjunction with the Leadership Team) will also work with individuals and units to facilitate alignment of policies, reporting procedures, activities and funding proposals with QEP priorities, so as to (a) minimize the workload on those individuals and units while (b) maximizing the impact on QEP student learning and assessment goals.