

### 2015-2020 QEP CONCEPT PAPER SUBMISSION FORM

Address all issues as specifically as possible. While the white paper is not intended to constitute a fully-developed proposal, a high degree of clarity and specificity will better enable the SACS Leadership Team to evaluate the potential of the proposal to meaningfully impact and document student learning at WKU.

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Proposed Title. Provide a working title of 15 words or less that captures the focused intent of the proposal. For reference, a list of other institutions' QEPs is available at: [http://sacscoc.org/inst\\_forms\\_and\\_info1.asp](http://sacscoc.org/inst_forms_and_info1.asp)

Preparing Graduates for a Knowledge-Based Society through Information Mastery

Problem Statement. Briefly describe the aspect of student learning this proposal is designed to enhance. What makes this dimension of learning particularly pertinent to WKU and its students?

*[T]he modern day literate [can] identify their own knowledge, its short-falls and gaps, identify learning needs, recognise the difference between legitimate claims and spurious scams, be able to discern the strengths and weaknesses of opposing perspectives, are empowered with the skills of learning as well as having a willingness learn, unlearn and relearn (Bond,2011).*

In a society of constantly changing information, knowledge obsolescence is a reality. Mastery of information is critical for graduates to possess in order to keep up with the changes in a chosen field. The inundation of information we face daily requires astute information-seeking and evaluation to "separate the wheat from the chaff." It is vital that students be able to discover, access, evaluate, synthesize, and communicate resources for an argument (e.g., a solution or project) appropriate to their field. The WKU experience enables all students to achieve information mastery upon graduation. Information mastery forms the basis for lifelong learning and affects textual, graphical, and aural formats that challenge students in all learning environments and in all levels of education. Such mastery must include technology skills for students to achieve competency in their information-seeking behaviors.

The ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly and authoritative information impacts student performance and academic achievement. These skills and knowledge are associated with beneficial behaviors that improve student persistence/retention, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare lifelong learners. Employers consistently ask colleges and universities to place more emphasis on information, research, and evaluation skills (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008). A study by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (2007) found that 70% of surveyed employers want to see more teaching of information retrieval and evaluation. These skills are defined as the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, effectively use, and understand ethical issues related to information in its various formats.

WKU plays a crucial role in fostering graduates who are knowledgeable about information retrieval, evaluation, and dissemination. Mastery of information is a valued and desired outcome for college graduates (AACU/NLC, 2007). Employers consistently ask for graduates with developed cognitive skills such as "the ability to comprehend, interpret, or extrapolate; to evaluate materials and methods; and to apply abstractions or principles. . ." (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996, p. 155). More information can be found in the report [Preparing Information Literate Students at WKU: Report of the Task Force on Universal Information Literacy](http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ulstats/9/), available at <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ulstats/9/>. References to the citations are available on the Libraries' website at [http://www.wku.edu/library/qep\\_references.php](http://www.wku.edu/library/qep_references.php).

Alignment. How does the proposal align with existing institutional and/or statewide priorities, as articulated in the emerging WKU 2012-2017 Strategic Plan and *Stronger by Degrees: A Strategic Agenda for Kentucky Postsecondary and Adult Education 2011-2015*. These documents are available for review at: <http://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/strategicplanningupdates.php>

Many recent initiatives emphasize discovery and critical evaluation of relevant information. In Europe, the *Bologna Process* has dealt with the issue of information competency in postsecondary education (Holliday, 2011). In the U.S., the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* (2011) contains extensive work on the learning outcomes and competencies that should be obtained by graduates at each degree level. The *Degree Qualification Profile* specifies that at the associate degree or sophomore level, the student "Identifies, categorizes, evaluates and cites multiple information resources necessary to engage in projects, papers or performance in his or her program." At the bachelor's level, the student:

- Incorporates multiple information resources presented in different media and/or different languages, in projects, papers, or performances, with citations in forms appropriate to those resources, and evaluates the reliability and comparative worth of competing information resources.
- Explicates the ideal characteristics of current information resources for the execution of projects, papers or performances; accesses those resources with appropriate delimiting terms and syntax; and describes the strategies by which he/she identified and searched for those resources (Lumina Foundation, 2011, pp. 12-13).

The Association of College and Research Libraries considers students to be "information literate" when they "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (ACRL, 2000/2004, p. 2). This definition is endorsed by the American Association for Higher Education and the Council of Independent Colleges.

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) is now using the term "information competency," which is defined in a somewhat more comprehensive fashion. The IFLA definition reads as follows: "A competent citizen, whether a student, a professional or a worker[,] is able to recognize her/his information needs [and] knows how to locate, identify access, retrieve, evaluate, organize, and use information. To be an information literate person, one has to know how to benefit from the worlds of knowledge, and incorporate the experience of others into one's background" (Lau, 2006, p. 8).

The draft revision of *Kentucky General Education Transfer Policy and Implementation Guidelines* (2011) carries the following student learning outcome under written and oral communication: "Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts." Kentucky is also using the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* (2011) by implementing the *Kentucky Tuning Project* (2011) to develop common learning and competency outcomes using evidence-based research. The *Kentucky Tuning Project* includes evaluation and critical thinking in its overall competencies, as well as within individual disciplines. For example, the business competencies for "oral and written communication" emphasize finding, analyzing, and citing relevant information.

A wide variety of terms are in use for this type of instruction. Some of the most-used terms include:

- Information fluency – Capability or mastering of information competencies.
- User education – Global approach to teach information access to users.
- Library instruction – Focuses on library skills.
- Bibliographic instruction – User training on information search and retrieval.
- Information competencies – Compound skills and goals of information literacy.
- Information skills – Focuses on information abilities.
- Development of information skills – Process of facilitating information skills (Lau, 2006, p. 8).

The terms used in this document at WKU are "information fluency," "information competency," and "information mastery." The University Experience program uses the term "library skills." We want all freshmen to obtain at least information competency, with information fluency the ideal goal. By the end of their college career, WKU graduates should obtain information mastery, which is defined at WKU in reference to the Association of College and Research Libraries, the International Federation of Library Associations, and the Bachelor's degree outcomes of the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* (2011).

This initiative falls within the parameters of **WKU's Challenging the Spirit 2012-2013 to 2017-2018** under the category "Fostering Academic Excellence." Specifically, it falls within *Objective 1.4, Promote research, creative and scholarly activity by faculty and students*, and within *Objective 1.5, Prepare students for lifelong learning and success*. In addition, this proposal aligns with *Objective 1.1, Sustain a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built on a liberal foundation*, which includes the strategy to implement the Colonnade program.

**Initiatives.** What specific initiatives or programs are proposed to address the identified QEP theme? What would be the targeted student demographic and number of students to be impacted? How would the proposed activities be integrated into the existing curricular/co-curricular framework? What individuals or units would be responsible for ensuring that the activities were appropriately implemented and assessed? Map out a rough implementation timeline, beginning in Fall 2015.

This initiative will be implemented in stages throughout each student's academic journey. At the introductory level, students will obtain basic information competency or fluency. Students will deepen their knowledge and skills in upper-level courses. Upon graduation, WKU students will achieve information mastery and will be prepared for a knowledge-based society.

### **Introductory Level: Basic Information Competency or Fluency**

#### *Information Fluency Modules*

Implementation of this proposal should include a required three-class-period sequence of information literacy instruction within the University Experience course, English 100, Communication 145, and comparable discipline-specific courses that introduce research (e.g., Nursing 102, History 175). Both English 100 and Communication 145 include research, evaluation, and synthesis of existing materials. Both of these courses are appropriate places for first-year students to obtain basic fluency in information and knowledge management. The three-class-period sequence of information skills will introduce students to basic information competencies. WKU Libraries joins University College in recommending that University Experience 175 be made into a three-credit course. Online learning opportunities would benefit distance learners and could include adaptive or personalized tutorials.

#### *Existing Initiatives*

WKU Libraries recommends that academic classes make greater use of the Libraries' existing initiatives in order to enhance student learning. Every program on campus has an assigned subject librarian ("personal librarian"). Academic departments and teaching faculty should be encouraged to have the subject librarian(s) visit their classes any time there is a major paper or project that requires research and encourage students to meet with their personal librarian. At-risk students should be given mandatory orientations with their personal librarian. Distance and regional campus instructors should be encouraged to work closely with the libraries' outreach services. These programs are already available, but expansion and promotion would lead to increased student retention and learning and to enhanced outcomes for the entire university.

#### *Embedded Librarians*

Another possible role for library faculty, known as an "embedded librarian," is to attend class sessions, monitor discussion boards, and be present during course discussions of assignments and research papers. The librarian's participation is timed so that instruction and answers to questions are given at the students' point of need. The library faculty member can also work with other faculty to discuss evaluation, citation, and plagiarism issues. In some models, the librarian and the instructor of record both review papers and provide student feedback (York & Vance, 2010; Hearn, 2005). This embedded librarian model, in conjunction with other campus initiatives such as the Writing Center, will provide students with important interventions in the research, evaluation, and writing process.

#### *Implementation and Assessment Responsibilities*

Responsibility for implementing and assessing these changes would be split among WKU Libraries, University College, Academic Advising, and individual academic departments. WKU Libraries will implement and assess the UE 175 3-class information fluency module. University College will be responsible for UE 175. The English and Communication departments are already responsible for assessing outcomes in English 100 and 300, and Communication 145. Academic Advising will be responsible for implementing at-risk student orientations. And individual academic departments would be responsible for encouraging teaching faculty to use

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information fluency modules, embedded librarians, and guest lectures from library faculty.

#### *New Faculty Positions Needed for Implementation*

The expanded UE 175 library component, embedding of library faculty, and enhancement of existing initiatives could be accomplished by using existing library faculty. However, outcomes would be improved by the addition of two new faculty positions.

While most of the content in advanced classes will be similar to that in UE 175, the level of understanding and expectations will be increasingly complex as students progress in their learning. Learning outcomes will be aligned with discipline or major-specific components. This plan can be implemented in Fall 2015.

#### **Moving Upper-Level Students toward Information Mastery**

In the *WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM*, the *Connections* component is the avenue for upper-level students to increase competencies in information mastery and allows for diverse teaching and learning styles. *Connections* classes also provide a framework for students to achieve more complex skills and discern the broader implications of information policies and practices. WKU Libraries will enhance existing research guides to focus on disciplinary practices for the integration of research sources appropriate for the individual field. These guides can provide additional support for courses like English 100, English 300, and Communication 145, as well as the yet-to-be-designed *Connections* courses.

#### *Embedding Librarians in Upper-Level Courses*

Upper-level courses, such as the *Connections* classes, are also appropriate venues for the embedded librarian concept. Library faculty members can (and already do) answer questions regularly on a one-to-one basis. Embedded librarians will be available to help students work through their research issues, regardless of whether the ultimate output is a paper, presentation, musical or artistic composition, capstone project, or honors thesis. By making themselves available for multiple class sessions, monitoring discussion boards, etc., the library faculty members will be in a better position to assist the instructor of record with increasingly complex research, evaluation, citation, and communication of research. The students will advance in their level of expertise beyond mere competency to obtain information mastery by the time they graduate from WKU.

Instructional design library faculty and subject librarians will collaborate to recognize, identify, and build upon existing research-intensive courses and develop and enhance advanced research resources in response to departmental needs. At this upper level, the QEP Assessment Team and all departments will be involved. This plan can be implemented in Fall 2015.

Student Learning Goals and Outcomes. What is the overarching student learning goal; that is, what is the primary academic purpose in implementing the proposed initiatives? What are 2-3 measurable student learning outcomes that will be targeted? Student learning outcomes describe the specific component of knowledge, skills, or perspective that students will be expected to gain as a result of participating in the proposed initiatives.

The overarching goal of this proposal is *to prepare WKU graduates for a knowledge-based society through information mastery*. In order to accomplish this objective, we have created the following student learning outcomes. These outcomes provide students with skills, knowledge, and perspective as lifelong learners.

1. WKU graduates will be able to define and explain information needs for specific purposes.
2. WKU graduates will be able to access and evaluate their findings for appropriate use.
3. WKU graduates will be able to demonstrate ethical and legal use of information in a knowledge-based society.

Assessment. How might student learning outcomes be assessed? What metrics could be used to document enhanced student learning? What means of assessment (process, rubric) could be employed to track progress on these metrics? What would be appropriate criteria for success and institutional attainment targets? Where would the primary point of accountability lie for documenting enhanced student learning (individual academic departments, coordinating unit, Institutional Research, etc.)?

Criteria for effective use of information can be incorporated into the existing general education assessment for English 100, Communication 145, English 300, and other general education courses. All three goals can be assessed through research-based assignments. This proposal meets a universal need across disciplines, thus representing a wide variety of institutional constituencies.

### **Assessment of Information Competency Components**

#### *Introductory-Level Courses*

Learning outcomes for entry-level courses could be assessed in various ways, including a post-test scored with a rubric; by summative analysis of a research process journal kept by the student during their research (scored using a rubric); by summative assessment of a full paper or major project; or by a combination of these strategies. We recommend that students receive points towards their grades for pre-tests, post-tests, and research process journals, since students are significantly more likely to take these assessments seriously if they are part of the grade.

A post-test and research process journal could be scored individually or collaboratively by a library faculty member, a teaching assistant, and/or the teacher of record. While a major paper or project could only be scored by the individual teacher of record, library faculty members and teaching assistants can assist by analyzing the sources used in the paper and making comments.

#### *Upper-Level Assessment*

The best way to assess our students' fluency in information management is to have each student use a portfolio assessment within English 300 or a comparable disciplinary writing course. This assessment could be accomplished by having students select research projects (whether experimental, visual, textual, aural, or graphical) to demonstrate information mastery. The portfolio could be connected to the electronic transcript. Research Week and other events could help to showcase high-quality student achievement examples. Each department could display the best projects (e.g., the top 5) at the upper levels and/or submit accomplishments for institutional reports.

The 90-minute Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) could also be utilized as a nationally validated measure for critical synthesis of information. This test could be administered as part of capstone seminars and other end-of-program courses. Those departments that already assess capstones, portfolios, or senior projects can use their existing systems for collection and evaluation. Additionally, TopSCHOLAR can provide a platform for the access and storage of student research at WKU.

For both introductory and upper-level assessment, a personalized web-based platform using hybrid multimedia components could both deliver information competency tutorials and assess student progress over time. This platform will be able to provide feedback to students and faculty, and will assist faculty members in identifying at-risk students who need intervention.