

## **Informal Meeting Notes – October 22, 2010**

### **Steering Committee/ QEP**

In attendance: Kevin Shriner, Scott VanSelow, Tom Rath, Kathy Clark, Amy Trogan, Eileen DeLuca, Pat Newell, Maureen McClintock, Ed Smith, Kevin Coughlin, Theo Koupelis, Amy Teprovich, Judy VanGalen, Fred Morgan, Christy Gilfert, George Manacheril, Myra Walters, Bill Wilcox

Dr. Atkins offered an overview of the QEP Course which developed from our self-study in Foundations of Excellence, and it is the cornerstone of what we're doing. We started in our focus groups with a clear consensus for First Year Experience. Critical Thinking was a close second, but if we use the entire First Year Experience as our QEP, it would be too large. So we narrowed it down to a First Year Experience course. Anytime a course or program is developed, it requires a theoretical framework. The framework informs what we do to increase student learning. This is based on experience, good practice, and research. We want to replicate what others are doing successfully.

### **Theoretical Background for the First Year Experience Course**

**Student Support:** This surrounds the entire FYE course. It includes orientation, early alert, in-take processes, training for staff, assessment and evaluation. Anything that supports students goes under Student Support.

1. **Relevancy:** Students will enter the course on a pre-major track, perhaps based on their interest – a humanities track, a business track, an arts track, for instance. This gives relevancy to students. It also gives them faculty-to-student connections and student-to-student connections. Also, the state of Florida will soon require pre-majors, and this fits with that initiative.
2. **Linked courses:** Research shows that students must reinforce what they're learning in the classroom. Linked courses allow us to do that. We'll probably start with students who are at greatest risk (those in two College Prep courses). Some of those students will be in a math course or a reading course and the FYE course. We can round out their schedule by linking them to another course, psychology perhaps, where they'll practice what they've learned in the FYE course in a for-credit course. For example, if they're learning to do the Cornell note taking method in the FYE course, they will use it in the for-credit course. In this manner, students will apply what they learn.
3. **Supplemental Learning:** This is really a tutor systems approach. The professors teaching the FYE courses can send their students for supplemental instruction. The tutor and faculty member must communicate. We will have a committee who will work on researching this. This is a systemic approach using peer tutoring to supplement what students learn in the classroom. It could target high impact courses rather than high risk students. You bring the tutors to the student rather than sending the student to the tutors.
4. **Critical Thinking:** We want students to learn to think for themselves and to analyze their own thinking. Our model of critical thinking teaches analysis in any situation. Metacognition is arguably the

most important ability students learn in college. The ability to think critically allows students to be self-reliant, life-long learners.

Time frame: We want full implementation in five years, but each one of these will take time. What we lose from an elective, we will gain in the quality of learning from students. We submit this report in August, so our plan must be finalized by then. We need a literature review and a description of the product by January. By February we'll need to be working on content and the syllabus. It needs to be in publishable form by June. Next fall we will pilot with a handful of classes with these pieces. We will need to do a great deal of professional development for this. We'll bring in a consultant specializing in pedagogies for at-risk students. We'll be piloting this course when SACS visits us in November and will have a five-year incremental approach to bring the larger student body into the process.

We propose to call our QEP: Cornerstone: Foundation of Self-Reliance. We'll be starting a newsletter and webpage that will be coming out soon and could use the idea of the cornerstone as our emblem. The Cornerstone is the course, and the Foundation of Self-Reliance harks back to the Foundations of Excellence as well as referring to the larger First Year Experience Program.