

# **Quality Enhancement Plan Impact Report**

## **Pilot Year (Spring – Summer 2015)**

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“Communication for Professional Success”

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This report provides a summary of information related to the University of West Florida's Quality Enhancement Plan: *Communication for Professional Success*. The goal of this report is to outline the successes and challenges of the QEP in its pilot year, which encompassed the Spring and Summer 2015 terms. The report also provides data regarding outcomes and offers future directions for increasing utilization of the program and optimizing students' professional readiness and ultimate success.

### **Overview of a QEP**

A Quality Enhancement Plan is a key component of UWF's accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. A QEP focuses on one area that a university deems essential to its mission and future success. Generally, QEPs consist of four key elements:

1. Goals
2. Student learning outcomes
3. A plan for implementation
4. A plan for assessment/evaluation

### **Communication for Professional Success at UWF**

UWF selected *Communication for Professional Success* as the focus of its QEP for the 2015 SACSCOC accreditation process. UWF further described its QEP as having learning experiences that are "high impact" in nature (see Kuh, 2008) and directed toward upper-division courses/co-curricular activities.

The development of the QEP began in October 2012 with the formation of a Topic Steering Committee. President Judith Bense appointed Drs. Jim Hurd and Karen Rasmussen as QEP Fellows and charged them to lead the effort. As development progressed, various teams and committees formed. These groups consisted of diverse representation from across campus and among the community. In October 2013, a Topic Selection Team vetted ideas and established the QEP's focus. Dr. Matthew Schwartz assumed the leadership of the Topic Development Team in December 2013. This group fleshed out the details of the proposal and prepared for the on-site visit from the SACSCOC.

In November 2014, the newly established University College and its Dean, Dr. Greg Lanier, assumed oversight for the QEP. The UC's mission focuses on enhancing students' professional readiness and success from general education to graduation—making the QEP a natural fit. In late November, the UC named Joshua Schutts its QEP Director and Assistant to the Dean for Professional Readiness.

### **QEP Implementation Team**

Representatives from across campus hold membership on the QEP Implementation team. The QEP Director chairs this team. A QEP Liaison represents the interests of each academic college and the co-curriculum. Additional team members consist of directors from several key academic and student support services, university marketing and communications, and the Emerald Coast. The SGA President and SGA University Relations Chairperson also hold

membership on the team. The role of the QEP Liaison is to support faculty and staff mentoring QEP projects, cultivate interest among the UWF community, counsel individuals developing proposals, and support high-impact practices and communication skills development across the curriculum.

## Participation Rates

### Students

- 318 students participated in QEP projects during the pilot year.
- The average age of students who participated was 25.6 (SD = 7.3).
- The majority of students (64.8%) were White non-Hispanic (n = 206)
- The majority of students (63.5%) were female (n = 202).
- The majority of students (70.8%) were seniors (n = 225).
- Nearly all of the students (92.1%) were Florida residents (n = 293).
- 216 students (67.9%) were from the three local Florida counties.
- 20 students (6.3%) were first-generation college students

### Faculty

- Each academic college selected two projects from among its faculty. Projects each received a \$5,000 grant to support to support the development, enhancement, or expansion of a high-impact practice.
- The University College selected two projects from the co-curriculum. As above, projects each received a \$5,000 grant.
- Faculty and staff receiving these grants were designated as “QEP Fellows.” All QEP Fellows (*n* = 18) completed their reporting requirements and submitted student-level data on learning outcomes.
- **Future analysis will look into faculty and staff interest at the department level based on proposal submissions and funding. Analyses will also explore issues of equity.**

## Student Learning Outcomes

### Areas of Strength

*Criteria: >95% of students met expectations. Exceeding expectations is also considered as "met expectations"*

*See Table 1 for the complete presentation of results.*

- 97% met expectations** for time/page length constraints (SLO 5), n = 101, M = 1.58, SD = 0.55.
- 96% met expectations** for presenting evidence in sequence (SLO 6), n = 198, M = 1.40, SD = 0.55.
- 98% met expectations** for appropriate transitions (SLO 7), n = 85, M = 1.35, SD = 0.53.
- 98% met expectations** for staying on topic (SLO 9), n = 90, M = 1.57, SD = 0.54.
- 97% met expectations** for appropriate sources (SLO 10), n = 69, M = 1.38, SD = 0.55.
- 96% met expectations** for supporting the main idea (SLO 12), n = 318, M = 1.07, SD = 0.81.
- 96% met expectations** for supporting the main idea (SLO 14), n = 139, M = 1.26, SD = 0.56.
- 97% met expectations** for expected style (SLO 18), n = 72, M = 1.39, SD = 0.55.

### Opportunities for Improvement

*Criteria: >10% of students did not meet expectations*

- 15% did not meet expectations** for intended purpose (SLO 4), n = 318, M = 1.34, SD = 0.72.
- 30% did not meet expectations** for grammar/syntax (SLO 20), n = 318, M = 1.07, SD = 0.81.
- 36% did not meet expectations** for punctuation (SLO 21), n = 190, M = 1.04, SD = 0.87.
- 16% did not meet expectations** for spelling (SLO 22), n = 205, M = 1.45, SD = 0.75).
- 13% did not meet expectations** for compelling language (SLO 23), n = 105, M = 1.39, SD = 0.71.

**Table 1***Summary Results by Student Learning Outcome*

SLO #	Outcome Description	Summary Statistics			
		n	X	SD	% below expectations
1	Establish Common ground (shared understanding)	85	1.34	.61	7
2	Appropriate language and jargon	129	1.51	.65	9
3	Appropriate use of media	85	1.35	.59	6
4	Support intended purpose of the communication	318	1.34	.72	15
5	Adhere to time/page length constraints.	101	1.58	.55	3
6	Present evidence in a logical and coherent sequence.	198	1.40	.57	4
7	Transition between topics appropriately	85	1.35	.53	2
8	Address contradictory evidence	141	1.16	.53	7
9	Stay on topic	90	1.57	.54	2
10	Select appropriate and relevant sources	69	1.38	.55	3
11	Demonstrate congruence between content and central message	70	1.40	.60	6
12	Support main idea with discussion	318	1.48	.57	4
13	Clear and focused scope	139	1.28	.54	6
14	Support main idea with sufficient detail	139	1.26	.56	4
15	Introduce gist of the message in one phrase	105	1.46	.60	6
16	Clear statement of conclusion	72	1.33	.63	8
17	The conclusion is consistent with the evidence presented	305	1.42	.62	7
18	Adhere to expected editorial style for the discipline	72	1.39	.55	3
19	Appropriate editorial voice or author style	85	1.44	.63	7
20	Use standard grammar/syntax OR vocal inflection	318	1.07	.81	30
21	Use correct punctuation OR appropriate vocal volume	190	1.04	.87	36
22	Spelling is generally error-free OR clear diction/enunciation	205	1.45	.75	16
23	Compelling and engaging language	105	1.39	.71	13

**Group Differences**

*Analysis: Chi Square Test for Independence, Effect sizes: Somer's d or Cramer's V*

*Significance Criteria:  $\alpha = .002$  (Bonferroni corrected)*

- **Males received higher ratings** (Ms: 1.64-1.89) on several outcomes (Female Ms: 1.25-1.48)
  - Appropriate sources (SLO 10):  $\chi^2(2) = 12.42$ ,  $p = .002$  ( $d = 0.51$ )
  - Voice (SLO 19):  $\chi^2(2) = 12.74$ ,  $p = .002$  ( $d = 0.43$ )
  - Spelling (SLO 22):  $\chi^2(2) = 18.74$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $d = 0.25$ )
  
- **No differences among the proportionate values of outcome level across the following comparisons:**
  - Local students (Tri-county area) vs. Non-local students
  - Florida residents vs. Non-Florida residents
  - First generation students vs. Non-first generation students
  - Racial categories

- **Some differences existed between seniors and juniors** on several outcomes.
  - *Seniors > Juniors*
    - Intended purpose (SLO 4):  $\chi^2(8) = 42.95, p < .001, V = 0.26$
    - Grammar/syntax (SLO 20):  $\chi^2(8) = 82.62, p < .001, V = 0.36$
    - Punctuation (SLO 21):  $\chi^2(6) = 28.93, p < .001, V = 0.28$
  - *Juniors > Seniors*
    - Spelling (SLO 22):  $\chi^2(6) = 27.15, p < .001, V = 0.26$
- **As one's age increases, the ability to meet expectations relative to appropriate sources (SLO 10) decreases,  $\rho = -0.36, p = .003$ .**

### **Baseline**

A baseline analysis was not conducted during the Pilot Year.

### **Indirect Measures of Learning**

One project assessed professional role confidence and communication apprehension in their participants. The small sample size ( $n = 8$ ) makes statistical inference inappropriate.

- 62.5% of students increased their professional role confidence pre-post
- 50% of students went from having some degree of uncertain confidence (pre) to a high level of professional role confidence (post)
- 50% of students decreased their communication apprehension scores pre-post
- 12.5% of students became more apprehensive pre-post

### **Professional Development**

- Dr. Gale Workman conducted three workshops in June. **Every participant ( $n = 48$ ) reported the session provided (1) value to them as an educator, (2) concrete tools/takeaways, (3) strategies to improve their own writing, and (4) strategies to improve the writing of their students or staff.**
- UWF faculty and staff members attended the AAC&U Summer Institute for High-Impact Practices in Madison, WI held June 9 – June 12. **The team ( $n = 6$ ) developed and presented an action plan based on the institute curriculum.**
- The QEP Director attended the SACSCOC Summer Institute for Quality Enhancement in Kissimmee, FL held July 19 – July 22.

### **Toolkit Resources**

Planning did not include the development of additional tools in the Pilot Year. Presently, tools available to UWF faculty, staff, and students include the QEP rubric and several indirect assessments of student learning.

## Projects

### Summer Leadership Series (Kermiet)

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: In addition to strong demonstration of SLO attainment, students self-reported learning in the following areas: conflict communication, working in a diverse environment, self-awareness, public speaking, common purpose, values clarification, collaboration, and professional image (n = 12).
- Major changes: Project director modified the written assignment to include a written and verbal component. Pre and post-test assessments of two indirect measures of student learning conducted upon consultation with QEP Director.
- Budget: Utilization = 52%. Unused budget carried forward to fund Year 1 credentialed project “undergraduate board fellows project” also delivered by Kermiet (Amount carried = \$2,360.19).

### Student Teaching Seminar (Boddy)

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: The student’s e-portfolio of classroom work is useful to demonstrate state hiring requirements for hiring. The QEP Director will follow up in Year 1 to ascertain the hiring rate for project participants (n = 37).
- Major changes: The project director also assessed an additional reflection paper to identify student needs relative to the course experience.
- Budget: Utilization = 0%. Unused budget carried forward to purchase software and equipment for live seminar sessions, access to video exemplars, and conference travel (Amount carried = \$5,000.00).

### Social Work Senior Seminar (King/Lewis)

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: The student’s e-portfolio of classroom work is useful to demonstrate state hiring requirements for hiring. The QEP Director will follow up in Year 1 to ascertain the hiring rate for project participants (n = 37).
- Major changes: None, however, an EMERGE 2015 proposal was submitted to the College of Education and Professional Studies to expand the QEP project and enhance student learning of professional identity and self-care in the Senior Seminar and field experience prior to the completion of the BSW degree.
- Budget: Utilization = 0%. Unused budget carried forward (Amount carried = \$5,000.00).

### MathStat Proseminar (Kuhl)

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: All students (n = 12) received an evaluation summary of their mock presentation before the

actual presentation of their Proseminar research. The result was improved performance on the SLOs QEP for the 87% of the student participants.

- Major changes: None, however, the observed gains from this project will continue inform the Proseminar experience. In fall 2015, students will again complete a mock presentation and the schedule for mock and actual presentations will be released earlier.
- Budget: Utilization = 17%. Unused budget carried forward for student travel to future conferences and professional development opportunities for faculty (Amount carried = \$4,140.27).

### **National Student Advertising Competition (McLaughlin)**

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: All students (n = 20) indicated the course helped them, or will help them secure a position in the advertising or public relations field. As of the reporting date, 60% of students who graduated in spring or summer 2015 had received a job. Based on the competition scores, external evaluators (industry judges) rated the plans book and presentation to be “A-” work.
- Challenges: Most Florida schools began their preparatory work in September. The UWF team did not begin until January. Additionally, the IRB process to complete the NIH certification slowed down the project timeline. Strategy and creative development processes experienced at least two weeks worth of delays. Despite these setbacks, deadlines were met, however, an earlier start would have facilitated additional strategic and creative processes (e.g., focus groups).
- Major changes: Based on the challenges, the following changes will be enacted: (1) the project manager will attend the National AAF conference to engage others from around the country in best practices, (2) seek additional course collaborations that could incorporate elements of the competition into their student work (e.g., audience research and strategy assignments), (3) explore more open-ended IRB process, (4) carefully review and consider how students enroll in the course and make recommendations for curriculum change, if applicable.
- Budget: Utilization = 100%.

### **Student Scholars Symposium (Schwartz)**

*Project determination: Success*

- Impact: Undergraduate students that opted to have their oral presentation or poster judged (n = 87) were each rated by a panel of three judges. The majority of judges were faculty members. The data collected during the pilot were intended to serve as baseline comparison for future years.
- Major changes: Data were collected with pen and paper in the pilot, with the intent of using the tablets purchased with pilot funds and UWF’s institutional Qualtrics license in subsequent years. The original proposal called for the hiring of a graduate student to develop an application for scoring. The inability to use the tablets and software in time was related to a delay in the receipt of funds and the launch of Qualtrics university-wide.

- Budget: Utilization = 99%. Unused budget carried forward for use in year 1 (Amount carried = \$76.02).

### **Assessing Scientific Communication (Vaughan)**

#### *Project determination: Success*

- Impact: Written comments were shared with students (n = 27) in an effort to improve their presentations early in the evaluation cycle. Overall, most students' demonstrated improvement in their communication skill scores, and in many cases, mastery in each SLO by the third evaluation cycle.
- Challenges: Due to scheduling, it was difficult to obtain evaluations for each student in all three of the evaluation cycles. Selecting fewer students in the next study may result in a more manageable analysis. More extensive planning prior to the start of the project would ensure uniform feedback measures were provided by all faculty members involved.
- Major changes: None, however a shorter more correct rubric for posters vs. oral presentations vs. written papers would make assessment simpler and data analysis easier.
- Budget: Utilization = 100%.

### **Audience Consideration for Professional Communication in Operations Management (Williams)**

#### *Project determination: Success*

- Impact: The pilot study was helpful in identifying a gap in audience considerations for professional communication in operations management. Over half of the students could not identify a correct recipient for their memo assignment. Most students also demonstrated poor mechanics of language.
- Challenges: Due to scheduling, it was difficult to obtain evaluations for each student in all three of the evaluation cycles. Selecting fewer students in the next study may result in a more manageable analysis. More extensive planning prior to the start of the project would ensure all faculty members involved provided uniform feedback measures.
- Major changes: None, however a shorter more correct rubric for posters vs. oral presentations vs. written papers would make assessment simpler and data analysis easier.
- Budget: Utilization = 0%. Unused budget carried forward for use in year 1 (Amount carried = \$5,000).

### **Additional Notes**

- The College of Business selected one pilot project

## Promotion and Marketing

The marketing and communication strategy for the QEP generally followed the articulated plan in the original QEP document. Several planned activities (e.g., advertisements in the *Voyager* and QEP buttons) were not conducted because of cost or time constraints. The inability to deploy those efforts was not determined to have a significant impact on the community's perception and knowledge regarding the QEP.

Future marketing and promotion will be communicated in two manners: (1) advertisement in "@UWF," (2) email solicitation to department directors and chair. In select instances, printed flyers may be developed. A record of all marketing activity will be maintained by the QEP director for the duration of the plan. The QEP website ([uwf.edu/QEP](http://uwf.edu/QEP)) will serve as another main conduit for information dissemination.

## Recommendations for Future Action

### 1. Reduce the number of student learning outcomes

- a. Analysis found that five of the SLOs had double-digit rates of failing to meet expectations. The focus of the QEP is professional readiness. As such, , and as such future efforts should begin by addressing areas of improvement. That type of approach is best accomplished when efforts are limited to a fewer number of outcomes.

### 2. Conduct a baseline analysis in Year 1

- a. The Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CUTLA) has access to upper division writing samples. These samples represent student work submitted before the QEP's pilot year. An analysis of all or a sample of these work products would be useful for comparative purposes.
- b. There is also value in assessing baseline data from lower-division courses or experiences when students enter UWF. This would provide valuable longitudinal understanding of a student's progression through our curriculum. Potential areas where first-year data may be captured are
  - i. Orientation (e.g., taking a writing/grammar test that could be administered later as part of a QEP project),
  - ii. English Composition I (ENC 1101)
  - iii. Basic Communication Skills (SPC 2608)

### 3. Continue professional development partnership with Gale Workman

- a. CUTLA has access to upper-division writing samples. These samples represent student work submitted before the QEP's pilot year. An analysis of all or a sample of these work products would be useful for comparative purposes.

### 4. Revise the QEP rubric

- a. Revise the language to make SLOs easier to comprehend.
- b. Reduce the number of SLOs.
- c. Consider separate rubrics for written and verbal work products.
- d. Develop rubric to be used as an instrument for grading and assessment of student work.