Proposed Final Candidates for QEP II Topic

The Ad hoc Committee to Select the Topic for Guilford’s next Quality Enhancement Plan reviewed the comments and suggestions gathered from the various physical and virtual forums. The committee believes that all suggested topics would greatly benefit student learning. But, since we can have only one QEP – and this QEP needs to be doable, assessable, sustainable, and focused – we have narrowed down the list of possible topics to four proposed “finalists.” We have listed these topics below – in alphabetical order – each paired with a few thoughts to help initiate a broader conversation.

At the community forum, we will ask for feedback on these proposed topics. We also welcome feedback on the Moon Room. Our list of finalists is only a proposed list. If people think that other topics should be added to this list, we will absolutely consider such suggestions. However, at some point in the not-to-distant future, the faculty will need to approve one QEP topic.

**TOPIC 1: Creative Works / Undergraduate Research.**
For those students engaged in areas that center on creative works (e.g., art, music, and theatre), this QEP could take the form of enhancing students’ skills and techniques in applying their particular discipline. Research experience allows students to better understand published works, determine an area of interest, and jumpstart their careers as researchers. Through exposure to research as undergraduate students, students can discover their passion for research and better prepare themselves for careers involving research.

Student creative works / research can achieve the balance between independence and collaboration. Creative works / research are often performed in teams, and one must sometimes learn to balance a collaborative effort with what one is capable of accomplishing independently.

The reputation of the college benefits as we highlight undergraduate research / creative works. This topic focuses on faculty/student engagement, an area in which we already claim to excel. Devising
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“standardized” rubrics and/or methods to assess the enhancement of student learning may be difficult, as this topic focuses on individual projects that can differ greatly across the college. This QEP could mesh nicely with many regular Guilford activities and existing Guilford programs. This topic may be considered a subset of proposed Topic 2, Experiential Learning.

**TOPIC 2: Experiential Learning.**
Experiential learning provides students the opportunity to apply course content to practical experience and develop personal, academic, and work competencies. Students benefit from experiential learning because they can have broad opportunities to apply research and learning and to participate in cutting edge research, business and technology initiatives. By graduation, students will have had the opportunities to apply what they have learned in their chosen field of study. Experiential learning can lead to job opportunities, interview skills and solid life skills.

Resources for experiential learning are already available to the Guilford community. Experiential Learning could involve group collaboration, working off campus, community service, connecting internships with community service and course studies. The challenge with which we are already charged is to connect community service with each department or program of study. A certain lack of clarity with this topic and how it relates to each department differently may pose problems for assessment, however, data on student engagement does exist and other colleges have selected such a topic for their QEP.

**TOPIC 3: Oral Communication.**
Students can benefit from oral communication because it can be an especially effective way to promote debates and address problems. Oral discussions promote interchange between people, especially when those topics involve disagreements or misunderstandings. Oral communication is a great way to promote student morale and maintain energy and enthusiasm in class. Students could also learn to provide purposeful and well-designed formal presentations that successfully increase knowledge, foster understanding, and/or promote change in the listeners’ attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.
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Oral communication can be assessed in most departments/disciplines and a wide variety of courses at multiple levels. Oral communication is a specific General Education Learning Outcome (GEL0 1.2) and is thus already a component of many courses, including FYS. Assessment data exists, however weak it may be.

Oral communication could be assessed by evaluating the purpose and topic, main points and organization (e.g., introduction and conclusion), the evidence/sources and reasoning, audience engagement, responses to audience questions, and effective delivery (the use of notes, vocal tunes, etc.). Implementation could involve workshops similar to those used for Writing in the Disciplines (QEP I).

**TOPIC 4: Quantitative Literacy / Quantitative Reasoning.**
As quantitative reasoning is required in most academic fields, is used in most every profession, and is necessary for decision-making in everyday life, the ability to think clearly and critically about quantitative issues is imperative for students. Quantitative reasoning can help students understand many of the economic, political, and environmental issues that arise in today's global community. Because quantitative information takes many forms, and quantitative reasoning skills span a vast spectrum, quantitative reasoning can benefit students to develop their ability to understand, evaluate, and use quantitative information.

The practical topic of Quantitative Literacy is easily assessable by means of standardized tests. We possess a substantial history of baseline data that is contentious and points to a weakness at our institution, it is clear that we have a need for improvement and we cannot ignore this glaring issue. Quantitative Literacy is a specific General Education Learning Outcome (GEL0 2.1).

Though a Quantitative Literacy QEP would affect most students, the topic may be considered too narrow and may not appeal to all departments. Quantitative Reasoning, on the other hand – how to use quantitative rather than solely qualitative arguments to approach problems – could be applied in a broader manner across many disciplines. As with Oral Communication, quantitative reasoning could be supported by training workshops.