What is the QEP?

Section 2.12 of the Core Requirements for reaffirmation of accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requires the development by HCC of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for 2012-2017.

The QEP, submitted four to six weeks in advance of the on-site review by the Commission (scheduled for early November 2011), is a document developed by the institution that

1. includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment,
2. focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution,
3. demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP,
4. includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and
5. identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.

The SACS Liaison Charles Cook and SACS Director Judy Cantwell worked with the SACS Steering Committee and several sub-committees over the past year to complete our Compliance Report (submitted in March 2011) and to develop our QEP. Our Compliance Report is currently under review by an Off-Site Committee that likely will ask for more information and clarification in a follow-up Focused Report.

How was the QEP developed and selected?

In conjunction with the Compliance Report, a sub-committee, co-chaired by President Fena Garza of HCC-Southwest College and Executive Dean Butch Herod of HCC-Northwest College, led efforts to develop a QEP topic. The committee created a web-based “Suggestion Box” for any HCC faculty, staff, administrator, student, or community member to submit proposed topics. The Co-Chairs also held forums at the District with the Board and senior administrators and at all of the Colleges to generate discussion, answer questions, and encourage participation. These activities resulted in the submission of over 400 topic suggestions!

During Fall 2010, the QEP Development Committee narrowed the topics to the top five categories. At the beginning of the Spring 2011 semester, faculty were invited to submit applications to write “white papers” of 8-10 pages on one of the topics, detailing goals and plans of action. Almost 50 applications were received, from which 8 faculty were selected in late January 2011.
They submitted white papers covering the five topics in early April 2011, and an evaluation team composed of HCC faculty and administrators selected one topic, presenting it to the Steering Committee for final approval.

**What is HCC’s QEP topic?**

The winning topic is **HCC INSPIRE: Innovative STEM Program Initiatives to Reform Education**, submitted by author and newly-appointed QEP Director Tineke Berends, Professor of Biology from HCC-Northwest College. The overall goal of HCC INSPIRE is to “lay the foundation for system-wide, data-driven reform of HCC STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) education, utilizing teaching and student support strategies proven to encourage critical thinking, higher-level scientific reasoning, and STEM student recruitment, retention, and success.”

**What will be the focus of the QEP?**

Currently, HCC INSPIRE has three broad goals and several related strategies for the collaboration of college-based teams:

1. Increase student access to STEM-related academic learning skills resources, opportunities, and support.
   a. Creation of an online academic learning skills clearinghouse of best practices
   b. Implementation of general academic learning skills workshops for students
   c. Integration of student peer-led learning and tutoring sessions
   d. Support for system-wide student science clubs and competition
   e. Creation and implementation of a STEM-focused, CSI-style, freshman success course

2. Prepare increasing numbers of HCC faculty for innovative teaching strategies, to include
   a. Inquiry-Based Projects
   b. Conceptually-Oriented Tasks
   c. Collaborative Learning and Learning Communities
   d. Use of Technology

3. Identify the elements required for HCC Model Courses and create one or more STEM model courses, impacting the following areas:
   a. Developmental math
   b. College level math
   c. College level science
   d. College level science and engineering-related technical programs

**What are the next steps?**

Dr. Berends will be engaged in writing the full QEP from now until early August, at which point it will be submitted to SACS along with the Focused Report. Dr. Berends will spend the summer in additional research and consultation with experts around the country to develop a 60-80 page plan that will “flesh out” all the related details, including budgets, timelines, and evaluation components. She remains open to your suggestions and assistance in completion of this very important task for our college. The On-Site Committee will then evaluate both documents during its visit in early November 2011.
Who else should be acknowledged for their contributions?

Thanks to the Board of Trustees for their involvement in providing suggestions for the QEP and interest in receiving the on-going reports on the topic selection. At the May 2011 Board Committee on Academic Affairs/Student Services, they received a report on the substance of HCC INSPIRE and forwarded it to the Committee of the Whole.

Congratulations to Tineke Berends, and thanks to all of you—Charles Cook, Judy Cantwell, Fena Garza, Butch Herod—who have contributed to our reaffirmation efforts thus far as we move forward in providing ever greater opportunities for students to achieve academic success in their lives and careers.

Thank you to the “white paper” authors for their work: Saler Axel, Suanna Davis, Charlotte Hamilton, Judy Hayman, Janis Innis, Douglas Rowlett, and Lifang Tien.

Thank you to the QEP Development Committee members for their efforts: Alan Ainsworth, John Boxie, Tenecia Brown, Willie Caldwell, David Diehl, Arnold Goldberg, David Joost, Beverly Joseph, Stephen Levey, Mike McCormick, Martha Oburn, Norma Perez, Cheryl Peters, Elizabeth Scherer, and Mary Alice Wills.

Future editions of the QEP UPDATE will be prepared by the QEP Director and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Instruction.