Quality Enhancement Plan

Success Through Inquiry

Vernon College

Development of the QEP

- Development of the QEP was facilitated by the QEP Planning Committee and the QEP Development Task Force.

- The initial phase of planning focused on the college's Strategic Plan and related data.

- The committee created college-wide topic identification surveys administered to all faculty, staff, and college constituencies

- Focusing on key issues derived from the surveys, the Planning Committee narrowed the list of topics and investigated need, feasibility, cost, best practices, and student-learning outcomes related to the narrowed list.

- The results of the topic identification surveys and data from Strategic Planning resulted in the identification of four possible topics:
  - student motivation
  - personal responsibility
  - critical thinking
  - reading/information literacy

- Collaboration Sessions were held to investigate the list of proposed barriers to student learning and refine the list of potential topics.

- The Planning Committee determined the topic of reading continually surfaced throughout the process and VC initially selected @VCReads as the college's QEP.

- The QEP Development Task Force was charged with ensuring the proposed QEP topic focused on student learning outcomes, accomplished the mission of the institution, and related to institutional needs and assessment data.

- The QEP Development Task Force formed two teams focused on reading inside the classroom reading and barriers outside the classroom.

- Surveys designed to refine the topic were given to students and faculty.

- Student responses did not indicate that reading (in terms of ability or understanding) was perceived as a barrier, and during the course of the faculty interviews, it became apparent that faculty and staff were using reading as a catchall phrase for other issues

- The QEP Planning Committee analyzed the findings and determined a QEP topic that more fully addressed the common themes was desirable.

- Review of the literature along with an analysis of assessment data revealed the topic of inquiry-based learning (IBL).

- "Success through Inquiry" was officially adopted as Vernon College's QEP at the start of Spring 2017.

- Vernon College's Strategic Planning and assessment data supported the proposed topic of inquiry-based learning.

- Core curriculum assessment data indicated a need for improvement in information literacy (as related to the core objectives of personal and social responsibility), critical thinking, and communication.

- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data, SIR II (and eSIR II) results, along with faculty reflections on the End of Semester Course Review (ESCR) instrument all provided indirect assessment evidence in support of the inquiry-based learning topic.

QEP Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1 - Develop and assist faculty in adopting and implementing best practice IBL strategies.	FLO 1: Faculty will identify and research IBL methodologies and strategies.
	FLO 2: Faculty will develop and implement an IBL integration plan.
Goal 2 - Students will develop knowledge of discipline appropriate inquiry skills.	SLO 1: Students will formulate a clear question, thesis, problem statement or hypothesis.
	SLO 2: Students will collect relevant and appropriate information or data, or identify appropriate processes.
Goal 3 - Students will apply inquiry skills from the classroom to a student-generated question or problem.	SLO 3: Students will analyze and evaluate information, data, or processes for the purpose of addressing the question, problem, thesis, or hypothesis.
	SLO 4: Students will present their findings in a discipline appropriate manner (demonstration, presentation, research paper, etc.)

Impact on the Faculty

Faculty Responses to Development Course Survey (N=46)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined	76.9%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged	79.5%	18.0%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The training experience will have relevance/impact for my teaching	60.5%	31.6%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%
The trainers were knowledgeable about the training content	76.9%	20.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The training objectives were met by course end	69.3%	28.2%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The time allotted for the training was sufficient.	46.2%	41.0%	0.0%	12.8%	0.0%

Instructor comments on the survey indicated that the majority were excited to try a new strategy in their course:
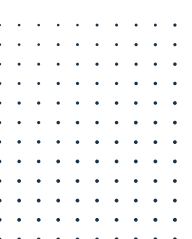
- "We are encouraged to think outside the box and buck tradition when developing IBL materials."
- "I loved the 3-step process for inquiry provided in the sessions. Easy to apply! I love the promise of engagement that this learning strategy has to offer."
- "I appreciated the push to try something new and different. I enjoyed support from my peers."
- "Being inspired by what others are doing in a way that challenges me to be a better instructor and revamp my course to make it more interactive."
- "ALL disciplines can participate when they have faculty who are as curious as they expect their students to be."

Of course, not all faculty saw the value in the course development content:
- "I have more doubts about IBL working for workforce programs than before the class."

Goal 1 - Develop and assist faculty in adopting and implementing best practice IBL strategies.

- A faculty development course, IBL QEP 101, was designed to mirror the IBL process.

- Faculty decided on a curricular topic, researched IBL strategies, and drafted and presented an implementation plan.

- The structure of the course ensured that Faculty Learner Outcomes 1 and 2 were successfully met.

FLO 1: Faculty will identify and research IBL methodologies and strategies.

- Assessment activities included reflection journals, discussion boards, and the faculty workshop.

- In weeks 1 and 2 of the faculty development course, faculty investigate what defines inquiry-based learning and how it may be implemented in the classroom.

- In weeks 3 and 4, faculty use the VC Wright Library to research journal articles and other sources to determine how best to implement IBL in their subject. The results of this research are added to an interactive annotated bibliography

- At the conclusion of week 4, faculty members met for a working lunch to discuss the methodologies and strategies found during the first 4 weeks.

- Forty-six faculty participated in the QEP faculty development course. Of those 46, 46 (100%) made a submission to the IBL Annotated Bibliography.
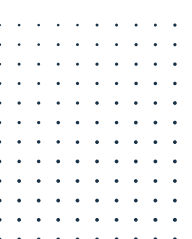
FLO 2: Faculty will develop and implement an IBL integration plan

- Assessment activities associated with this outcome included the implementation peer review, final implementation plan submission, and the post-implementation reflection.

- Faculty drafted an IBL implementation plan (IBLIP) for their course. The IBLIP included IBL objectives/outcomes unique to the course, how those objectives relate to established course-level objectives and the SLO objectives, and how the objectives will be directly assessed in their course.

- The initial draft of the IBLIP was submitted in week 5 of the course, and a peer review session provided faculty a chance to interact with their peers and improve their initial plan in week 6.

- The final draft of the IBLIP was submitted in week 7 followed by a presentation of the IBLIP in week 8.

- Forty-six faculty participated in the QEP faculty development course. Of those 46, 38 (83%) submitted a complete and peer-reviewed IBLIP.

The IBL QEP 101 End-of-Course Reflection provided an indirect measure of Goal 1 and its associated faculty learner outcomes. Most faculty indicated success in regards to implementing IBL strategies and methodologies into their classroom:

- "they liked being involved in the learning process… retention of information was better."

- I was pleased with the way the project went. I believe the students learned more about research and time management… Most of them… recognized that scholarly research was more valid than surfing the web.

- "in the book… the info was quite "boring". They learned more by researching on their own… and then cool extra bits that weren't even mentions in the book"

- "Students seemed to be more engaged in their learning from non-QEP terms."

- "I think students like the fact that they can write about something they may be interested in instead of having the topic dictated to them."

- "Engagement seems to be higher for the term. This was my second semester implementing the research project"

- "Student involvement seems to be much higher and of more interest to students… Students chose topics of interest to them and the subject matter was relevant"

- "Grades in some ways are similar BUT topical assignments and more interaction has created a better learning environment and will help them retain more information (life long learners)."

Not all faculty found IBL to be useful in the classroom, although the bulk of negative feedback appeared during semesters impacted by the pandemic:

- "Students had difficulty with the freedom of selecting their own topic to research. They seemed to need more structure than I initially provided."
- "This semester, my students seemed to hate this assignment. Most students didn't like discussion based assignments, nor did they like presenting to their classmates."
- "Some were very excited to do the assignment and found it quite enjoyable. Others felt as though they were forced to do yet another assignment. Things cannot get back to normal fast enough."
- "Students seemed to be engaged, but with the issues of COVID, work, and personal issues, seemed to prevent some presentations in class or following through the assignment."
- "Many of my students didn't have computers that worked well enough, or did not possess the skills to successfully transition to an online format, let alone handle inquiry-based learning."
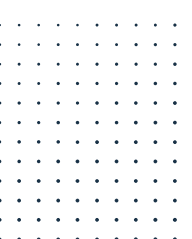
Impact on the Students

Goal 2 - Students will develop knowledge of discipline appropriate inquiry skills.

- SLO 1: Students will formulate a clear question, thesis, problem statement or hypothesis.
- SLO 2: Students will collect relevant and appropriate information or data, or identify appropriate processes.

Goal 3 - Students will apply inquiry skills from the classroom to a student-generated question or problem.

- SLO 3: Students will analyze and evaluate information, data, or processes for the purpose of addressing the question, problem, thesis, or hypothesis.
- SLO 4: Students will present their findings in a discipline appropriate manner (demonstration, presentation, research paper, etc.)

QEP SLO Rubric

	Proficient (4)	Approaching Proficiency (3)	Emerging Proficiency (2)	Novice (1)
SLO 1 Articulate and refine a question, problem, or challenge.	Articulate and refine a focused and manageable question, problem, or challenge relevant to the discipline.	Articulate a question, problem, or challenge that is generally relevant and appropriate in scope.	Articulate a question, problem, or challenge that is too narrow or general to be addressed appropriately.	Not yet able to articulate an appropriate question, problem, or challenge.
SLO 2 Gather and evaluate evidence appropriate to the inquiry.	Acquire information or data using effective, well-designed strategies; consistently use appropriate criteria to judge the relevance of the evidence.	Acquire information or data using appropriate strategies; sometimes able to judge the relevance of the evidence.	Begin to recognize and apply appropriate strategies for gathering relevant information or data.	Not yet able to gather relevant evidence appropriate to the inquiry.
SLO 3 Appropriately analyze scholarly evidence.	Consistently analyze or synthesize new and previous evidence to make important contributions to the inquiry.	Analyze or synthesize new and/or previous evidence appropriate to the inquiry.	Demonstrate a limited ability to analyze or synthesize evidence.	Not yet able to analyze or synthesize information or data.
SLO 4 Communicate findings related to the inquiry in a discipline-appropriate manner.	Clearly communicate the results of a scholarly or creative project through writing, presenting or performing, consistently employing conventions appropriate to the discipline.	Communicate knowledge from scholarly or creative project through writing, presenting, or performing, employing some conventions appropriate to the discipline.	Begin to communicate about a scholarly or creative project through writing, presenting, or performing, with some awareness of discipline conventions.	Not yet able to communicate knowledge from a scholarly or creative project.

- Faculty submitted authentic student artifacts from their courses each semester.

- The collection of student artifacts was then assessed by faculty teams using the QEP SLO rubric.

- Vernon College set its target attainment rate at 85% for each of four SLOs.

- Aggregated results of student achievement showed the highest attainment on SLOs 1 (85.6%) and 3 (85.1%), with attainment on SLO 2 (84.7%) slightly lower.

- Attainment of SLO 4 was the lowest at 84.0%, falling just below the target attainment level. SLO 4 focused on student presentation. Instructors reported students were reluctant to present or chose not to participate in the presentation process.

Responses to Pre- and Post-Surveys

Survey Question	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
	Familiar	
How familiar are you with Vernon College's Quality Enhancement Plan "Success through Inquiry"?	42.3%	55.8%
	Yes	
Have you previously participated in a course at Vernon College that emphasized inquiry or discovery?	32.3%	60.1%
(pre-) Thinking of your previous courses, … (post-) Thinking of this course, to what extent do you agree with the following?	There are Opportunities	
To what extent do you think there are opportunities for students at Vernon College to participate in activities/projects that allow the student to generate the question or problem?	70.9%	79.1%
To what extent do you think there are opportunities for students at Vernon College to participate in activities/projects that deal with questions or problems that are relevant or interesting?	71.2%	77.6%

(pre-) Thinking of your previous courses, … (post-) Thinking of this course, to what extent do you agree with the following?	Agree	
I enjoy learning about people and experiences that are different from my own	97.2%	98.8%
Skills learned in the classroom can be used to solve real-life problems	96.8%	98.2%
Learning about proper methods for gathering data or information is a valuable use of time	96.3%	97.6%
Participating in the posing of a question or problem is a valuable use of time	93.4%	95.6%
Learning about ways to gather and evaluate data or information makes me more curious about the world	89.1%	93.3%
It is fun to work on problems or questions that cannot be easily solved, or take a long time to solve	72.9%	82.7%
Participating in projects or creative activities improves the academic experience	94.7%	95.5%
Being involved in projects or creative activities can help me become better in my field	95.6%	96.4%

(pre-) Thinking of your previous courses, … (post-) Thinking of this course, to what extent have they contributed to your learning?	Contributed to My Learning	
Understanding current issues in your program/ major/career field	62.2%	69.7%
Explaining the advantages and limitations of different data/information gathering methods in your field	60.7%	67.4%
Understanding how to evaluate information/data in your field	66.7%	70.4%
Understanding the difference between personal beliefs and evidence in supporting a position or drawing conclusions	73.8%	78.7%
Career- or work-related knowledge and skills	70.0%	71.7%
Collecting appropriate data/evidence to answer a question or problem	75.1%	83.5%
Analyzing data/ information for the purpose of solving a problem or answering a question	76.2%	79.9%
Communicating well orally and/or in written form in a presentation, performance, or discussion of your work	75.3%	78.7%
Creating new ideas, solutions, or creative works based on what you learned in the course	73.1%	77.7%

What VC learned from the QEP Experience

Success Through Inquiry

- IBL has a transformative impact on both faculty and student learning.
- The direct and indirect assessment results highlight the influence of faculty researching discipline-specific IBL strategies and methodologies and the resulting change in students' perceptions of relevance and motivation.
- The QEP Team observed faculty showing vulnerability as they opened up to learning new strategies and methodologies
- The QEP team noticed that getting faculty excited about learning had a positive impact on students, other faculty, and the institution.
- It was important to foster broad-based involvement when instituting such a plan.
- Broad-based involvement offered ownership, responsibility, and collegiality amongst constituents.
- The IBL QEP built strong and lasting relationships between administration, student support staff, and faculty.
- The impact on student learning was the most important aspect of the VC *Success Through Inquiry* QEP. The performance of students in relation to the student learner outcomes met expectations (even during the struggles of the pandemic).

Any Questions?

Success Through Inquiry