**X. ASSESSMENT**

**OVERVIEW**

In our RWR initiative, Southeastern plans for assessment activities that will have, to borrow a phrase from Catherine Wehlburg, "a long-term, positive impact on the institution" ("Just Right"). In her recent article on outcomes assessment, Wehlburg argues for a balance between *not too much* and *not too little*as she advocates for an assessment paradigm that focuses on the teaching/learning process. Such a strategy, says Wehlburg, is "how we improve and enhance teaching and**learning**" (our emphasis).

Southeastern adopted WeaveONLINE® software for program assessment and planning in 2011. Since then, much time and effort has gone into developing and using this information system for purposes of cultivating institutional effectiveness. Concurrent to this adoption, the QEP Design Team began developing assessment ideas for multi-dimensional learning in 2013. At its November 5, 2013 meeting, the team established a subcommittee to discuss methods and performance criteria for measuring the QEP student outcomes. The members of this faculty subcommittee included Colleen Klein-Ezell, Chair; Sheri Hoffman; David Norwood; and Charlotte Humphries. The subcommittee determined that rubrics for evaluating RWR activities should be structured to identify specific characteristics or behaviors while, in another sense, being deliberately broad enough to allow authentic assessment by each program.

Next, QEP Coordinator Jayetta Slawson attended an assessment workshop as part of the National Society for Experiential Education Academy held in St. Petersburg, Florida, in Fall 2013. Additionally, she attended sessions on assessment at the 2014 SACSCOC tenth annual Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation held in New Orleans, Louisiana. On campus, Dr. Slawson had meetings for assessment advisement and input with Mary White, Professor of Biological Sciences and Chair of the University Academic Assessment Committee; and Josie Walker, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness.

As a result of these activities and efforts, we have developed an initial experiential-learning assessment plan. Any adjustments will be an outgrowth of patterns that emerge as we implement our RWR campaign. Assessment data will be collected by the faculty member who is responsible for the RWR experience and supplied to the Office of Experiential Learning each semester via WeaveONLINE®. The QEP Coordinator will create an annual report for distribution to the campus community for reflection and continued growth in our efforts to incorporate experiential learning as an effective strategy for improved student learning.

**ASSESSMENT STRATEGY**

The assessment strategy developed for the QEP is comprehensive, multi-faceted and flexible. The assessment plan for student learning outcomes includes direct and indirect measures including structured reflections, observed behavior, pre/post surveys and locally-developed rubrics. The assessment of the effectiveness of the QEP at the institutional level will include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the University-administered Alumni Survey, and the analysis of data collected for each student learning outcome.

A holistic Master Rubric was developed by the QEP Assessment subcommittee to identify and assess common characteristics of all Real-World Ready activities while accommodating the variety of discipline-specific activities. Elements of the Master Rubric ensure that all students are meeting a common set of expectations for each student learning outcome but are deliberately broad to allow for interpretation by the programs that will use them. Faculty at the degree program level will use the holistic Master Rubric to develop clearly stated scoring guidelines or analytic rubrics within the discipline to render reliable ratings. It is within these analytic rubrics that programs have individual latitude for meeting the needs and requirements of their specific disciplines.

Although participating academic programs will devise experiential-learning opportunities that are authentic to the discipline, assessment practices will include the use of the analytic rubrics developed from the holistic Master Rubric to measure the four QEP student learning outcomes (SLOs) in three areas: the experience, the work and the behavior. The table below summarizes the direct and indirect measures for assessing each student-learning outcome (SLO) within these three areas and is followed by a more detailed description of the assessment activities.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Summary of QEP Assessment Activities** | | | | | | |
|  |  | **Direct Measures** | | **Indirect Measures** | | |
| **Area of Assessment** | **QEP Student Learning Outcomes** | Course Embedded | Community Based | Student pre/post survey | NSSE | Employer Survey |
| *The activity in which the student can connect and apply academic work in a setting authentic to the discipline.* | SLO 1: Student will apply professional (discipline-specific) knowledge in an authentic setting. | X | X | X | X | X |
| *The performance, act, or product by which the student communicates information on the experience in a method in line with the discipline (such as an oral presentation, an essay, a video, a graphic design, etc.).* | SLO 2: Student will demonstrate effective communication in a professionally-authentic form. | X |  | X |  | X |
| SLO 3: Student will reflect on the work, identifying strengths and weaknesses of product and process, and deriving directions for future efforts. | X |  | X |  |  |
| *The actions, conduct and performance of the student throughout the course and the RWR experience.* | SLO 4: Students’ professional behaviors reflect a commitment to quality work. | X | X | X |  | X |

Table 12: Summary of Assessment Activities

***ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES: Student learning outcomes***

Direct measures of the student learning outcomes include both course embedded and community-based assessments. Course Embedded assessments refer to those activities directed by the faculty member(s) teaching the course aligned with the real-world experience. Community-based assessments are performed by the site supervisor (when applicable) of the real-world experience. As indicated above, analytic rubrics within the discipline will be used to evaluate student writing (course embedded) and observed behavior (course embedded and community based). These discipline-specific rubrics will align with the Master Rubric and reflect these assessment categories: Connections to Experience, Professional Performance, Integrated Communication, Self-Assessment, and Student Behavior.

Assessment within these three areas is described in the following outline.

1. **The Experience** refers to the activity in which the student can connect and apply academic work in a setting authentic to the discipline.

*SLO 1: Students will apply professional (discipline-specific) knowledge in an authentic setting.*

**Suggested Assessment Activity:**

1. Students will describe how they applied knowledge from their curricula in the authentic setting through a written response to a reflection prompt. All students will respond to the same prompt with submissions due at the end of the RWR experience and before the presentation of the communication activity (i.e. the ‘Work’). Reflections will be submitted to the faculty supervisor and evaluated using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Connections to Experience dimension of the Master Rubric. Evaluation will be done on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 representing ‘misses expectations’ and 3 representing ‘exceeds expectations’. The achievement target for this measure is that 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 1.

*Sample Prompt for SLO 1: Describe your Real-World Ready Experience. Explain how you applied the knowledge acquired in your academic course(s) to this experience. Provide specific examples of connections made and insights gained. Analyze the impact of your RWR experience on your academic understanding and your preparation for your chosen profession.*

1. Through observed behavior, site supervisors will complete an evaluation of each student using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Professional Performance dimension of the Master Rubric. Site supervisors will complete the evaluations and submit to the faculty member within one week of the end of the experience. The achievement target for this measure is that 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 1.
2. **The Work** refers to the performance/act/product by which the student communicates information on the experience in a method in line with the discipline (such as an oral presentation, an essay, a video, a graphic design, etc.).

*SLO 2: Student will demonstrate effective communication in a professionally authentic form.*

*SLO 3: Student will reflect on the work, identifying strengths and weaknesses of product and process, and deriving directions for future efforts.*

**Suggested Assessment Activity:**

1. The faculty supervisor evaluates ‘the work’ (the discipline appropriate method by which the student communicates information on the experience) using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Integrated Communication dimension of the Master Rubric. Evaluation will be done on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 representing ‘misses expectations’ and 3 representing ‘exceeds expectations’. The achievement target for this measure is that 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 2.
2. Students will reflect on ‘the work’ via a written response to a reflection prompt. All students will respond to the same prompt with submissions due after the presentation of the communication activity (i.e. the ‘Work’). Reflections will be submitted to the faculty supervisor and evaluated using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Self-Assessment dimension of the Master Rubric. Evaluation will be done on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 representing ‘misses expectations’ and 3 representing ‘exceeds expectations’. The achievement target for this measure is that 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 3.

*Sample Prompt for SLO 3: Explain how your ‘work’ embodies the culmination of your coursework and RWR experience and serves as an appropriate communication. Examine both the development and presentation of your work and expand on strengths and weaknesses. Articulate the value added for both you and your audience/reader.*

1. **The Behavior** refers to the actions, conduct and performance of the student throughout the course and the RWR experience.

*SLO 4: Students’ professional behaviors reflect a commitment to quality work.*

**Suggested Assessment Activity:**

1. The faculty supervisor evaluates the professional behavior of the student throughout the course and RWR experience using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Student Behavior dimension of the Master Rubric. Evaluation will be done on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 representing ‘misses expectations’ and 3 representing ‘exceeds expectations’. The achievement target for this measure is 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 4.
2. Site supervisors (when applicable) evaluate the student’s professional behavior in the real-world setting using the discipline-specific rubric created for the Student Behavior dimension of the Master Rubric. Site supervisors will complete the evaluations and submit to the faculty member within one week of the end of the experience. The achievement target for this measure is 80% of the students will meet or exceed expectations for SLO 4.

In addition to the activities described in the outline above, student responses to a Pre/Post Experience Survey will enable us to assess student learning by using a ‘value added’ approach. The Pre/Post Experience Survey instrument has not yet been identified but will be selected (or created) with the guidance of the Office of Institutional Research and the Assistant Vice-President of Institutional Effectiveness. Students enrolled in QEP-designated course sections will complete the survey at the beginning and end of the course. A positive change in mean scores (e.g., a 5% increase) for each student learning outcome area will be the established criterion for success for this assessment.

The diagram below illustrates the flow of suggested assessment activities.

Figure 6: Flow of Assessment Activities

***ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES: Effectiveness of QEP***

As described previously, faculty at the degree program level will develop analytic rubrics based on the holistic Master Rubric to assess student learning within a specific discipline. Data will be collected by the faculty member, compiled in aggregate and submitted to the Office of Experiential Learning. The QEP Coordinator will use the Master Rubric to view program data (holistically) across disciplines, compile results and record in the QEP entity of WeaveONLINE®. Evaluation will be done on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 representing ‘misses expectations’ and 3 representing ‘exceeds expectations’. The achievement target for this measure is that 80% of all students in QEP-designated real-world experiences will meet or exceed expectations in all four of the student learning outcomes.

Our QEP will enhance the academic climate for student learning by providing authentic learning opportunities that connect academic courses with real-world experiences, thereby better preparing students for life in the real-world. So in addition to attainment of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) reported by faculty in QEP-designated course sections, effectiveness of the QEP will be monitored through a periodic audit of the SLOs posted by each degree program in WeaveONLINE®. As the campus culture for enhancing student learning through experiential-learning opportunities evolves, the number of degree SLOs that align with QEP SLOs should increase. The Fall 2014 audit will serve as the baseline.

As indicated previously in the Final Topic Selection section of this report, data from the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Southeastern’s 2011 Employer Survey helped confirm the selection of Real-World Ready as our QEP. Data from the most recent administration of these surveys will be used as a baseline for helping measure the effectiveness of the QEP.

The NSSE survey is administered to freshmen and seniors every two years. The data collected by the survey include students’ self-reports of quantity and frequency of engagement in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. During the QEP implementation, a positive trend in mean scores for the related NSSE questions will be the established criterion for success for this assessment.

Southeastern’s Employer Survey is administered every other year as a follow-up to the Alumni Survey. As part of the Alumni Survey, alumni are asked to provide information about their employers. The employers identified in the Alumni Survey are sent an Employer Survey. The Employer Survey addresses three specific areas: what skills or knowledge are important to a graduate’s job; what the graduate’s skill level is in the identified areas; and what attributes employers believe are important when they hire a new employee. The survey also asks some general questions concerning the graduate’s overall preparedness and the type of organization for which the graduate works. The questions related to Communication Skills and Professional Traits and Attitudes were identified as significant to the QEP. A positive trend in mean scores for the related Employer Survey questions will be the established criterion for success for this assessment.

The NSSE and Employer Survey data will be collected and analyzed by Institutional Research and disseminated to the QEP Coordinator and Real-World Ready Advisory Team for comparison with baseline data. The QEP Coordinator will record the data in the QEP entity of WeaveONLINE®. Results will be shared with faculty and all QEP stakeholders and used as affirmation of QEP effectiveness or impetus for improvement.

**DEFINING SUCCESS OF THE QEP**

It has been documented in the experiential-learning literature and in the review of literature that engaging students in experiential-learning activities does indeed improve student learning. Our Real-World Ready initiative will also improve the **quality** of student learning by enhancing the academic climate so that more and better experiential-learning opportunities are available to students. Our RWR initiative will provide students the opportunity to apply the discipline in a professional context by integrating an experiential-learning component into the curricula for those degree programs without an existing opportunity AND by enhancing current experiential-learning components. In addition to assessment of our four student-learning outcomes, our measures of success will include environmental indicators that reveal an increase in the quality and quantity of RWR experiences.

***IMPROVING THE QUANTITY OF EXPERIENTIAL-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES***

Environmental indicators of success for increasing the quantity of experiential-learning opportunities are as follows.

* Increase the number of students engaged in experiential learning
* Increase the number of course sections that include experiential-learning opportunities
* Increase the number of degree programs that offer experiential learning

For purposes of tracking increases in the number of students who engage in experiential learning, the number of course sections that include experiential learning, and the number of degree programs that offer experiential learning, each program will complete an academic year-end survey and return to the Office of Experiential Learning. The QEP Coordinator will compile this data and, in conversation with the Division of Academic Affairs, set new and increased targets for the following academic year. The new campus targets will be communicated to all programs each summer.

***IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EXPERIENTIAL-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES***

Indicators of success for increasing the quality of experiential-learning opportunities are as follows.

* Develop faculty expertise in experiential learning
* Align designated QEP course sections with the campus definition, guidelines and SLOs
* Increase in the number of degree programs that align program outcomes with the RWR student-learning outcomes
* Increase student satisfaction with experiential-learning opportunities

As described previously, the QEP Coordinator will work with the Center for Faculty Excellence to offer a number of faculty development workshops in the area of experiential learning. An assessment questionnaire will be distributed after all workshops and will include questions regarding satisfaction with the training, as well as content questions to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

Establishing a common understanding of what constitutes experiential learning and agreed upon definitions/guidelines for the depth of student involvement in the experiential-learning activity is essential to ensure the quality and consistency of RWR experiences across disciplines. The application process for the Faculty Grant initiative will ensure that QEP designated course sections align with the campus definition, guidelines and student-learning outcomes in the QEP proposal.

WeaveONLINE® audits will be conducted at the end of Years 3 and 5 to measure the increase in the number of degree programs that align program outcomes with the RWR student-learning outcomes. Data will be compared with baseline data established in Year 0.

To measure student satisfaction with experiential learning, a pre/post survey will be designed to align with questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), such as, “How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in…Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills.” This survey will be given to all students engaged in QEP designated course sections. Results will be compared to general results obtained from the campus-wide administration of NSSE in Spring 2016, 2018 and 2020.

**ASSESSMENT TIMELINE**

While a general timetable for “big-picture” timeline targets of the QEP was provided in Section VII of the QEP, the timeline below provides a summary of and schedule for assessment activities.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ASSESSMENT TIMELINE** | | | |
| **Year 0**  C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg | | Fall 2014 | * Campus discussions of assessment strategy continue. Conversations include pilot faculty, the QEP Coordinator, the Assistant Vice-President for Institutional Effectiveness and members of the QEP Design Team. * Draft rubrics are created for each student learning outcome for use in the Spring 2015 pilot (e.g. adaptations of AAC&U VALUE Rubrics). Rubrics align with the holistic Master Rubric created by the QEP Assessment subcommittee. * Draft pre/post student survey is created for Spring 2015 pilot. * WeaveONLINE® audit of student learning outcomes (SLOs) for degree programs to establish baseline for number of degree SLOs that align with QEP SLOs. |
| Spring 2015 | * Pilot course sections assess **The Experience**, **The Work** and **The Behavior** using the draft rubrics. * Pilot course sections implement a draft of the pre/post survey. * Campus discussions of assessment strategy continue as draft instruments (e.g. pre-post survey) are shared and reviewed. Additional modifications are pending pilot results. * Pilot faculty report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. |
| Summer 2015 | * The QEP Coordinator compiles the data and writes a report. Data collected through the application of the rubrics will include individual student ratings for each rubric category. Statistics to be generated include number and percentage of ratings levels within each rating category (e.g. 37 students or 88% Exceeded Expectations in the Connections to Discipline category). * The QEP Coordinator distributes report and discussions are held with Provost, RWR Advisory Council, pilot faculty, AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, etc. Existing implementation plans are modified as needed and targets are established to ensure we are moving towards a successful result. |
| **Year 1**  C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg | | Fall 2015 | * Assessment strategy and pre-post survey is finalized based on improvements and modifications suggested by pilot results and campus conversations. * Assessment plans are ready for use in the first round of QEP-designated course sections scheduled for Spring 2016. |
| Spring 2016 | * Begin first round of QEP-designated course sections. * The Office of Institutional Research administers the National Survey for Student Engagement and Southeastern’s Employer Survey. Results are used to determine baseline data. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. |
| Summer  2016 | * The QEP Coordinator compiles the data, writes and distributes report. Assessment instruments and implementation plans are modified as needed based on results/ improvements suggested by Year 1 report and campus conversations. |
| **Year 2**  C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg | Fall 2016 | * Begin delivery of second round of QEP-designated course sections. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Spring 2017 | * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Summer 2017 | * The QEP Coordinator compiles the data, writes and distributes report. Campus conversations determine needed modifications to implementation plans for Year 3. | |
| **Year 3**  **C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg** | Fall 2017 | * Begin delivery of third round of QEP-designated course sections. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Spring 2018 | * The Office of Institutional Research administers the National Survey for Student Engagement. Results are compared with baseline data. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Summer  2018 | * The QEP Coordinator compiles the data, writes and distributes report. Campus conversations determine needed modifications to implementation plans for Year 4. * WeaveONLINE® audit of degree SLOs that align with QEP SLOs is repeated and compared with baseline. | |
| **Year 4**  **C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg** | Fall 2018 | * Begin delivery of fourth round of QEP-designated course sections. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Spring 2019 | * The Office of Institutional Research administers Southeastern’s Employer Survey. Results are compared with baseline data. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Summer  2019 | * The QEP Coordinator compiles the data, writes and distributes report. Campus conversations determine needed modifications to implementation plans for Year 5. | |
| **Year 5**  **C:\Users\UserSELU\Downloads\qep_logo_sheet.jpg** | Fall 2019 | * Begin delivery of fifth round of QEP-designated course sections. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Spring 2020 | * The Office of Institutional Research administers the National Survey for Student Engagement. Results are compared with baseline and Spring 2018 data. * Faculty teaching QEP-designated course sections report assessment results to QEP Coordinator in aggregate form. Faculty also submit an action plan which includes analysis of results and plans for future improvements. | |
| Summer  2020 | * WeaveONLINE® audit of degree SLOs that align with QEP SLOs is repeated and compared with baseline and Year 3 audit. * QEP Coordinator prepares and distributes the QEP Impact Report. | |

Table 13: Assessment Timeline

**SUMMARY**

Constructing a plan for assessing the QEP means little if we are not prepared to use the information to improve student learning or, as Mary J. Allen puts it, to turn “raw data into useful information” (131). The QEP assessment plans reflect room for common understanding and process evolution, and provide a basis for measurement across the spectrum of Southeastern programs. Over time, these assessments will serve to determine success of programs and of efforts to improve student performance in those areas.