

# The QEP and Reaffirmation for ULM

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# SACS and Reaffirmation: Old Process vs. New Process

- Previous Process and “Must” Statements for Compliance
- Discontinuity between reaffirmation visits:  
Reports Go on Shelf
- New Process and Continuous Assessment

# Continuous Assessment

## Compliance Certification

2.5 “Ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services...” [Core Requirement]

3.4.1 “Each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administrations, and (b) establishes and evaluated program and learning outcomes”  
[Comprehensive Standard]

Go to: <http://www.sacs.org>

# Continuous Assessment

- The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is the final (twelfth) Core Requirement.
- Unlike the other core requirements within the compliance certification, the QEP is a plan for the future, even if certain elements are already in place.
- 2.12: “The institution has developed an acceptable QEP and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.”

# The Unique QEP

At the time of the on-site review, the Commission expects an institution to have in place all components that are characteristic to any workable plan:

- (1) A focused topic (directly related to student learning),
- (2) Clear goals
- (3) Adequate resources in place to implement the plan,
- (4) Evaluation strategies for determining the achievement of goals
- (5) Evidence of community development and support of the plan.”  
(SACS Website)

# The Unique QEP

- Unique because plan tied to University's mission and strategic plan
- Unique because plan's assessments tied to institutional needs and learning objectives
- Unique because of involvement of campus and community constituencies
- Unique because no two QEPs are truly alike

# Campus Involvement

- The ideas must flow UP from the constituencies, NOT DOWN from the leadership, even if leadership makes final decisions on project development
- Enhanced Learning, not bigger parking lots
- **Integration** of Academic and Support Units
- Unsung Heroes: Tutoring, FYEP and Learning Communities, Librarians, Writing Center, Advising, Counseling
- Sites: <http://www.ulm.edu/sacs2009>

# ULM NEEDS QEP!

- Projects that reinforce writing, reading, numeracy, and critical thinking
- Projects that enhance technology in the classroom, including access to wireless technologies and video production, for freshman-only courses, online program delivery (CALL), and course redesign (National Center for Academic Transformation)
- Projects that explore the role of advising in the learning process (in whole or in part)
- Projects that institutionalize the FYE Program or integrate Summer Reading Program into larger program of assessment
- Projects that integrate student activities and student learning

# QEP Topics

Lesson: Don't Trap Yourself Into Doing More Work Than Necessary

- East Tennessee State University: “The **ETSU QEP** supports the university's aim of creating ‘a student-centered community of learning’ that encourages people “to achieve their full potential.”
- Texas A&M University—Kingsville: “The Quality Enhancement Plan (**QEP**) at **Texas A&M University—Kingsville seeks to improve student success through civic, professional, or research engagement at the course level.**”

# QEP Topics: Problems with Complexity and Suitability

## Lesson: Don't Choose What You Can't Do

**Texas A&M University:** “The SACS accreditation process, however, facilitated focus for our **QEP**—that of enhancing excellence in learning environments. Furthermore, the assessment of excellence in our **QEP** is based on student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes refer to changes in student performance as a result of learning experiences offered by the **University**. The four themes that form the foundation of the **QEP** were chosen because of their importance in the ongoing academic evolution of the institution.

- *Research.* As one of the two flagship doctoral-extensive public universities in the state, **Texas A&M University** recognizes its responsibility as a research institution.
- *Diversity.* To become a top-10 public institution, **Texas A&M University** must improve its record of attracting and retaining a more diverse student body and faculty. The choice of diversity as a **QEP** theme is designed to heighten awareness in all units about the priority placed on this issue.
- *Internationalization.* **Texas A&M University** understands that its graduates must be able to work in a rapidly changing environment, with skills that are suited for an increasingly global society.
- *Technology.* Students in all fields of study must now develop competencies in appropriate technologies to be successful at the **University** and in a technology-dependent workplace.”

# QEP Topics

Lesson: If You Say It, Do It

- Texas A&M International University: “The purpose of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) is to improve the quality of undergraduate writing and to develop a campus culture that not only fosters writing as the logical product of coursework or program requirements, but regards writing as an important exploratory tool that students must embrace if they are to be successful professionals and lifelong learners.”

# QEP Topic Areas for ULM

- Technology Infrastructure
- Online Pedagogies
- Writing Across the Disciplines
- Service Learning and Community Involvement
- First Year Experience Self-Study
- Student Learning and Campus Microenvironments:
  - The Write Place
  - MRC
- Service Learning and Program Development
- Academic Support Services Integration
- Core Curriculum Redesign that institutionalizes FYE
- Student Discovery Sites Embedded in Course and Program Curricula, such as with FaceBook or Second Life
- Cultural Diversity and Learning Enhancements in Course and Program Curricula

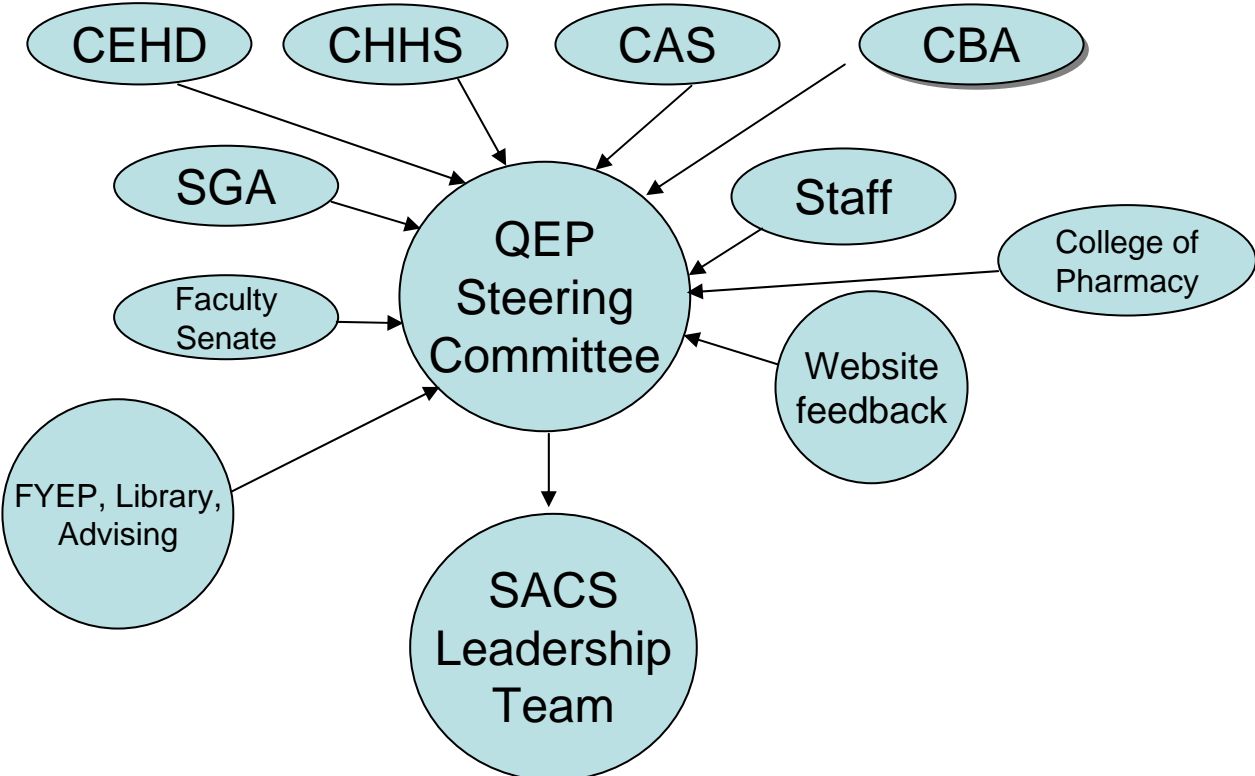
# Factors in Selecting a QEP Topic

- Have you already invested resources into an area that is likely to grow or become increasingly important?
- Do you want to ensconce existing program pieces into a unified program?
- Do you REALLY have the money to spend on the selected topic?
- Do your QEP committees or teams understand the need not only to select a topic but consider the accompanying assessments?
- Does the proposed topic SUIT our institution?

# THE QEP at ULM: Process of Gleaning Topics

- Presentations on the QEP by Jeffrey Cass
- Formation of Ad Hoc Committee from each college to weigh QEP possibilities (also SGA, staff, open forum)
- Compilation of Suggestions from website (direct) Go to: <http://www.ulm.edu/sacs2009/qep.html>
- QEP Steering Committee to evaluate suggested topics then send recommendations to SACS Executive Committee
- SACS Executive Committee will render decision, with consent of Provost and President, about the QEP topic
- QEP Steering Committee begins process of collecting internal data and external research
- Ad Campaign and Drafting of QEP

# QEP FLOW CHART: WHERE THE IDEAS GO...



# After the QEP Selection

- Research, research, research—Creating a QEP Master's Thesis and the Theoretical Mainstream for the QEP
- Drafts must go to various campus groups for review
- QEP Steering Committee will have to find consultants (outside Louisiana) who will review final draft and make their recommendations
- Assessments must match identified learning outcomes
- The assessment must reveal how the entire QEP is doing, not merely pieces of it. The sum of the assessment parts does not equal an assessment whole.

# Consider Your SACS Audiences

- Three audiences: 1) off-site team, 2) on-site team, 3) SACS Central Committee
- Get the compliance certification right the first time, and the on-site team will only focus on the QEP
- Follow any on-site team recommendations *to the letter*
- SACS Central Committee will view your responses to the on-site team, so they will not necessarily know everything that the other teams know. Don't provide new or unnecessary information; don't cave in to the dreaded SACS syndrome —EC—  
Explanation Compulsion

# Conclusion

The QEP is:

- 1) Focused on student learning
- 2) Supported across University units
- 3) Tied to the University's Mission and Strategic Plan
- 4) Connected to the institution's ongoing assessment processes
- 5) Based on current research in the field
- 6) Funded appropriately and reasonably

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