Higher Learning Commission:

Quality Initiative Status Report

Submitted by: Thomas Underwood

Date: April 29, 2013

The Washburn University HLC Quality Initiative was established as a three year process for the identification and implementation of a University-wide project to help Washburn improve the quality of the institution with particular focus on "Excellence in Education." This was planned as a four year initiative with the first year as project selection and the following three years as implementation and evaluation. Approximately $300,000 has been committed to the initiative.

Themes

The theme "Excellence in Education" was identified as a core or essential element to drive the QI process. Within this theme, three sub-themes were identified:

- Student Transitions: This theme encouraged exploration of how Washburn can prepare and support students to effectively deal with the obstacles to effective learning.
- Faculty Transitions: This theme encouraged a process to develop and sustain effective classroom teaching habits, facilitate ways of exchanging effective pedagogies, support recurring workshops where external experts present ideas, develop video materials, and assess prior learning effectively.
- Technology Competence: This theme suggested three aspects of technology pertaining to learning: delivery of educational components, providing access to technology found in various professions to fully prepare entrance into work environments, and information literacy and effectively teaching students.

A description of the general and three sub-themes was published on the QI web page and referenced in subsequent communications (*see Appendix A: QI Themes and Sub-themes, pp. 1-2*).

QI Committee

Thomas Underwood, Assistant Dean of Academic Outreach, was identified to serve as the Quality Initiative Coordinator to manage the process. In addition, a group of individuals representing both academic and administrative units were recruited to serve on the QI Committee to assist with the review process. These individuals include:

Michael McQuire
Dean of Honors/
Associate Professor of Psychology
College of Arts and Sciences

Brad Clark
Instructor, Computer Repair and Networking
Washburn Institute of Technology

Louella Moore
Professor of Accounting
School of Business

Sean Bird
Assistant Dean
Mabee Library

Aida Alaka
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs/Professor
School of Law

John Haverty
Assistant Director
Information Technology Services

Michelle Shipley
Prog. Dir. of Health Inform. Tech. /Assistant Professor of Allied Health
School of Applied Studies

James Barraclough
Career Services Specialist
Career Services

Bobbe Mansfield
Associate Professor
School of Nursing

John Cummings
Assistant Director
Student Recreation and Wellness Center

Process Framework

The process for solicitation and review of employee initiated ideas was in two phases:

Initial Proposals

Employees were invited to submit a brief initial proposal (*see Appendix B: Initial Proposal Form, p. 3*) that identified a problem or opportunity as it related to one of the themes. The initial proposal was not intended to outline a specific plan or solution. This online proposal format included:

- Title - Brief working title that captures the essence of the problem or opportunity (10 word maximum).
- Problem/Opportunity Statement - One or two sentence description of the problem or opportunity with focus on specific, observable indicators. Statement was not to infer cause or solutions (50 word maximum).
- Proposal Themes - Selection of one quality initiative theme for the proposal with description of how the problem or opportunity related to the identified theme (200 word maximum).
- Benefits - Description of realistic and measurable desired outcomes, both tangible and intangible (200 word maximum).
- Scope - Description of the scope or impact on the institution as a whole with specification if the scope was focused on specific areas, units or departments (200 word maximum).
- Stake Holders - Listing of all persons/groups, both internal and external to the University, that have an interest or position in the issue.
- Team Members - Listing of individuals who will work on development of full proposal and/or may work towards project implementation.

Twenty-one initial proposals were submitted by the November 1, 2012 deadline. The proposals were reviewed independently by each member of the QI Committee. The proposals were reviewed based on the extent in which the initial proposal form areas were addressed with acknowledgement of strengths as well as areas that were missing or unclear. The independent reviews were merged into one document per proposal with edits by Dr. Underwood to eliminate redundancies. The QI Committee had the opportunity to review and revise these documents before being shared with the applicants.

Five themes or sub-areas were identified in the proposals (*see Appendix C: Initial Proposals: Themes and Sub-themes, p. 4*).

- Professional Development / Teaching Excellence
- Technology for Learning Enhancement
- Student Support
- Community Engagement
- Scholarly Support

Proposals were listed by area and posted on the QI web page. Also posted on the web page were the results of discussions by faculty and staff (*see Appendix D: Faculty and Staff Discussion Results, p. 5-11*) as were all the submitted initial proposals. All information made available was intended to inform applicants in development of a high quality comprehensive proposal.

Comprehensive Proposals

Guidelines for the comprehensive proposal were posted on the QI web page (*see Appendix E: Comprehensive Proposal Guidelines, pp. 12-14*). The proposal was to include three parts: narrative, time line, and budget. These parts were allocated a point value for a final possible score of 100 points:

- Narrative
  - Cover Page – Title and individuals involved in proposal development.
  - Overview – Brief description of initiative.
  - Scope and Significance (25 points)
    - Rationale and evidence regarding the nature of the problem or opportunity and its relevance at this time.
    - Alignment with the University mission and vision.
    - Potential for significant impact on the institution and its academic core.
    - Potential to improve and sustain institutional and educational quality, with particular focus on one of the three quality initiative sub-themes.
  - Goals and Objectives (25 points)
    - Specified purpose and goals reflective of scope and significance.
    - Intended outcomes with measurable objectives and milestones.
    - Process for evaluating progress,
    - Comprehensive plan or project design.
  - Evidence of Commitment and Capacity (25 points)
    - Commitment of internal and external stakeholders.
    - Identification of necessary resources (human, financial, technical, other) and alignment to implementation plan and

timeline, including individuals committed to serve on project team.
- Plan for integration and sustainability.
- Anticipated obstacles and capacity to respond.

- Project Time Line (10 points) - Various tasks and estimated completion date over the three year duration that are consistent with stated goals and objectives, and reflect a realistic implementation plan.
- Budget (15 points) – To determine cost estimates only; selected proposal to develop final budget in partnership with the Finance Office. Budget was to be submitted in two parts:

  - Detail Worksheet - Item, calculations, and cost per each year.
  - Narrative - Description of every category expense listed in the detail worksheet.

Comprehensive proposals were due March 25, 2013 and three comprehensive proposals were submitted. The QI Committee independently reviewed, scored, and provided comment on the three proposals. Scores by each reviewer as well as the average of all scores were provided to the committee in a meeting held April 11, 2013 where the proposals and reviews were discussed. Reviewers were given the opportunity to revise scores for a final report sent to Dr. Randy Pembrook, Vice-President of Academic Affairs (*see Appendix F: QI Proposal Review Scores, pp. 15-16, and Appendix G: QI Committee Review and Recommendations, pp. 17-19*).

Communications

Communications to the University regarding the QI initiative has been multi-faceted. An all faculty and staff e-mail was sent on September 24, 2012 by Dr. Pembrook, VPAA, informing the University of the HLC Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Initiative (QI). On October 4, 2012 an e-mail was sent to all faculty and staff by Dr. Underwood again introducing the QI and encouraging employees to consider ideas that were innovative, collaborative, and would have broad impact, and to submit a brief initial proposal via an online form on the QI web page. E-mail reminders were sent out October 25, 2012 and November 1, 2012.

The web page provided information about the initiative and the processes plan for project selection. As previously indicated in this report, the initial proposals

were available for open viewing due to posting on the page and were available for non-restricted viewing.

Two open meetings were held in October 2012 to introduce both the Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Initiative (QI) processes.

Faculty discussion sessions and staff discussion sessions were held in November and December 2012. These discussions provided an opportunity to again introduce the QI project, provide an overview of the key themes from the initial proposals, and to solicit input that may help inform the comprehensive proposals. Four to five small group discussions focused on two themes derived from the initial proposals. These discussions were facilitated by the QI Committee and followed an appreciative inquiry or strengths approach where the focus was on positive examples and available resources. Small group report-outs were provided per topic which was documented on easel pads. Each topic was then discussed in a facilitated large group discussion with additional comments documented. There results of these discussions were posted on the QI web page (*see Appendix D: Faculty and Staff Discussion Results, p. 5-11*).