

Executive Summary

In compliance with SACS Core Requirement 12 for maintaining accreditation, Georgia College & State University (GC&SU) has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) focused on student learning. This plan is consistent with the goals of GC&SU's mission and with the guidelines established by the Commission on Colleges (COC) in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*.

This report presents a full explanation of the QEP that has been approved through governance and adopted at GC&SU. Prior to the detailed plan, this report provides information about the university's goals and pursuits as well as about the process used to develop the plan. This discussion provides a context necessary for full appreciation of the QEP.

There are three sections to this contextual discussion. The first part defines the plan's theme and purpose.

The second part introduces the reader to GC&SU, explaining the institution's recent transformation from a regional state university to a public liberal arts university. It is important to understand that GC&SU's ongoing commitment to fully realizing its public liberal arts mission forms the foundation for the QEP.

The third part explains how and why GC&SU's QEP developed as it did. Because GC&SU is among the first institutions to develop a quality enhancement plan as a requirement for reaffirmation of accreditation and because GC&SU strives for participatory, bottom-up management, development of the QEP initiatives followed a meandering, but worthwhile path. Because the process has proved valuable, it is discussed in this contextual section.

The plan itself provides the body of this report. It identifies endeavors that will be implemented to address six initiatives. As is required by SACS, the plan demonstrates that each initiative is based on analysis of empirical data, as well as study of best practices. Student-learning outcomes are also identified for each initiative, as well as the means for assessing those outcomes. For each of the endeavors that have been developed as part of the initiatives, the leadership is designated and analysis is provided of resource allocation needs and a time line for implementation.

Following the report are two appendices. Since the QEP is a continuation of the university's efforts to institute endeavors that will enhance its mission, an overview of currently existing programs and policies is presented in table form with these appendices. Appendix A focuses on existing programs addressing mission-related learning in the first year. Appendix B shows existing programs addressing mission-related learning throughout the undergraduate years.

Introduction to the QEP

The description of GC&SU's QEP which follows shows that it adheres to the SACS guidelines. It is focused on the long-term improvement of student learning. Student learning is defined broadly and in a way consistent with the University's mission as a public liberal arts university.

In the vision statement of its mission, GC&SU declares that it "seeks to endow its graduates with passion for achievement, lifelong curiosity, and exuberance for learning." To this end, the faculty and staff are "dedicated to challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond."

Furthermore, as a liberal arts institution, GC&SU defines learning broadly. As its mission principles explain, while graduates are "well prepared for careers or advanced study," they have also been "instilled with exceptional qualities of mind and character." GC&SU "seeks to provide communities and employers with graduates who exhibit professionalism, responsibility, service, leadership, and integrity." (see mission: <http://www.gcsu.edu/GCSU/gen/mission.html>)

GC&SU has identified behaviors necessary for success in college and life afterward, which it expects students to develop and master. It expresses these behaviors as its "Expectations of Students," declaring that GC&SU students will do the following:

1. Set their own personal development goals and take responsibility for their own learning;
2. Be prepared to learn and to be intellectually challenged;
3. Strive for excellence in their studies and seek to achieve high academic expectations in all of their courses;
4. Acquire an inquisitive mind; respect for human diversity and individuality; a sense of civic and global responsibility; sound ethical principles; effective writing, speaking and quantitative skills; and a healthy lifestyle;
5. Be meaningfully engaged in and involved in the campus community;
6. Take full advantage of opportunities to develop and implement career plans. (see expectations: http://www.gcsu.edu/student_affairs/Student_Handbook/expectations/expectations.html)

The University shares these expectations with students explicitly from their first experience as GC&SU students during summer orientation, and it continues to do so throughout the first year. Furthermore, over the past few years, the University has implemented numerous programs and activities to encourage student excellence and to facilitate student development with respect to these expectations. However, after the first year, curricular design and student-life programming are not clearly focused on developing these behaviors for success.

The University wishes to continue this emphasis throughout the students' undergraduate years. To that end, GC&SU has developed a quality enhancement plan that will enhance undergraduate student development of these expected behaviors. **Thus, GC&SU's Quality Enhancement Plan is to better fulfill its educational mission.**

The Foundation for the QEP

As an institution that has been in the process of transformation for most of the past decade, GC&SU has been extremely cognizant of the context within which it strives to achieve its goals.

History of GC&SU's Transformation

In 1996, the University System of Georgia engaged its thirty-four institutions in a comprehensive mission-review process. Georgia College was ultimately selected to serve as the public liberal arts university for the state of Georgia. Its central location, rich liberal-arts heritage as the state women's college, and its demonstrated commitment to raising admissions standards to ensure student success were factors in this selection. Currently, as the state's public liberal arts university, GC&SU seeks to provide the academic quality and "feel" of a small private liberal arts college and yet be affordable as a public institution with 5,500 students offering forty majors.

Mission and Goals

For the past seven years, administrators, faculty, and staff of Georgia College & State University have been working toward one goal: making the principles and goals of its new mission a reality. In 1997, the campus community engaged in a year-long discussion, which centered on the questions, "What does our new liberal arts mission mean to the University?" and "What does it mean to be a student-centered community?" Planning sessions and retreats were geared toward defining the liberal arts mission and identifying the following strategic goals:

- To engage the University in creating a learning environment to accomplish its liberal arts mission;
- To develop attitudes among administration, faculty, students, and staff that foster trust and respect;
- To promote intellectual excellence in faculty and students;
- To enhance student centeredness; and
- To link resources to the mission of the University.

GC&SU's mission vision statement, principles, strategic goals, and academic agenda emerged from these discussions. The GC&SU vision statement and principles, which were approved through governance, were duplicated on plastic wallet-sized cards and distributed to all faculty and staff. This strategy playfully reinforced the very serious role our ideals were to play in all of our planning.

The vision statement of GC&SU's mission reads:

As the state's designated public liberal arts university, Georgia College & State University is committed to combining the educational experiences typical of esteemed private liberal arts colleges with the affordability of public higher education. GC&SU is a residential learning community that emphasizes undergraduate education and offers selected graduate

programs. The faculty is dedicated to challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond. GC&SU seeks to endow its graduates with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning.

Status Changes

The Board of Regents has recognized that an increase of faculty, particularly in liberal arts and sciences, would be necessary to achieve the smaller classes and variety of liberal arts programs needed to fulfill the new mission. Through a special funding initiative to support the mission, GC&SU has increased its tenure-track lines by 33% since 1997. It has also recognized GC&SU's need to expand facilities. Over \$100 million in construction projects are more tripling the library's capacity and increasing campus housing.

In September 2000, the Chancellor reiterated his support for GC&SU's liberal arts mission when he discussed the proposal to the Board of Regents to allow GC&SU to have a tuition differential to reflect its unique mission and then increased it to that of the flagship universities from its previous tuition category of state universities. Currently GC&SU tuition schedule is very close to that of the state research universities.

The vision and leadership of the university's administrators, coupled with the talent and commitment of its faculty and staff, have transformed GC&SU's mission goals into a reality. In 1999, GC&SU made a significant leap when *U.S. News and World Report* increased the school's rank, making it a Tier 2 school, a position it continues to hold. This was a wonderful achievement, especially given the brief time that has elapsed since GC&SU made its mission change a reality.

Additional proof that the University's efforts at transformation were succeeding occurred in June 2001, when GC&SU was invited to become one of only nineteen members of the prestigious Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). Since then GC&SU has continued to improve as a public liberal arts college, and this improvement is seen by many indicators. For instance, GC&SU has raised its minimum SAT score every year since 1996. The average score has risen 130 point, to the current average score of 1089. This year's recipients of GC&SU's 1200 Club scholarships include 58 freshmen from throughout Georgia and as far away as Texas, with an average SAT score of 1278 and an average GPA of 3.62.

GC&SU plans to continue developing a national reputation for student-centeredness and academic quality. The increase in faculty positions has enabled GC&SU to reduce its student-teacher ratio by 13 percent, keeping even lecture course at an average of 21 students. It has also enabled the development of new majors in the liberal arts disciplines, such as philosophy and rhetoric. The library expansion and the new residence halls create a residential campus with a clear academic focus. And to facilitate learning in the twenty-first century the entire campus has wireless Internet connectivity

Presidential Search

President Rosemary DePaolo, who had led the University's transformation since her arrival in 1997, left GC&SU in July 2003 to become Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Consequently, GC&SU was engaged in the process of a presidential search for much of 2003. Concerned that GC&SU's positive momentum might be harmed by a long search, University System of Georgia Chancellor Thomas C. Meredith put the process on a fast track. He appointed Dr. David G. Brown, former chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Asheville and founder of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), as interim president from July through December 2003. Though rapid, the presidential search was extremely successful. In November Dr. Dorothy Leland, vice president of the Boca Raton campus of Florida Atlantic University, accepted GC&SU's invitation to become its president. She began her leadership on January 1, 2004.

Initiatives for GC&SU's Transformation

GC&SU has pursued a variety of initiatives and sought to benchmark academics best practices relevant to fulfillment of its mission.

Program Planning

In 2000, the Vice President & Dean of Faculties initiated semi-annual retreats for academic leaders to address the challenge of liberal arts transformation. At these retreats, participants explored the implications of the mission, modeled best practices, and developed strategic plans. Because the liberal arts model integrates the functions of academic affairs and student affairs, the Vice President for Student Affairs joined his division to these retreats in summer of 2001.

Also in 2000 GC&SU adopted a mission-driven academic program review process tied to annual reports. The Program Review addresses questions related to program relevance to the mission, student recruitment and admissions, student enrollments and retention, academic challenges to students, opportunities for student distinction, career preparation and student mentoring, and institutional resources including class size, part-time faculty, facilities, and equipment.

Faculty and Staff Development

GC&SU has encouraged administrators, faculty, and staff to learn more about best practices and innovations in academe. It has supported development opportunities in these areas, sending individuals and entire teams to valuable conferences, workshop, and institutes. These University representatives have shared their new understandings with colleagues. In this way, the University personnel have learned much to facilitate its transformation. Two areas of particular interest have been the development of a liberal arts core curriculum, and the integration civic engagement into the curriculum. Other areas of interest

have been integrating technology, global awareness, and appreciation for diversity into the curriculum.

The following is a sampling of the development programs that representatives from GC&SU have attended:

Annually

- American Council on Education
- University System of Georgia Teaching & Learning Conference
- Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges Annual Meeting
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Annual Meeting
- American Association of Colleges and Schools of Business Annual Meeting

2003

- American Association of College & Universities, "Courage to Question" Conference
- American Association
- The American Humanics Association Meeting
- Learn and Serve Conference, Gainesville College
- Council on Undergraduate Research
- SENCER Science Education and Civic Engagement/AAC&U
- American Conference of Academic Deans and Phi Beta Kappa Conference: Intellectual Leaders in the Liberal Arts
- Hosted the Georgia Service Learning Conference

2002

- American Association of Colleges and Universities Meeting, Washington
- American Council on Education Conference on Diversity
- Georgia Campus Compact Conference, Kennesaw
- Council on Undergraduate Research
- Student Living and Learning Conference, Ohio State University
- Student Affairs team visit to University of Puget Sound for information gathering
- SENCER Science Education and Civic Engagement/AAC&U
- National Academic Advising Association Meeting

2001

- The American Association for Higher Education Summer Academy
- The American Association for Higher Education Annual Meeting
- American Association of Colleges and Universities Meeting, Atlanta
- Student Affairs Department Heads field trip to UNC-Ashville for two-day campus exchange
- National First-Year Experience Conference

2000

- The American Association for Higher Education Summer Academy
- The American Association for Higher Education Annual Meeting
- The American Association for Higher Education Roles and Rewards Conference

- NASPA National Academy for Leadership and Executive Effectiveness
- National Society for Experiential Learning, Orlando, FL
- Education Trust Conference on Service Learning
- National First-Year Experience Conference

In 2003 the Board of Regents recognized two GC&SU academic programs with awards for best practices in international education. The Nursing Program won first place in the "Degree Program with an Integrated Study Abroad Program" competition, and the Department of Modern Foreign Languages took first place in the "Most Internationalized Academic Unit" competition.

Valuable programs--such as those coordinated through the Center for Student Success, the Office of Experiential Learning, and the International Education Center--have been integrated into GC&SU as a result of this conscious effort to learn from others. Most affected by GC&SU's transformation efforts are the programs associated with encouraging student success in the first year of college. The following programs illustrate the pursuit of that goal:

- Week of Welcome
- Reading Circles
- First-year Academic Seminars
- Center for Student Success
- Residence Hall Education
- Cornerstones
- Honors Program

These and other programs that address student learning needs in the first year have already been implemented (see appendix A).

Construction, Renovation, and Technology Upgrades

Decisions about all new construction, renovation and technology upgrades are all driven by the new mission to support a student-centered learning environment. Thus, there are centrally located academic and student support buildings on one primary campus; numerous new residence halls have been completed and some are still being built; a new wellness center opened in Fall 2003; and the library is being expanded to more than three times its former size. Most recently the Board of Regents gave final approval to a financing plan that would allow GC&SU to acquire property for additional parking and a large church building to be used as a student union annex with ample space for large special events. Consequently, the campus is designed to best serve the needs of higher education well.

Revised Governance Structure

Another key change of the university milieu that reflects GC&SU's commitment to best practices has been the movement toward greater faculty and staff participation in university governance. During January and February 2000, a committee of administrators, staff, faculty, and students developed standards for a new form of governance through a university senate. The Board of Regents

approved the revised University Statutes in February 2003. The new university-senate structure provides a vehicle for responsible shared governance.

Core Assessment and Revision

In February 2003, as a result of two earlier initiatives—recorded in a white paper on curriculum revision ([see online](#)) and a report on GC&SU's core curriculum learning outcomes ([see online](#))—the Committee on Academic Governance charged a sub-committee to develop a plan for a complete revision of the core.

This committee began by clarifying its goals:

- To develop a core that fulfills the mission mandates articulated by GC&SU's vision statement and statement of principles;
- To develop a core that contains some degree of the verticality found in the core curricula of most private liberal arts colleges and that addresses some of the most commonly held "visions" of the white paper;
- To develop a core that also meets the University System of Georgia guidelines for a general-education, transferable core;
- To develop a core that contains an assessment plan.

Over the summer 2003, a portion of this committee, which included representatives from all but one school and a variety of programs, met for an intense retreat in order to work out a basic outline. In advance of this retreat, participants researched the core plans of a variety of schools known for having thoughtfully innovative cores or for addressing issues of concern to GC&SU. This retreat was very productive; the participants produced a plan that met all four of the committee's goals. The report from this retreat is on file ([see online](#)).

Because another major initiative at GC&SU--the adoption of a new governance structure--was implemented beginning Fall 2003, the work of this core revision committee has been set aside. A new sub-committee on core revision is currently being established in accordance with the University's new statutes. This new body will continue review of the core curriculum.

The Future of GC&SU's Transformation

Now that GC&SU is known as a Tier 2 school, the next obvious goal is to reach the same level as the majority of COPLAC schools, almost all in the first tier in their region (except those that seek national ranking). This is another comparative measure for GC&SU, and it is eminently achievable. GC&SU is clearly moving toward parity with UGA and Georgia Tech, and students no longer need to transfer to these institutions in order to study with a cohort of talented peers. Reaching full parity is also an achievable goal. This past fall, GC&SU experienced a measure of its success when, for the first time, it had to close admissions weeks before the scheduled date.

GC&SU continues to raise its minimum SAT score by at least 20 points each year, this year's minimum score for consideration is 980. GC&SU's developing reputation as a quality public liberal arts university has made this plan for

continuous improvement quite realistic. The University's average SAT score, which improves each year by more than 20 points, well exceeds the minimum. The University also continues to develop the residential campus, building residence halls and with learning space and wireless networking.

GC&SU has employed significant efforts and resources to provide support, services, and programs ensuring the success of students. The transfer from high school to university life has been most successful, and information about this first transition stage is included in full in Appendix A. While there are programs and processes in place for the second and third stages of a student's transition through college, GC&SU recognizes that these are areas where it needs to strengthen its endeavors. Consequently, the focus of this QEP is to address stages two and three.

However, GC&SU is well poised to be successful in this endeavor because it is a natural continuation of the institution's ongoing commitment to seek ways to fulfill its mission, "to endow its graduates with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning" by "challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond."

Explanation of the QEP

GC&SU affirms SACS's emphasis on process as well as product in the QEP. The story of how GC&SU's quality enhancement plan evolved clearly demonstrates broad-based institutional participation in the identification of both the issue to be addressed and the means for addressing it. The narrative also shows a consensus among the University's key constituencies that the issues addressed are relevant to significant improvement in the quality of student learning at GC&SU.

The Developmental Process

While SACS has required a quality enhancement plan with specific requirements, the spirit of the QEP is consistent with an enterprise begun four years ago, when leaders first from academic affairs and later from both academic affairs and student affairs began semi-annual retreats to explore ways of better achieving our mission. Some retreats have focused on exploring innovations and best practices in liberal arts undergraduate education; others have addressed particular challenges related to GC&SU's transformation into a public liberal arts university.

These retreats began as an effort by Vice President and Dean of Faculties Anne Gormly to bring together academic leaders—associate vice presidents, school deans, department chairs, programs directors, and key faculty—to define and address mission-related priorities. Below is a brief overview of these early retreat topics:

Winter 2000 (Uniting in Mission): The goal of this first retreat was to determine what actions the academic division could take to accomplish the University's strategic plan objectives and support the liberal arts mission.

Summer 2000 (Embracing Change): Attendees read *Who Moved My Cheese?* beforehand, and the retreat opened with a discussion of the need to adapt to change. The focus of this Academic Leaders' Retreat was on recruiting, challenging, and retaining a new type of student to GC&SU. The group examined the distinction between input measures, active learning, and student outcomes. The 2000-2001 Academic Agenda was derived from discussions at the retreat. (see Agenda in appendix)

Winter 2001 (Ensuring Success): This retreat began with a review of progress that had been made in the implementation of previous action items, such as the development of student-learning outcomes and a senior capstone experience for all majors. The group explored further ways to increase learning beyond the classroom through experiential learning and experiential transcripts and through a Center of Effective Teaching and

Learning. Attendees were introduced to the concept of “closing the loop” of assessment and planning.

Beginning in summer 2001, Vice President Gormly and Vice President for Student Affairs Bruce Harshbarger recognized that addressing the mandates of the University’s liberal arts mission—to be a “residential learning community,” dedicated to “challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond”—would be facilitated by truly joining the efforts of the academic affairs and student affairs divisions. They established leaders’ retreats, which have been held twice a year and attended by approximately 60 people: from the academic side, associate vice presidents, deans, chairs, and directors; from the student affairs side, associate vice presidents, directors, and coordinators. Like the previous retreats, they have explored benchmark models and addressed particular institutional challenges. Regardless of the topic, however, all these combined retreats have significantly furthered the larger agenda of developing an academic community in which all the constituencies are truly united in the effort to serve students well in a seamless environment. Below is an overview of the first combined retreat:

Summer 2001 (Seeking Models): This first combined retreat was a two-day event with several objectives. GC&SU having been admitted into the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) the month before, the group examined how a public institution could adjust its thinking to reflect the spirit of private liberal arts colleges. Attendees, who all read *Colleges That Change Lives* beforehand, worked to identify programs worth emulating. They also learned about the newly established Center of Effective Teaching and Learning, and the newly established Office of Experiential Learning. Colleagues in academic affairs and student affairs developed new institutional goals and objectives, called themes and action items, to further enhance the liberal arts mission (see document “Action Items” in appendix).

In June 2001 the new *Principles of Accreditation* was approved, and in October it was posted to the SACS COC Web site. It was formally adopted at the December meeting, and the class of 2004 was given an orientation to the new procedures in May of 2002.

When the new re-accreditation component of the QEP was presented to the GC&SU SACS Review leadership team, Dr. Gormly and Dr. Harshbarger immediately saw the role that the Academic Affairs/Student Affairs Leaders’ Retreats could play in helping to identify direction and priorities for the QEP. Since 2002, all the retreats have addressed development of GC&SU quality enhancement plan in some way. Below is an overview of these retreats:

Winter 2002 (Self-examination): The goal of this AA/SA Retreat was to introduce the new SACS directives on the Quality Enhancement Plan. The

plan was to arrive at a QEP theme that would result from the themes and action items that were derived from the previous retreat. As they tried to move smoothly from the previous action items to focus on one QEP theme, retreat participants discovered some problems. Some were concerned that, if their favorite action items were not essential to the QEP, they would not be addressed. Others worried that the current action items were not engaged enough in traditional classroom student learning. These issues engaged the participants in valuable ways. An attempt was made to arrive at priorities, linking outcomes to previously identified action items, but the results were not satisfactory. Struggling to be coherent and consistent with previous agendas led to a retreat that lacked closure.

From this retreat, however, the leaders learned that, while the transition from general planning to focus on a QEP needed to maintain certain retreat agenda items, it could not maintain focus on the details. Equally important, the retreat members gained trust in and respect for the open forum. As a result, the group maintained the working pattern of blended divisions and the focus on student learning and mission; but it abandoned specific focus on previous action items.

Summer 2002 (Gaining Focus): The focus of this AA/SA retreat was to study GC&SU's performance in terms of NSSE and COPLAC data. Comparative national NSSE data indicated that GC&SU students did not think they were being challenged as much as peer institutions. This data led to a discussion of how we could challenge and support students to achieve excellence. Mixed groups of AA/SA leaders engaged in focused discussions on the meaning of NSSE data and the implications for student learning. Groups developed action items related to the five categories of NSSE.

(see NSSE surveys: <http://info.gcsu.edu/intranet/ippa/nssewebpage.htm>)

Guided by the issues of this retreat, the SACS Review leadership team was able to develop a QEP theme, derived from the University's vision statement: "challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond." Considering further, the SACS Review leadership team realized that this theme needed more focus. Guided by notes from the retreat teams, it saw that concerns for challenging and fostering occurred most at three transition points in undergraduate education: entry into college; entry into major and late entry as a transfer student; and exit into world of work, advanced study, and citizenry. So it narrowed the QEP theme: "Challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond as students negotiate the three transition points of undergraduate education." Focus on the three stages was later dropped.

Winter 2003 (Developing the QEP): This AA/SA Retreat organized working teams to address the needs of each transition stage. After forming into break-out groups, the teams began needs assessment, brainstorming, and planning. Because the QEP embraces goals and initiatives already begun,

teams began by assessing what programs are already in place as well as what needs to be developed.

From the team leaders of this retreat, a QEP advisory committee was formed and work continued in expanded ad-hoc committees. They defined the goals for their transition stage; identified their action items; articulated the anticipated student outcomes; developed an implementation plan; and addressed the following questions: What are the challenges for student learning? How will we support students? How will we assess the impact on student learning? What resources are needed? Who should be involved in implementing this portion of the plan? How do we communicate this portion of the plan? These reports are on file.

Ironically, the work of these teams showed the leadership team that the QEP did not yet have enough focus to provide coherence. So the leadership team studied the transition-team reports and GC&SU's mission documents, seeking an implicit unity, which it found in the GC&SU "Expectation of Students." The six expectations group into three different kinds of learning issues, which need to be addressed in each of the three developmental stages of a student's life:

- The first three expectations—that they set their own personal development goals and take responsibility for their own learning, are prepared to learn and to be intellectually challenged, and strive for excellence in their studies and seek to achieve high academic expectations in all of their courses—assume that students will demonstrate a positive attitude toward the pursuit of knowledge and accept responsibility for learning.
- The fourth expectation—that they acquire an inquisitive mind; respect for human diversity and individuality; a sense of civic and global responsibility; sound ethical principles; effective writing, speaking and quantitative skills; and a healthy lifestyle—assumes that students will demonstrate achievement of college-level competencies and liberal arts modes of inquiry.
- The last two expectations—that they be meaningfully engaged in and involved in the campus community and take full advantage of opportunities to develop and implement career plans—assume that students will demonstrate the engagement of learning with career planning and community service.

Division of the three learning issues was later dropped.

Summer 2003 (Prioritizing Plans): The goal of this final AA/SA Retreat to be focused on development of the QEP was to arrive democratically at priorities for specific goals and means of achieving them. These goals and means needed to address the three learning issues and be specific to the three developmental stages. This effort was facilitated by electronic meeting software and a consultant proficient in using it. Participants clustered around eleven computers in groups of four and five, selected to assure that each group reflected varied concerns. Their input was solicited first for goals to address, arriving at consensus responses and entering

them. A compilation of all responses was instantaneously projected for all to see. Then the groups selected the ideas they liked for the whole list and could immediately see a ranking of the most popular ideas. In this highly structured session, retreat participants, who already understood the centrality of the QEP's focus to GC&SU's mission and its relevance to student learning, were able to determine how its intent would be addressed and fulfilled. A report summarizing participant input is on file.

After this retreat, the leadership team continued to refine the plan. First it determined that over the past few years GC&SU has implemented many initiatives to facilitate successful student learning in the first year. Therefore, it was decided that the QEP would focus on the learning needs of students after their first year. Since comparatively little systematic attention has been given to developing GC&SU's learning expectations in students throughout their undergraduate years, this has become the QEP. Thus, GC&SU's quality enhancement plan fits the model of one that extends and strengthens an initiative that is already underway.

Another way that the leadership team continued to refine the plan was to limit the plan to just a few of the many suggestions developed by retreat participants. The leadership team only considered those goals and means valued by at least eight of the eleven groups. Among these, it determined goals and means that were feasible and cogent. An outline of the resulting list of initiatives is on file.

Coincident with this effort was the installation of a new governance system and a new governing body at GC&SU. In spring of 2003 GC&SU adopted new bylaws that called for governance by a university senate and a total reshaping of committees. Such changes are learning experiences, and this change naturally slowed down development of the QEP. However, the change, motivated by a desire for shared governance, also significantly helped QEP development.

A QEP steering committee was developed by yoking the SACS leadership team with the University Senate Executive Committee. Five open meetings were held to discuss the twenty-eight proposed QEP initiatives--one for the leadership retreat attendees and one at each of the university's four schools. Each meeting led to helpful revision. Then the University Senate hosted a University "town meeting," where the President led everyone in a secret straw vote on whether each initiative was desirable, potentially desirable, or not desirable. The hope was that the vote would eliminate a good number of the initiatives; however, that did not occur. Very few initiatives were voted as undesirable. The results of this process are on file.

When the QEP leadership team met to review the voting data, they saw a way to narrow the scope by blending the twenty-eight very specific initiatives into six more inclusive ones:

1. Enhance student orientation programs for transfer students;

2. Enhance student leadership opportunities;
3. Enhance academic challenge within the curriculum to reflect the liberal arts mission;
4. Enhance recruitment of minority students and faculty;
5. Enhance student involvement in the campus community and beyond;
6. Enhance preparation of students for post-graduate opportunities.

These proposed initiatives were next brought before the full University Senate for approval. After approval, draft teams of three senators each were formed to pursue the development and implementation plans for each initiative. These teams were charged with the following specific tasks:

1. Report on a survey of best practices related to the initiative;
2. Specify the desired student outcomes to be achieved by the initiative;
3. Specify an assessment plan for measuring achievement of each outcome;
4. Specify the planned means (programs, etc.) for achieving those outcomes;
5. Identify the administrator/unit that would be responsible for each means;
6. Provide a financial analysis of resource needs related to each means; indicating how those needs would be met;
7. Provide a development and implementation schedule, indicating the procedural steps and recognizing resource constraints.

The resulting plans, which are on file, were brought back to the full senate, where the body reviewed and revised them, and in some cases requested further development. When that further development was complete, and the document was edited, the QEP steering committee distributed copies of the final draft to the entire campus community. Following due process, the senate met again and approved the final draft as GC&SU's QEP (pages 17-65).

While the process by which GC&SU arrived at its QEP may seem elaborate, it proved valuable in its own right. The established Academic Affairs/Student Affairs Leaders' Retreats provided a way to have broad-based University input into the development of the QEP. Similarly, GC&SU's recently instituted University Senate, a body that assures shared governance, has enabled broad-based approval of the plan among the faculty and staff.

Organizational Description

After much campus discussion, the University Senate approved the following six initiatives to be addressed by the QEP in order to encourage excellence in students throughout their undergraduate years. The table below shows that the initiatives relate to the expectations very closely; minor deviation is due to initiative 1 relating to both expectations 1 and 2, and initiatives 3 and 4 both relating to expectation 4.

Identification of these specific initiatives was the result of research and data analysis, as well as study of best practices at other institutions. After that, learning outcomes were developed for them, and mean of assessing those outcomes was determined. Finally, specific endeavors were designed to address each initiative.

For each endeavor, the leadership was determined, resource needs and allocation sources were identified, and an implementation time line was developed.

The plan, which follows, is presented to show all of these considerations.

Linkage of QEP Enhancement Initiatives to GC&SU Student Expectations

<u>ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES</u>	<u>EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS</u>
1. Enhance student orientation programs for transfer students.	1. Students will set their own personal development goals and take responsibility for their own learning. 2. Students will be prepared to learn and to be intellectually challenged.
2. Enhance student leadership opportunities.	3. Students will strive for excellence in their studies and seek to achieve high academic expectations in all of their courses.
3. Enhance academic challenges within the curriculum to reflect the liberal arts mission. 4. Enhance recruitment of students and faculty to increase diversity.	4. Students will acquire an inquisitive mind; respect for human diversity and individuality; a sense of civic and global responsibility; sound ethical principles; effective writing, speaking and quantitative skills; and a healthy lifestyle.
5. Enhance student involvement in the campus community and beyond.	5. Students will be meaningfully engaged in and involved in the campus community.
6. Enhance preparation of students for post-graduate opportunities.	6. Students will take full advantage of opportunities to develop and implement career plans.

Summation of QEP:

GC&SU has developed 6 learning initiatives to enhance the fulfillment of its mission to “foster excellence and challenge students in the classroom and beyond”:

1. Enhance student orientation programs for transfer students.
2. Enhance student leadership opportunities.
3. Enhance academic challenges within the curriculum to reflect the liberal arts mission.
4. Enhance recruitment of students and faculty to increase diversity.
5. Enhance student involvement in the campus community and beyond.
6. Enhance preparation of students for post-graduate opportunities

These initiatives reflect desired student outcomes articulated in the University’s “Expectations of Students.”