

Date: July 14, 2003
To: SACS / QEP committee
From: Larry Anderson
Subject: second of three provocations

What are possible sources of our QEP's focus (that is, the topic/issue related to enhancing student learning)? The Commission recommends exploring our institution's culture, strategic planning, mission, and results of assessment. They further suggest that we look for shared interests, concerns, and aspirations already articulated. They point out that it is allowable to develop a QEP that "extends, modifies, redirects, or strengthens an improvement already underway" (HR 21).

What strikes me is that we should not see the focus of the QEP as a new issue, but rather as an already-recognized concern. We have such concerns documented in the 2001 reports of the Task Forces, last year's SWOT analyses, and the recent work of the recruitment and retention committees. I suggest that we look to this material as the source of possible foci.

What makes a suitable focus? We need to keep the following in mind: "Institutions are encouraged to base their selection of the focus of the QEP on empirical data and an analysis of these data" (HR 22). More specifically, the focus must relate to the enhancement of student learning, which is defined as "changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or values that are attributable to the collegiate experience" (HR 19). The COC offers the following as examples:

- enhancing the academic climate for student learning
- strengthening the general studies curriculum
- developing creative approaches to experiential learning
- enhancing critical thinking skills
- introducing innovative teaching and learning strategies
- increasing student engagement in learning
- exploring imaginative ways to use technology in the classroom

At the orientation meeting, we were also told about the following actual examples:

- (Samford) problem-based learning
- (church-affiliated college) servant leadership

The Handbook reminds us that "the goals and evaluation strategies must clearly be linked to improving the quality of student learning" (HR 19). Our QEP must document a plan for improving the quality of student learning. Please think back to the work done over the past couple of years and identify one or more issues we might consider as a possible focus for our QEP. Once we settle on three or four, we will solicit input from the campus community to help us determine the focus around which we will build our QEP.

Please send me your suggestions for our QEP focus.